ENGLISH COMPOSITION
at Sinclair

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Chapter One: English Composition at Sinclair
by Sinclair Community College English Department

What is This Textbook?
This textbook is an Open Educational Resource (OER). The English Department piloted it during the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016 with over 1500 students. Based on student and instructor feedback, we adopted this text in the summer of 2016. The text is in its second edition for the 2017-18 academic year. You can download a copy of this text from your course shell in eLearn, or you can download a copy from the LibGuide for ENG 1101 and 1201.

An OER is composed of pieces written by teachers and scholars that have used a Creative Commons license to publish their work. Using a Creative Commons license means that the work can be shared with others, used as content, and re-purposed as needed. This license makes the work open—and free—both to students and the institution. While a “free” textbook is a wonderful benefit for students, other reasons do exist for adopting an OER. The most significant reason is that we can better align our composition courses to the needs of our students.

For instance, each chapter is preceded by an “Introduction” tailored specifically to Sinclair students and written by a Sinclair faculty member. Constructing this OER with introductions has allowed us to speak directly to our students’ needs. Further, as writing teachers, we understand how crucial revision is to good writing. This OER embodies that philosophy in that it is a living text: it can be revised to strengthen its weaknesses and better address its audience(s).

Students’ Input
Your input as students using this textbook is extremely valuable to us. You have the opportunity to shape the textbook for future students in composition courses! You will find a student evaluation form on the last page of this text that your instructor will ask you to fill out and submit. Please return it and let your voice be heard so that we can continue to improve this text. We will take your opinions seriously as we continue to revise the text.

About ENG 1101
English 1101 is one of the first courses students take at Sinclair. The purpose of the course is to introduce you to the community of academic writing. This introduction serves to prepare you for the future thinking and writing tasks you will face in college. No course can prepare you fully for the challenges that you will face in your studies; however, your hard work in this course to improve your writing will pay off not only this semester, but also in future semesters.

The English Department has created mission and philosophy statements to guide us in creating our curriculum and this text. Please read the statements below to learn about our commitment to teaching writing.

English Department Writing Program Mission Statement:
The English Department’s Writing Program introduces students to the complexities of twenty-first century literacies and provides traditional and innovative approaches to writing, reading, and critical thinking.
Chapter One: English Composition at Sinclair

**English Department Writing Program Philosophy Statement:**
The English Department’s Writing Program focuses on developing rhetorical literacy, which undergirds all academic disciplines and is highly valued by employers. Rhetorical literacy includes practices of reading, writing, and critical thinking. Literacy enriches personal lives; empowers students to become responsible, contributing members of a democracy; increases both self-expression and the understanding of others in our global society; and encourages resiliency and life-long learning.

In the English Department we meet students as individuals and believe in culturally responsive teaching. We maintain high standards to challenge students to grow to their full potential. Students leave our writing classes with improved literacy skills that help them reach their personal and professional goals in the twenty-first century.

**ENG 1101 Course Description**
In English Composition I, students learn reflective, analytical, and argumentative writing strategies, incorporating sources and personal experience. Students will negotiate between public and private rhetorical situations and purposes to achieve academic literacy. They will write multiple drafts using a recursive writing process as they work toward fluency in style and mechanics.

**ENG 1101 Course Outcomes**
Throughout ENG 1101, students will practice writing in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes; some writing assignments will be longer essays and others may be short, in-class writings. All of the writing students do for ENG 1101 will help them to attain the following outcomes by the end of the course:

**Rhetorical Knowledge**
Construct audience-smart texts to achieve an intended purpose, while using an appropriate voice, tone, style, and level of formality, and the conventions of format and structure.

**Think, Read, and Write Critically**
Analyze through reading and writing the complex social, institutional, and cultural issues relevant to students’ experience; explore through reading and writing the relationships between writer, text, and audience in various genres.

**Composing Process**
Understand and use a recursive writing process, including peer involvement, employing situation-appropriate writing strategies to produce successive drafts of increasing quality.

**Knowledge of Conventions**
Control sentence-level language (syntax, grammar, punctuation, etc.); employ appropriate conventions for larger structural components (paragraphing, structure, format, etc.); and use standard documentation format to document a variety of texts ethically and appropriately.

**Electronic Environments**
Understand and use electronic environments to support writing tasks and to share and publish texts.

**About ENG 1201**

English 1201 is the second of the two composition courses at Sinclair. Not all programs require ENG 1201, so it may not be in your pathway to take the course. The central difference between ENG 1101 and 1201 is that ENG 1101 **INTRODUCES** research methods and documentation and requires students to
summarize and analyze sources. ENG 1201 takes the research process much further by requiring students to **PRACTICE** research methods and documentation in every assignment. ENG 1201 requires students to summarize, analyze, and employ sources in arguments. Each assignment in 1201 requires research.

**Course Description:** English Composition II, building on the skills in English Composition I, develops rhetorical literacy through research, critical reading and multi-genre writing tasks. Through major and minor, cumulative and stand-alone assignments, students construct arguments and analyses, ethically incorporating academic sources while developing their own voices as writers and citizens.

**Course Outcomes:**

1. **Rhetorical Knowledge**
   Construct audience-smart texts to achieve an intended argumentative or analytical purpose while using an appropriate voice, tone style, and level of formality; effectively use source texts in persuasive writing and demonstrate understanding of the uses of public and private discourses.

2. **Think, Read, and Write Critically**
   Read critically to connect course and research texts with local and broader communities through summary, analysis, evaluation, and other written response.

3. **Composing Process**
   Understand and use a recursive writing process, including peer involvement, employing situation-appropriate writing strategies to produce successive drafts of increasing quality.

4. **Knowledge of Conventions**
   Control sentence-level language (syntax, grammar, punctuation, etc.); employ appropriate conventions for larger structural components (paragraphing, structure, format, etc.); use standard documentation format to document a variety of texts ethically and appropriately; and develop competence in introducing and incorporating quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material from sources.

5. **Electronic Environments**
   Locate, evaluate, organize, and ethically document material from electronic and print sources, including scholarly databases and Internet sources; understand and use electronic environments to support writing tasks and to share and publish texts.

**English Department Grading Standards**

**Characteristics of an A paper:** Polished, outstanding college-level work.

- The A essay shows originality of thought in stating and developing a central idea.
- The ideas are clear, logical, and thought-provoking.
- The essay exhibits the positive qualities of good writing.

**Characteristics of a B paper:** Above average college-level work.

- The B essay has a clearly stated central idea, logically and adequately developed.
- The essay exhibits some of the positive qualities of good writing.

Although the writing is above average, the B essay lacks the excellence of thought, development, and style which characterizes the A essay.
Chapter One: English Composition at Sinclair

**Characteristics of a C paper: Average college-level work.**

The C essay has a reasonably clear central idea with fairly adequate development and support. The essay exhibits some of the positive qualities of good writing.

The C essay may, in fact, have few correction marks on it, but it lacks the quality of thought development, and expression which would entitle it to an above average rating.

**Characteristics of an unacceptable paper:**

Does not meet more than one requirement and shows little or no revision. Below average college-level work. The central idea is unclear or incomplete. It may lack adequate development and support. The essay lacks several of the positive qualities of good writing and has errors that impede meaning.

**Sinclair Services**

**The Writing Center**

The Writing Center is a walk-in lab where Sinclair students can get assistance with writing projects for any course of 1000 level or higher. It is located in the library in room 07L06, next to Tutorial Services.

The Writing Center is a gathering place for writers. It offers:

- One-on-one tutoring assistance
- Computer stations
- Research resources
- A relaxed, friendly space in which to work

Writing Center tutors can help students:

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of their papers
- Develop and organize essay content
- Focus and support thesis statements
- Use and document sources
- Recognize and overcome grammar problems

**Disability Services**

Disability Services provides assistance to all qualified students with disabilities, whether they are physical, psychiatric, or educational. You are required to register with the office and identify your needs in order to be eligible for academic adjustments. All services are based on individual needs. **Disability Services is here to help students reach their academic goals.** It is located in Building 10, room 421. The phone number is 512-4521, and the office is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Disability Services:

- Assists students to secure resources, services, and adaptive equipment to aid in the classroom and laboratory
- Provides academic, career, and personal counseling
- Monitors the campus to assure accessibility

**Counseling Services**

Counseling Services is located in the Center for Student Success (10-424) and offers students free,
confidential counseling to address and work on academic and personal concerns. Their mission is to meet students where they are and assist them in taking steps to improve their lives. The licensed counselors in Counseling Services help students identify steps they can work on to begin creating positive change in their lives with a holistic approach.

Counseling Services typically operates on an appointment basis. To set up an appointment, call 512-3032 or stop by the office in 10-424. In case of urgent need, a student can see a free counselor or get immediate help during walk-in hours at 3 p.m. from Monday through Friday.

Counseling Services is open Monday through Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
About Creative Commons Licensing

Throughout this book, you will see rectangles with symbols in them underneath each heading. While these may seem distracting and at times unnecessary, they are an important part of any Open Educational Resource because they indicate the types of licensing for each piece of the text. Remember, different authors have written pieces of this textbook and want their work attributed in different ways.

For instance, pieces written by our Sinclair faculty or English department are licensed under a Creative Commons 2.0 license.

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Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

Chapter 2: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

Section 1: Writing Processes

Introduction
by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Ph.D., Sinclair Community College

If you walk into any elementary language arts classroom today, you will see posters and signs plastering the walls reminding students about the “writing process.” Commands to “Brainstorm! Cluster! List! Outline! Draft! Revise! Proofread” direct young students to follow the steps to becoming a successful writer.

If you are coming to college straight from high school or just a few years after graduating, you have been hearing about this writing process all of your life in school. It is nothing new to you. The concept that you have a process of your own—a process different from any other student’s writing process—may be new to you, though. Intuitively you know what works when you write; for instance, listing works for me, but outlining is a waste of my time because I rarely follow an outline and become frustrated by the constraint. I’ve learned to list at the beginning of a project and throw the list away as time goes on, opting to create fresh lists as the project progresses. Learning how to maximize the writing strategies that work for you in different situations is the key to becoming a successful college-level writer.

In this chapter, which applies to both the first and second courses in the writing sequence at Sinclair, you will read about how to develop successful writing habits to help you write in your future college courses. As you read, think about which writing strategies have worked for you in the past: Listing? Clustering? Freewriting? How can you develop those strategies into habits that enable you to effectively research and use sources?

Really? Writing? Again?
by Amy Guptill, Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence
adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Ph.D., Sinclair Community College

Yes. Writing. Again.

Obviously you can write. And in the age of Facebook and smartphones, you might be writing all the time, perhaps more often than speaking. Many students today are awash in text like no other generation before.

So why spend yet more time and attention on writing skills? Revisiting the craft of writing—especially on the early end of college—will improve your writing much more than simply producing page after page in the same old way. Becoming an excellent communicator will save you a lot of time and hassle in your studies, advance your career, and promote better relationships and a higher quality of life on the job. Honing your writing is a good use of your scarce time.
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

Also consider this: a recent survey of employers conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities\(^1\) found that 89 percent of employers say that colleges and universities should place more emphasis on “the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing.” It was the single-most favored skill in this survey. In addition, several of the other valued skills are grounded in written communication: “Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills” (81%); “The ability to analyze and solve complex problems” (75%); and “The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources”(68). If you want to be a professional who interacts frequently with others—presumably you do; you’re in college—you have to be someone who can anticipate and solve complex problems and coordinate your work with others, all of which depend on effective communication.

The pay-off from improving your writing comes much sooner than graduation. Suppose you complete about 40 classes for a 120-credit bachelors’ degree, and you produce about 2500 words of formal writing per class. Even with that low estimate, you’ll write 100,000 words over your college career. That’s about equivalent to a 330-page book. Spending a few hours sharpening your writing skills will make those 100,000 words much easier and more rewarding to write. All of your professors care about good writing, whether or not they see their courses as a means to improve it. Formal written work is the coin of the academic realm. Creating and sharing knowledge—the whole point of the academy—depends on writing. You may have gotten a lot of positive feedback on your writing before college, but it’s important to note that writing in college is distinct in ways that reflect the origins of higher education.

The origins of higher education

College may look and feel similar to high school, and, for the most part, you already know how to perform your student role within this setting. However, there are some fundamental differences. The most obvious ones are that high school is mandatory (to a certain point), freely available, and a legal right. They have to offer you the opportunity, regardless of your grades. College is optional, costly, and performance-based. Most institutions will dismiss you if your grades don’t meet a certain minimum. But college is different in more subtle ways as well, and those differences reflect the evolution of the university.

In their original ancient and medieval forms, universities were centers for scholarship, existing at the pleasure of the crown, church, or state. While centers of study go at least back to ancient Mesopotamia 2500 years BCE, the Islamic and European universities of the first and second millennium CE are usually considered the first of the modern model. Highly privileged people went to these universities as students, but they didn’t really attend classes, write papers, and take exams like college students today. Instead they acted as independent, though novice, scholars: they read everything they could find in their areas of interest, attended lectures that expert scholars gave, and, if they were lucky (and perhaps charming), got some feedback from those scholars on their own work or assisted scholars in theirs. Students were simply the most junior of scholars at a university, enjoying the extraordinary privilege of interacting with the revered academic superstars of their day.

Obviously, colleges and universities today are much more student-centered, and most higher education faculty spend most of their time carefully crafting educational experiences for students. But the notion of the university as a center for scholarship and exchange still shapes how colleges and universities operate today.

Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

Some points:

1. **Professors are scholars and artists:** Most of your professors have had little to no formal training in pedagogy (the science of teaching). They’re extensively trained in their scholarly or creative fields, well versed in relevant theories, methods, and significant findings. Many taught during graduate school, but most come to their jobs relative novices about teaching. Professors apply themselves to the craft of teaching with the same creative and intellectual fervor that drew them into their fields. They attend conferences and presentations about effective teaching and learning (such as the Lilly Conference, the AAC&U, or the American Educational Research Association), keep journals and portfolios to reflect on their teaching work, and read books and articles about cognitive neuroscience, trends in higher education, and the social worlds of their students. There are some professors who still see themselves in the classical model—as someone who delivers content through lectures and assesses performance through a final exam or term paper, but that approach is becoming ever rarer. Almost all professors seek out innovative and engaging pedagogies.

2. **Professors have competing obligations:** While you may view your professors primarily as teachers, your instructors are also collecting data, writing books and articles, making films, writing poetry, consulting with businesses and organizations, or inventing things. Even those who spend a majority of their time on teaching think of themselves as scholars or artists who also teach. Scholarship and creative activity are central ways that colleges and universities serve society. In addition to educated graduates, higher education also produces ideas, findings, and innovations. High school teachers, though similarly engaged in the craft of teaching, have much more formal training in instruction and are more likely to see themselves primarily as teachers, even those that are writing magazine articles, restoring wetland ecologies, or composing music on the side.

3. **Professors design their own classes:** While both college professors and high school teachers teach, one condition of their work is substantially different. Most high school teachers in public school systems are contractually obligated to deliver a particular curriculum and, in some cases, to use particular methods to do so. The topics and materials are often determined by state regulators, local boards of education, and school administrators. There is room for innovation, but under the current mania for standards, many teachers are no longer treated (and respected) like craftspersons in their own right. Higher education instructors still have a lot more latitude than their high-school counterparts. Your instructor may be required to cover particular concepts and skills or even assign a particular textbook, especially if one class is a prerequisite to more advanced classes. However, he or she still has a lot of freedom to determine what students should learn, what they will do to learn it, and how their achievements will be measured. As a result, two different sections of the same college course (such as Ancient World History) could differ dramatically, much more so than two parallel high school sections.

4. **Students drive their own learning:** The assumption behind high-school instruction is that the teacher is the engine of learning. Consequently, a lot of time is spent in direct face-to-face instruction. Homework is for further practice to reinforce material from that day. Teachers will often tell students what each night’s homework assignment is, follow up on missing work, and closely track students’ progress. The assumption behind college instruction, in contrast, is that students are the engine of learning, and that most of the significant learning happens outside of class while students are working through a dense reading or other challenging intellectual task on their own. Most college classes meet only 1-3 times a week for a total of about 3 hours. Consequently, college instructors think of class meetings as an opportunity to prepare you for the heavy-lifting that you’ll be doing on your own. Sometimes that involves direct instruction (how to solve a particular kind of problem or analyze a particular kind of text). More often, though, professors want to provide you with material not contained in the reading or facilitate active learning experiences based on what you read. e assumption is that all students—like
their medieval counterparts—have the skill and self-motivation to carefully read all the assigned texts. Professors lay out a path for learning—much like how personal trainers develop exercise routines—but it is up to students (and athletes) to do the difficult work themselves.

While university systems have clearly shifted toward student-centered practices, colleges and universities still see themselves as communities of scholars, some senior (i.e., faculty), most junior (i.e., students). Your professors are passionate about their fields, and they want to share their excitement with you as effectively as they can. However, they also know that you came to them on a voluntary basis, and they fully expect you to take complete responsibility for your own learning.

College writing is different

The origins of the university help explain why even skilled wordsmiths benefit from studying the assumptions and expectations behind college-level writing. College is a fundamentally different educational model; as a result, the purposes and expectations for writing are different. You have learned many of the essential skills and practices of formal written communication throughout your schooling; now it’s time to take your writing a step further.

By the end of high school you probably mastered many of the key conventions of standard academic English such as paragraphing, sentence-level mechanics, and the use of thesis statements. The essay portion of the SAT measures important skills such as organizing evidence within paragraphs that relate to a clear, consistent thesis, and choosing words and sentence structures to effectively convey your meaning. These practices are foundational, and your teachers have given you a wonderful gift in helping you master them. However, college writing assignments require you to apply those skills to new intellectual challenges. Professors assign papers because they want you to think rigorously and deeply about important questions in their fields. To your instructors, writing is for working out complex ideas, not just explaining them. A paper that would earn a top score on the SAT might only get a C or D in a college class if it doesn’t show original and ambitious thinking.

Professors look at you as independent junior scholars and imagine you writing as someone who has a genuine, driving interest in tackling a complex question. They envision you approaching an assignment without a pre-existing thesis. They expect you to look deep into the evidence, consider several alternative explanations, and work out an original, insightful argument that you actually care about. This kind of scholarly approach usually entails writing a rough draft, through which you work out an ambitious thesis and the scope of your argument, and then starting over with a wholly rewritten second draft containing a mostly complete argument anchored by a refined thesis. In that second round, you’ll discover holes in the argument that should be remedied, counter-arguments that should be acknowledged and addressed, and important implications that should be noted. When the paper is substantially complete, you’ll go through it again to tighten up the writing and ensure clarity. Writing a paper isn’t about getting the “right answer” and adhering to basic conventions; it’s about joining an academic conversation with something original to say, borne of rigorous thought.

My own experience as an instructor indicates that few students approach writing college papers in the way that professors envision. Many students first figure out what they want to say and then (and only then) write it down as clearly (and quickly) as they can. One quick round of proof-reading and they’re done. Many students have a powerful distaste for truly revising (i.e., actually rewriting) a paper because it feels like throwing away hard-won text. Consequently, when students are invited or required to revise an essay, they tend to focus on correcting mechanical errors, making a few superficial changes that do not entail any rethinking or major changes. Professors find that tendency incredibly frustrating. Some instructors craft an assignment sequence to force a true revising process; others leave it up to you.
Virtually all shape their expectations for the final project around the idea that you’re writing to learn, writing to develop, writing to think—not just writing to express.

Another major impact of this shift to a junior-scholar role is that you not only have to learn to write like a scholar, you also have to learn to write like a political scientist, a chemist, an art historian, and a statistician—sometimes all in the same semester. While most of the conventions of academic writing are common across disciplines, there is some variation. Your professors—immersed as they are in their own fields—may forget that you have such varied demands, and they may not take class time to explain the particular conventions of their field. For every new field of study, you’re like a traveler visiting a foreign culture and learning how to get along. Locals will often do you the kindness of explaining something, but you’ll have to sleuth out a lot of things on your own.

So what do professors want?

At one time or another, most students will find themselves frustrated by a professor’s recalcitrant refusal to simply “Tell us what you want!” It’s a natural feeling and, at times, a legitimate one. While all professors want to set you up to succeed, they may find their expectations hard to articulate, in part because they struggle to remember what it’s like to be a beginner in the field. Often, however, the bigger and better reason that professors won’t just tell you what to do is that there simply isn’t a particular “answer” they want you to give in the paper. They want to see your own ambitious and careful analysis. Some students assume that they should be able to envision a paper and its thesis within minutes of receiving the assignment; if not, they complain that the assignment is unclear. Other students assume that every professor has a completely different set of expectations and, consequently, conclude that writing papers is just an unavoidable guessing game about entirely subjective and idiosyncratic standards. Neither of those assumptions are true. Good, well-constructed writing assignments are supposed to be challenging to write, and professors are, above all, looking for your own self-motivated intellectual work.

Despite some variations by discipline, college instructors are bringing similar standards to evaluating student work. Recently, the Association of American Colleges and Universities has brought together faculty members from across the country to deliberate on the core knowledge and skills that define liberal arts education. They have also worked out benchmarks of success, as summarized in a rubric for written communication. Check it out! While few instructors are sitting down with the AAC&U rubric to determine grades on papers, you can be confident that these are the kinds of things almost all professors are looking for. The language of the “capstone” column illustrates especially well the scholarly mindset and independent work habits they expect students to bring to their work:

- “thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose,“
- “mastery of the subject,“
- “detailed attention” to writing conventions,
- “skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources,”
- and “graceful language.”

Professors want to see that you’ve thought through a problem and taken the time and effort to explain your thinking in precise language.
Demystify Writing Misconceptions
by Joseph M. Moxley, Writing Commons

Learn the beliefs that empower successful academic authors.

To become a competent, confident writer, you may find it useful to analyze your attitudes about writing. After all, your assumptions about how writers work can limit your imagination and the quality of your finished product. You can debunk a truckload of myths about writing by analyzing how you write, how your peers write, and how professional writers write.

**Writers are Born Rather Than Nurtured**
*Reality: Perhaps a few people are born with a special ability to express themselves through language, yet ability without desire or experience nets an empty page.*

Researchers have been unable to prove that writers are uniquely intelligent or original. What is unique, however, is that writers discipline themselves to write and revise. When their thoughts are muddy, successful writers persist until they achieve clarity.

**Writers Always Enjoy Writing**
*Reality: Professionals agonize about their writing from time to time.*

For example, Sue Lorch, an accomplished writing teacher and author, writes: “I do not like to write. Most people to whom I reveal this small, personal truth find it exceedingly odd, suggesting by their expressions that I ought either to repair my attitude or develop the discretion necessary not to go around telling people about it. Apparently these people hear my confession as an admission of fraud. Because my professional life centers on the written word—on producing it, interpreting it, teaching it, and teaching others to teach it—people assume that I should enjoy writing. Not at all. I inevitably view the prospect of writing with a mental set more commonly reserved for root canals and amputations: If it must be done, it must be done, but for God’s sake, let us put it off as long as possible.” [Sue Lorch, "Confessions of a Former Sailor." In *Writers on Writing*. Ed. Tom Waldrep, New York: Random House, 1985. 165-172.]

Although experienced writers may dislike the act of writing, they know that if they are to develop ideas, they need to put their pen to the page or their fingers to the keyboard. Like the forty-niners prospecting for gold in the Sierras, many of us write with the hope of eventually experiencing the "Eureka Phenomenon"—the inspirational moment when our passion finds form and we discover what we want to say by writing.

**Gifted Writers Are Overflowing with Ideas**
*Reality: Experienced writers do not have a monopoly on good ideas.*

Like most other people, they suffer through long, weary days when good ideas seem as rare as a lunar eclipse. Even on the worst days, however, they have faith in the creative process; their experience tells them that the chaos and frustration of early drafting will subside once a few drafts are written. Also, they look outside of themselves for ideas by reading extensively, observing their world, and building relationships with people.
Writing is a Lonely Craft Conducted Best by Introverts

Reality: Contrary to the myth of the lonely writer in the garret, you do not need to chain yourself to a desk in order to create.

Writing need not be a solitary, lonely act. In fact, writers who do not enjoy working in isolation either co-author essays or they make arrangements with friends to meet together and write on their separate subjects. Others find it useful to write in noisy college cafeterias. And even if you do your best writing in a quiet room away from other people, you can probably do your best revising by observing how your words influence actual readers. When you can no longer find fault with your manuscript, there’s nothing more invigorating than sharing it with trusted peers.

In business settings, people often co-author corporate reports and interoffice memos. Even the stereotypical author in the garret is responding line by line to how his or her words are likely to be received by the intended reader. Most writers routinely seek advice from colleagues and editors.

Writers Work Best at Their Desks

Reality: Thoughts about what you are going to write about do not only occur when you are sitting at your desk. If you are receptive to sudden insights, you will find that some of your best ideas originate when you are puttering about in the world, playing golf or driving in busy traffic. Studies of the creative processes of scientists and artists suggest that our most innovative breakthroughs occur in the slack moments between work and play, so keep a notepad or tape recorder handy to record promising thoughts.

Writers Are Most Critical When They Are Planning and Drafting

Reality: When they are just beginning a writing project, experienced writers ignore doubts about the quality of their ideas.

They often set aside questions of how best to organize their ideas or whether their rough drafts contain grammatical and mechanical errors. Experienced writers understand that evaluating the originality of all ideas based on a first or second draft is impossible.

Truly Skilled Writers Rarely Revise. Or, quality writing always develops spontaneously; revision is a form of punishment inflicted by nit-picking teachers

Reality: Professional writers do not perceive revision as merely a process of correcting errors; instead, they value revision as a method for developing and discovering their ideas.

Once Written, the Word is Final

Reality: Sure, when you submit your finished essays to your teachers, you should believe in what you have said.

Ideally, your essays represent your best thinking on your subject. However, you should feel free to change your mind when reviewing your work at a later date. In fact, your teachers want to help you recognize that thinking is an ongoing process. Rigid thinkers, like rigid writers, are characterized by bitterness and sarcasm rather than invigorated by the challenges of an ever-changing world.
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

It is Inappropriate to Use "I" in Writing

*Reality:* Use the first person when you are discussing personal experiences and when you want your readers to understand that the ideas in the text are your ideas or your opinions.

Because the "I" voice is so integrated with the insightful, energetic inner voice that helps us create, you might find it useful to write all your first drafts in the first person. Later on, if required by your communication situation, you can remove or rework the first person references.

The First Paragraph of Every Essay Should Define Your Thesis

*Reality:* Although it is true that many readers appreciate a writer’s work when he or she summarizes the purpose of the document, explains the significance of the topic, and foregrounds how the document is organized, this does not mean that you always need to follow this sort of deductive organization structure.

Rigid rules about structuring ideas need to be shattered when serious thinking is going on. No single structure or format can satisfy diverse audiences and purposes. When you are revising your work, you will want to respond to the conventions for structuring ideas that exist for your specific communication situation.

Instructors Care Primarily about Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling

*Reality:* More than anything else, your instructors care that you have thought deeply about a subject and written about it in such a way that they can understand your thinking.

Your instructors are much more concerned with the quality and depth of your ideas than with spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors. However, because stylistic errors can intrude on your reader’s understanding of your subject, be sure to correct any such errors.

*Editor’s Note:* Consider the following myths that Joseph Moxley identifies about writers. Some of these misconceptions are important cultural narratives that have been reinforced over time, such as the myth of the naturally-gifted writer. How have these misconceptions shaped your ideas about what good writers do?
Section 2: Critical Reading Practices

Introduction
by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

The more you read, the better you will write. Whether you like to read comics, novels, historical non-fiction, or the newspaper, the time you spend reading is invaluable exposure to new vocabulary and sentence structures. In order for that exposure to sink in, though, you need to pay attention to what you are reading and reflect on what you have read.

One step toward becoming a critical reader is to “read like a writer,” as Mike Bunn asks you to do in this chapter. Make sure to pay close attention to how Bunn describes his experiences learning to read like a writer and trace your own growth as a reader as you progress through ENG 1101 and 1201.

The second reading in this section addresses the genre of academic writing. How can you, as a student, decipher academic writing from other forms of writing? This essay points out that you need to pay close attention to the language in your assignments to pick up clues about your teachers’ expectations.

What’s Critical About Critical Thinking?
by Amy Guptill, Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence
adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Ph.D., Sinclair Community College

Critical thinking is one of those terms that has been used so often and in so many different ways that it often seems meaningless. It also makes one wonder, is there such a thing as uncritical thinking? If you aren’t thinking critically, then are you even thinking?

Despite the prevalent ambiguities, critical thinking actually does mean something. The Association of American Colleges and Universities usefully defines it as “a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.”

That definition aligns with the best description of critical thinking I ever heard; it came from my junior high art teacher, Joe Bolger. He once asked us, “What color is the ceiling?” In that withering tween tone, we reluctantly replied, “Whiiiiite.” He then asked, “What color is it really?” We deigned to aim our pre-adolescent eyes upwards, and eventually began to other more accurate answers: “Ivory?” “Yellow-ish tan.” “It’s grey in that corner.” After finally getting a few thoughtful responses, Mr. Bolger said something like, “Making good art is about drawing what you see, not what you think you’re supposed to see.”

The AAC&U definition, above, essentially amounts to the same thing: taking a good look and deciding what you really think rather than relying on the first idea or assumption that comes to mind.
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

The critical thinking rubric produced by the AAC&U describes the relevant activities of critical thinking in more detail. To think critically, one must ...

(a) “clearly state and comprehensively describe the issue or problem”,
(b) “independently interpret and evaluate sources”,
(c) “thoroughly analyze assumptions behind and context of your own or others’ ideas”,
(d) “argue a complex position and one that takes counter-arguments into account,” and
(e) “arrive at logical and well informed conclusions”.  

While you are probably used to providing some evidence for your claims, you can see that college-level expectations go quite a bit further. When professors assign an analytical paper, they don’t just want you to formulate a plausible-sounding argument. They want you to dig into the evidence, think hard about unspoken assumptions and the influence of context, and then explain what you really think and why.

Interestingly, the AAC&U defines critical thinking as a “habit of mind” rather than a discrete achievement. And there are at least two reasons to see critical thinking as a craft or art to pursue rather than a task to check off. First, the more you think critically, the better you get at it. As you get more and more practice in closely examining claims, their underlying logic, and alternative perspectives on the issue, it’ll begin to feel automatic. You’ll no longer make or accept claims that begin with “Everyone knows that ...” or end with “that’s just human nature.” Second, just as artists and craftspersons hone their skills over a lifetime, learners continually expand their critical thinking capacities, both through the feedback they get from others and their own reflections. Artists of all kinds find satisfaction in continually seeking greater challenges. Continual reflection and improvement is part of the craft.

As soon as I see the phrase “critical thinking,” the first thing I think is more work. It always sounds as if you’re going to have to think harder and longer. But I think the AAC&U’s definition is on point, critical thinking is a habit. Seeing that phrase shouldn’t be a scary thing because by this point in many people’s college career this is an automatic response. I never expect an answer to a question to be in the text; by now I realize that my professors want to know what I have to say about something or what I have learned. In a paper or essay, the three-step thesis process is a tool that will help you get this information across. While you’re doing the hard work (the thinking part), this formula offers you a way to clearly state your position on a subject. It’s as simple as: make a general statement, make an arguable statement, and finally, say why it is important. This is my rule of thumb, and I would not want to start a thesis-driven paper any other way!

-- Aly Button

Critical thinking is hard work. Even those who actively choose to do it experience it as tedious, difficult, and sometimes surprisingly emotional. Facing a new realm of uncertainty and contradiction without relying on familiar assumptions is inherently anxiety-provoking because when you’re doing it, you are, by definition, incompetent. Recent research has highlighted that both children and adults need to be able to regulate their own emotions in order to cope with the challenges of building competence in a new area.

The kind of critical thinking your professors are looking for—that is, pursuing a comprehensive, multifaceted exploration in order to arrive at an arguable, nuanced argument—is inevitably a struggle and it may be an emotional one. Your best bet is to find ways to make those processes as efficient, pleasant, and effective as you can.
Embrace it. And just as athletes, artists, and writers sustain their energy and inspiration for hard work by interacting with others who share these passions, look to others in the scholarly community—your professors and fellow students—to keep yourself engaged in these ongoing intellectual challenges. While writing time is often solitary, it’s meant to plug you into a vibrant academic community. What your professors want, overall, is for you to join them in asking and pursuing important questions about the natural, social, and creative worlds.
In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber.* The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London’s famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical Les Miserables. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

My job (in addition to wearing a red tuxedo jacket) was to sit inside the dark theater with the patrons and make sure nothing went wrong. It didn’t seem to matter to my supervisor that I had no training in security and no idea where we kept the fire extinguishers. I was pretty sure that if there was any trouble I’d be running down the back stairs, leaving the patrons to fend for themselves. I had no intention of dying in a bright red tuxedo.

There was a Red Coat stationed on each of the theater’s four floors, and we all passed the time by sitting quietly in the back, reading books with tiny flashlights. It’s not easy trying to read in the dim light of a theatre—flashlight or no flashlight—and it’s even tougher with shrieks and shouts and gunshots coming from the stage. I had to focus intently on each and every word, often rereading a single sentence several times. Sometimes I got distracted and had to re-read entire paragraphs.

As I struggled to read in this environment, I began to realize that the way I was reading—one word at a time—was exactly the same way that the author had written the text. I realized writing is a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence process. The intense concentration required to read in the theater helped me recognize some of the interesting ways that authors string words into phrases into paragraphs into entire books.

I came to realize that all writing consists of a series of choices.

I was an English major in college, but I don’t think I ever thought much about reading. I read all the time. I read for my classes and on the computer and sometimes for fun, but I never really thought about the important connections between reading and writing, and how reading in a particular way could also make me a better writer.

**What Does It Mean to Read Like a Writer?**

When you Read Like a Writer (RLW) you work to identify some of the choices the author made so that you can better understand how such choices might arise in your own writing. The idea is to carefully examine the things you read, looking at the writerly techniques in the text in order to decide if you might want to adopt similar (or the same) techniques in your writing.

You are reading to learn about writing.
Instead of reading for content or to better understand the ideas in the writing (which you will automatically do to some degree anyway), you are trying to understand how the piece of writing was put together by the author and what you can learn about writing by reading a particular text. As you read in this way, you think about how the choices the author made and the techniques that he/she used are influencing your own responses as a reader. What is it about the way this text is written that makes you feel and respond the way you do?

The goal as you read like a writer is to locate what you believe are the most important writerly choices represented in the text—choices as large as the overall structure or as small as a single word used only once—to consider the effect of those choices on potential readers (including yourself). Then you can go one step further and imagine what different choices the author might have made instead, and what effect those different choices would have on readers.

Say you’re reading an essay in class that begins with a short quote from President Barack Obama about the war in Iraq. As a writer, what do you think of this technique? Do you think it is effective to begin the essay with a quote? What if the essay began with a quote from someone else? What if it was a much longer quote from President Obama, or a quote from the President about something other than the war?

And here is where we get to the most important part: Would you want to try this technique in your own writing?

Would you want to start your own essay with a quote? Do you think it would be effective to begin your essay with a quote from President Obama? What about a quote from someone else?

You could make yourself a list. What are the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote? What about the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from the President? How would other readers respond to this technique? Would certain readers (say Democrats or liberals) appreciate an essay that started with a quote from President Obama better than other readers (say Republicans or conservatives)? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from a less divisive person? What about starting with a quote from someone more divisive?

The goal is to carefully consider the choices the author made and the techniques that he or she used, and then decide whether you want to make those same choices or use those same techniques in your own writing. Author and professor Wendy Bishop explains how her reading process changed when she began to read like a writer:

It wasn’t until I claimed the sentence as my area of desire, interest, and expertise—until I wanted to be a writer writing better—that I had to look underneath my initial readings . . . I started asking, how—how did the writer get me to feel, how did the writer say something so that it remains in my memory when many other things too easily fall out, how did the writer communicate his/her intentions about genre, about irony? (119–20)

Bishop moved from simply reporting her personal reactions to the things she read to attempting to uncover how the author led her (and other readers) to have those reactions. This effort to uncover how authors build texts is what makes Reading Like a Writer so useful for student writers.

How Is RLW Different from “Normal” Reading?

Most of the time we read for information. We read a recipe to learn how to bake lasagna. We read the sports page to see if our school won the game, Facebook to see who has commented on our status update, a history book to learn about the Vietnam War, and the syllabus to see when the next writing assignment is due. Reading Like a Writer asks for something very different.
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

In 1940, a famous poet and critic named Allen Tate discussed two different ways of reading:

There are many ways to read, but generally speaking there are two ways. They correspond to the two ways in which we may be interested in a piece of architecture. If the building has Corinthian columns, we can trace the origin and development of Corinthian columns; we are interested as historians. But if we are interested as architects, we may or may not know about the history of the Corinthian style; we must, however, know all about the construction of the building, down to the last nail or peg in the beams. We have got to know this if we are going to put up buildings ourselves. (506)

While I don’t know anything about Corinthian columns (and doubt that I will ever want to know anything about Corinthian columns), Allen Tate’s metaphor of reading as if you were an architect is a great way to think about RLW. When you read like a writer, you are trying to figure out how the text you are reading was constructed so that you learn how to “build” one for yourself. Author David Jauss makes a similar comparison when he writes that “reading won’t help you much unless you learn to read like a writer. You must look at a book the way a carpenter looks at a house someone else built, examining the details in order to see how it was made” (64).

Perhaps I should change the name and call this Reading Like an Architect, or Reading Like a Carpenter. In a way those names make perfect sense. You are reading to see how something was constructed so that you can construct something similar yourself.

Why Learn to Read Like a Writer?

For most college students RLW is a new way to read, and it can be difficult to learn at first. Making things even more difficult is that your college writing instructor may expect you to read this way for class but never actually teach you how to do it. He or she may not even tell you that you’re supposed to read this way. This is because most writing instructors are so focused on teaching writing that they forget to show students how they want them to read.

That’s what this essay is for.

In addition to the fact that your college writing instructor may expect you to read like a writer, this kind of reading is also one of the very best ways to learn how to write well. Reading like a writer can help you understand how the process of writing is a series of making choices, and in doing so, can help you recognize important decisions you might face and techniques you might want to use when working on your own writing. Reading this way becomes an opportunity to think and learn about writing.

Charles Moran, a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, urges us to read like writers because:

When we read like writers we understand and participate in the writing. We see the choices the writer has made, and we see how the writer has coped with the consequences of those choices. . . We “see” what the writer is doing because we read as writers; we see because we have written ourselves and know the territory, know the feel of it, know some of the moves ourselves. (61)

You are already an author, and that means you have a built-in advantage when reading like a writer. All of your previous writing experiences—inside the classroom and out—can contribute to your success with RLW. Because you “have written” things yourself, just as Moran suggests, you are better able to “see” the choices that the author is making in the texts that you read. This in turn helps you to think about whether you want to make some of those same choices in your own writing, and what the consequences might be for your readers if you do.
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

What Are Some Questions to Ask Before You Start Reading?

As I sat down to work on this essay, I contacted a few of my former students to ask what advice they would give to college students regarding how to read effectively in the writing classroom and also to get their thoughts on RLW. Throughout the rest of the essay I’d like to share some of their insights and suggestions; after all, who is better qualified to help you learn what you need to know about reading in college writing courses than students who recently took those courses themselves?

One of the things that several students mentioned to do first, before you even start reading, is to consider the context surrounding both the assignment and the text you’re reading. As one former student, Alison, states: “The reading I did in college asked me to go above and beyond, not only in breadth of subject matter, but in depth, with regards to informed analysis and background information on context.” Alison was asked to think about some of the factors that went into the creation of the text, as well as some of the factors influencing her own experience of reading—taken together these constitute the context of reading. Another former student, Jamie, suggests that students “learn about the historical context of the writings” they will read for class. Writing professor Richard Straub puts it this way: “You’re not going to just read a text. You’re going to read a text within a certain context, a set of circumstances . . . It’s one kind of writing or another, designed for one audience and purpose or another” (138).

Among the contextual factors you’ll want to consider before you even start reading are:

1. Do you know the author’s purpose for this piece of writing?
2. Do you know who the intended audience is for this piece of writing?

It may be that you need to start reading before you can answer these first two questions, but it’s worth trying to answer them before you start. For example, if you know at the outset that the author is trying to reach a very specific group of readers, then his or her writerly techniques may seem more or less effective than if he/she was trying to reach a more general audience. Similarly—returning to our earlier example of beginning an essay with a quote from President Obama about the war in Iraq—if you know that the author’s purpose is to address some of the dangers and drawbacks of warfare, this may be a very effective opening. If the purpose is to encourage Americans to wear sunscreen while at the beach, this opening makes no sense at all. One former student, Lola, explained that most of her reading assignments in college writing classes were designed “to provoke analysis and criticisms into the style, structure, and purpose of the writing itself.”

In What Genre Is This Written?

Another important thing to consider before reading is the genre of the text. Genre means a few different things in college English classes, but it’s most often used to indicate the type of writing: a poem, a newspaper article, an essay, a short story, a novel, a legal brief, an instruction manual, etc. Because the conventions for each genre can be very different (who ever heard of a 900-page newspaper article?), techniques that are effective for one genre may not work well in another. Many readers expect poems and pop songs to rhyme, for example, but might react negatively to a legal brief or instruction manual that did so.

Another former student, Mike, comments on how important the genre of the text can be for reading:

I think a lot of the way I read, of course, depends on the type of text I’m reading. If I’m reading philosophy, I always look for signaling words (however, therefore, furthermore, despite) indicating the direction of the argument . . . when I read fiction or creative nonfiction, I look for how the author inserts dialogue or character sketches within narration or environ- mental observation. After reading To the Lighthouse [sic] last semester, I have noticed how much more
attentive I’ve become to the types of narration (omniscient, impersonal, psychological, realistic, etc.), and how these different approaches are utilized to achieve an author’s overall effect.

Although Mike specifically mentions what he looked for while reading a published novel, one of the great things about RLW is that it can be used equally well with either published or student-produced writing.

**Is This a Published or a Student-Produced Piece of Writing?**

As you read both kinds of texts you can locate the choices the author made and imagine the different decisions that he/she might have made. While it might seem a little weird at first to imagine how published texts could be written differently—after all, they were good enough to be published—remember that all writing can be improved. Scholar Nancy Walker believes that it’s important for students to read published work using RLW because “the work ceases to be a mere artifact, a stone tablet, and becomes instead a living utterance with immediacy and texture. It could have been better or worse than it is had the author made different choices” (36). As Walker suggests, it’s worth thinking about how the published text would be different—maybe even better—if the author had made different choices in the writing because you may be faced with similar choices in your own work.

**Is This the Kind of Writing You Will Be Assigned to Write Yourself?**

Knowing ahead of time what kind of writing assignments you will be asked to complete can really help you to read like a writer. It’s probably impossible (and definitely too time consuming) to identify all of the choices the author made and all techniques an author used, so it’s important to prioritize while reading. Knowing what you’ll be writing yourself can help you prioritize. It may be the case that your instructor has assigned the text you’re reading to serve as model for the kind of writing you’ll be doing later. Jessie, a former student, writes, “In college writing classes, we knew we were reading for a purpose—to influence or inspire our own work. The reading that I have done in college writing courses has always been really specific to a certain type of writing, and it allows me to focus and experiment on that specific style in depth and without distraction.”

If the text you’re reading is a model of a particular style of writing—for example, highly-emotional or humorous—RLW is particularly helpful because you can look at a piece you’re reading and think about whether you want to adopt a similar style in your own writing. You might realize that the author is trying to arouse sympathy in readers and examine what techniques he/she uses to do this; then you can decide whether these techniques might work well in your own writing. You might notice that the author keeps including jokes or funny stories and think about whether you want to include them in your writing—what would the impact be on your potential readers?

**What Are Questions to Ask As You Are Reading?**

It is helpful to continue to ask yourself questions as you read like a writer. As you’re first learning to read in this new way, you may want to have a set of questions written or typed out in front of you that you can refer to while reading. Eventually—after plenty of practice—you will start to ask certain questions and locate certain things in the text almost automatically. Remember, for most students this is a new way of reading, and you’ll have to train yourself to do it well. Also keep in mind that you’re reading to understand how the text was written—how the house was built—more than you’re trying to determine the meaning of the things you read or assess whether the texts are good or bad.

First, return to two of the same questions I suggested that you consider before reading:

1. What is the author’s purpose for this piece of writing?
2. Who is the intended audience?
Think about these two questions again as you read. It may be that you couldn’t really answer them before, or that your ideas will change while reading. Knowing why the piece was written and who it’s for can help explain why the author might have made certain choices or used particular techniques in the writing, and you can assess those choices and techniques based on how effective they are in fulfilling that purpose and/or reaching the intended audience. Beyond these initial two questions, there is an almost endless list of questions you might ask regarding writing choices and techniques.

Here are some of the questions that one former student, Clare, asks herself: When reading I tend to be asking myself a million questions. If I were writing this, where would I go with the story? If the author goes in a different direction (as they so often do) from what I am thinking, I will ask myself, why did they do this? What are they telling me? Clare tries to figure out why the author might have made a move in the writing that she hadn’t anticipated, but even more importantly, she asks herself what she would do if she were the author. Reading the text becomes an opportunity for Clare to think about her own role as an author.

Here are some additional examples of the kinds of questions you might ask yourself as you read:

- How effective is the language the author uses? Is it too formal? Too informal? Perfectly appropriate? Depending on the subject matter and the intended audience, it may make sense to be more or less formal in terms of language. As you begin reading, you can ask yourself whether the word choice and tone/language of the writing seem appropriate.

- What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her claims? Does he/she use statistics? Quotes from famous people? Personal anecdotes or personal stories? Does he/she cite books or articles?

- How appropriate or effective is this evidence? Would a different type of evidence, or some combination of evidence, be more effective? To some extent the kinds of questions you ask should be determined by the genre of writing you are reading. For example, it’s probably worth examining the evidence that the author uses to support his/her claims if you’re reading an opinion column, but less important if you’re reading a short story. An opinion column is often intended to convince readers of something, so the kinds of evidence used are often very important. A short story may be intended to convince readers of something, sometimes, but probably not in the same way. A short story rarely includes claims or evidence in the way that we usually think about them.

- Are there places in the writing that you find confusing? What about the writing in those places makes it unclear or confusing?

It’s pretty normal to get confused in places while reading, especially while reading for class, so it can be helpful to look closely at the writing to try and get a sense of exactly what tripped you up. This way you can learn to avoid those same problems in your own writing.

- How does the author move from one idea to another in the writing? Are the transitions between the ideas effective? How else might he/she have transitioned between ideas instead?

Notice that in these questions I am encouraging you to question whether aspects of the writing are appropriate and effective in addition to deciding whether you liked or disliked them. You want to imagine how other readers might respond to the writing and the techniques you’ve identified. Deciding whether you liked or disliked something is only about you; considering whether a technique is appropriate or effective lets you contemplate what the author might have been trying to do and to decide whether a majority of readers would find the move successful. This is important because it’s the same thing you should be thinking about while you are writing: how will readers respond to this
technique I am using, to this sentence, to this word? As you read, ask yourself what the author is doing at each step of the way, and then consider whether the same choice or technique might work in your own writing.

What Should You Be Writing As You Are Reading?
The most common suggestion made by former students—mentioned by every single one of them—was to mark up the text, make comments in the margins, and write yourself notes and summaries both during and after reading. Often the notes students took while reading became ideas or material for the students to use in their own papers. It’s important to read with a pen or highlighter in your hand so that you can mark—right on the text—all those spots where you identify an interesting choice the author has made or a writerly technique you might want to use. One thing that I like to do is to highlight and underline the passage in the text itself, and then try to answer the following three questions on my notepad:

1. What is the technique the author is using here?
2. Is this technique effective?
3. What would be the advantages and disadvantages if I tried this same technique in my writing?

By utilizing this same process of highlighting and note taking, you’ll end up with a useful list of specific techniques to have at your disposal when it comes time to begin your own writing.

What Does RLW Look Like in Action?
Let’s go back to the opening paragraph of this essay and spend some time reading like writers as a way to get more comfortable with the process:

In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London’s famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical Les Miserables. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

Let’s begin with those questions I encouraged you to try to answer before you start reading. (I realize we’re cheating a little bit in this case since you’ve already read most of this essay, but this is just practice. When doing this on your own, you should attempt to answer these questions before reading, and then return to them as you read to further develop your answers.)

- Do you know the author’s purpose for this piece of writing? I hope the purpose is clear by now; if it isn’t, I’m doing a pretty lousy job of explaining how and why you might read like a writer.
- Do you know who the intended audience is? Again, I hope that you know this one by now.
- What about the genre? Is this an essay? An article? What would you call it?
- You know that it’s published and not student writing. How does this influence your expectations for what you will read?
- Are you going to be asked to write something like this yourself? Probably not in your college writing class, but you can still use RLW to learn about writerly techniques that you might want to use in whatever you do end up writing.

Now ask yourself questions as you read.
In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London’s famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical Les Miserables. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

Since this paragraph is the very first one, it makes sense to think about how it introduces readers to the essay. What technique(s) does the author use to begin the text? This is a personal story about his time working in London. What else do you notice as you read over this passage? Is the passage vague or specific about where he worked? You know that the author worked in a famous part of London in a beautiful theater owned by a well-known composer. Are these details important? How different would this opening be if instead I had written:

In 1997, I was living in London and working at a theatre that showed Les Miserables.

This is certainly shorter, and some of you may prefer this version. It’s quick. To the point. But what (if anything) is lost by eliminating so much of the detail? I chose to include each of the details that the revised sentence omits, so it’s worth considering why. Why did I mention where the theater was located? Why did I explain that I was living in London right after finishing college? Does it matter that it was after college? What effect might I have hoped the inclusion of these details would have on readers? Is this reference to college an attempt to connect with my audience of college students? Am I trying to establish my credibility as an author by announcing that I went to college? Why might I want the readers to know that this was a theater owned by Andrew Lloyd Weber? Do you think I am just trying to mention a famous name that readers will recognize? Will Andrew Lloyd Weber figure prominently in the rest of the essay?

These are all reasonable questions to ask. They are not necessarily the right questions to ask because there are no right questions. They certainly aren’t the only questions you could ask, either. The goal is to train yourself to formulate questions as you read based on whatever you notice in the text. Your own reactions to what you’re reading will help determine the kinds of questions to ask.

Now take a broader perspective. I begin this essay—an essay about reading—by talking about my job in a theater in London. Why? Doesn’t this seem like an odd way to begin an essay about reading? If you read on a little further (feel free to scan back up at the top of this essay) you learn in the third full paragraph what the connection is between working in the theater and reading like a writer, but why include this information at all? What does this story add to the essay? Is it worth the space it takes up?

Think about what effect presenting this personal information might have on readers. Does it make it feel like a real person, some “ordinary guy,” is talking to you? Does it draw you into the essay and make you want to keep reading?

What about the language I use? Is it formal or more informal? This is a time when you can really narrow your focus and look at particular words:

Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

What is the effect of using the word “antiquated” to describe the fire-safety laws? It certainly projects a negative impression; if the laws are described as antiquated it means I view them as old-fashioned or obsolete. This is a fairly uncommon word, so it stands out, drawing attention to my choice in using it. The word also sounds quite formal. Am I formal in the rest of this sentence?
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I use the word “performance” when I just as easily could have written “show.” For that matter, I could have written “old” instead of “antiquated.” You can proceed like this throughout the sentence, thinking about alternative choices I could have made and what the effect would be. Instead of “staff members” I could have written “employees” or just “workers.” Notice the difference if the sentence had been written:

Because of old fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of workers inside watching the show in case of an emergency.

Which version is more likely to appeal to readers? You can try to answer this question by thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of using formal language. When would you want to use formal language in your writing and when would it make more sense to be more conversational?

As you can see from discussing just this one paragraph, you could ask questions about the text forever. Luckily, you don’t have to. As you continue reading like a writer, you’ll learn to notice techniques that seem new and pay less attention to the ones you’ve thought about before. The more you practice the quicker the process becomes until you’re reading like a writer almost automatically.

I want to end this essay by sharing one more set of comments by my former student, Lola, this time about what it means to her to read like a writer:

Reading as a writer would compel me to question what might have brought the author to make these decisions, and then decide what worked and what didn’t. What could have made that chapter better or easier to understand? How can I make sure I include some of the good attributes of this writing style into my own? How can I take aspects that I feel the writer failed at and make sure not to make the same mistakes in my writing?

Questioning why the author made certain decisions. Considering what techniques could have made the text better. Deciding how to include the best attributes of what you read in your own writing. This is what Reading Like a Writer is all about.

Are you ready to start reading?

Discussion

1. How is “Reading Like a Writer” similar to and/or different from the way(s) you read for other classes?
2. What kinds of choices do you make as a writer that readers might identify in your written work?
3. Is there anything you notice in this essay that you might like to try in your own writing? What is that technique or strategy? When do you plan to try using it?
4. What are some of the different ways that you can learn about the context of a text before you begin reading it?

Works Cited

Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

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Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

What Is “Academic” Writing?
by L. Lennie Irvin, Writing Spaces

Introduction: The Academic Writing Task
As a new college student, you may have a lot of anxiety and questions about the writing you’ll do in college.* That word “academic,” especially, may turn your stomach or turn your nose. However, with this first year composition class, you begin one of the only classes in your entire college career where you will focus on learning to write. Given the importance of writing as a communication skill, I urge you to consider this class as a gift and make the most of it. But writing is hard, and writing in college may resemble playing a familiar game by completely new rules (that often are unstated). This chapter is designed to introduce you to what academic writing is like, and hopefully ease your transition as you face these daunting writing challenges.

So here’s the secret. Your success with academic writing depends upon how well you understand what you are doing as you write and then how you approach the writing task. Early research done on college writers discovered that whether students produced a successful piece of writing depended largely upon their representation of the writing task. The writers’ mental model for picturing their task made a huge difference. Most people as they start college have wildly strange ideas about what they are doing when they write an essay, or worse—they have no clear idea at all. I freely admit my own past as a clueless freshman writer, and it’s out of this sympathy as well as twenty years of teaching college writing that I hope to provide you with something useful. So grab a cup of coffee or a diet coke, find a comfortable chair with good light, and let’s explore together this activity of academic writing you’ll be asked to do in college. We will start by clearing up some of those wild misconceptions people often arrive at college possessing. Then we will dig more deeply into the components of the academic writing situation and nature of the writing task.

Myths about Writing
Though I don’t imagine an episode of MythBusters will be based on the misconceptions about writing we are about to look at, you’d still be surprised at some of the things people will believe about writing. You may find lurking within you viral elements of these myths—all of these lead to problems in writing.

Myth #1: The “Paint by Numbers” myth
Some writers believe they must perform certain steps in a particular order to write “correctly.” Rather than being a lock-step linear process, writing is “recursive.” That means we cycle through and repeat the various activities of the writing process many times as we write.
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

Myth #2: Writers only start writing when they have everything figured out
Writing is not like sending a fax! Writers figure out much of what they want to write as they write it. Rather than waiting, get some writing on the page—even with gaps or problems. You can come back to patch up rough spots.

Myth #3: Perfect first drafts
We put unrealistic expectations on early drafts, either by focusing too much on the impossible task of making them perfect (which can put a cap on the development of our ideas), or by making too little effort because we don’t care or know about their inevitable problems. Nobody writes perfect first drafts; polished writing takes lots of revision.

Myth #4: Some got it; I don't—the genius fallacy
When you see your writing ability as something fixed or out of your control (as if it were in your genetic code), then you won’t believe you can improve as a writer and are likely not to make any efforts in that direction. With effort and study, though, you can improve as a writer. I promise.

Myth #5: Good grammar is good writing
When people say “I can’t write,” what they often mean is they have problems with grammatical correctness. Writing, however, is about more than just grammatical correctness. Good writing is a matter of achieving your desired effect upon an intended audience. Plus, as we saw in myth #3, no one writes perfect first drafts.

Myth #6: The Five Paragraph Essay
Some people say to avoid it at all costs, while others believe no other way to write exists. With an introduction, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion, the five paragraph essay is a format you should know, but one which you will outgrow. You’ll have to gauge the particular writing assignment to see whether and how this format is useful for you.

Myth #7: Never use “I”
Adopting this formal stance of objectivity implies a distrust (almost fear) of informality and often leads to artificial, puffed-up prose. Although some writing situations will call on you to avoid using “I” (for example, a lab report), much college writing can be done in a middle, semi-formal style where it is ok to use “I.”

The Academic Writing Situation
Now that we’ve dispelled some of the common myths that many writers have as they enter a college classroom, let’s take a moment to think about the academic writing situation. The biggest problem I see in freshman writers is a poor sense of the writing situation in general. To illustrate this problem, let’s look at the difference between speaking and writing.

When we speak, we inhabit the communication situation bodily in three dimensions, but in writing we are confined within the two-dimensional setting of the flat page (though writing for the web—or multimodal writing—is changing all that). Writing resembles having a blindfold over our eyes and our hands tied behind our backs: we can’t see exactly whom we’re talking to or where we are. Separated from our audience in place and time, we imaginatively have to create this context. Our words on the
page are silent, so we must use punctuation and word choice to communicate our tone. We also can’t see our audience to gauge how our communication is being received or if there will be some kind of response. It’s the same space we share right now as you read this essay. Novice writers often write as if they were mumbling to themselves in the corner with no sense that their writing will be read by a reader or any sense of the context within which their communication will be received.

What’s the moral here? Developing your “writer’s sense” about communicating within the writing situation is the most important thing you should learn in freshman composition.

Figure 1, depicting the writing situation, presents the best image I know of describing all the complexities involved in the writing situation.

Looking More Closely at the “Academic Writing” Situation

Writing in college is a fairly specialized writing situation, and it has developed its own codes and conventions that you need to have a keen awareness of if you are going to write successfully in college. Let’s break down the writing situation in college:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who’s your audience?</th>
<th>Primarily the professor and possibly your classmates (though you may be asked to include a secondary outside audience).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s the occasion or context?</td>
<td>An assignment given by the teacher within a learning context and designed to have you learn and demonstrate your learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s your message?</td>
<td>It will be your learning or the interpretation gained from your study of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s your purpose?</th>
<th>To show your learning and get a good grade (or to accomplish the goals of the writing assignment).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What documents/genres are used?</td>
<td>The essay is the most frequent type of document used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So far, this list looks like nothing new. You’ve been writing in school toward teachers for years. What’s different in college? Lee Ann Carroll, a professor at Pepperdine University, performed a study of student writing in college and had this description of the kind of writing you will be doing in college:

What are usually called ‘writing assignments’ in college might more accurately be called ‘literacy tasks’ because they require much more than the ability to construct correct sentences or compose neatly organized paragraphs with topic sentences. . . . Projects calling for high levels of critical literacy in college typically require knowledge of research skills, ability to read complex texts, understanding of key disciplinary concepts, and strategies for synthesizing, analyzing, and responding critically to new information, usually within a limited time frame. (3–4)

Academic writing is always a form of evaluation that asks you to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting. Writing the paper is never “just” the writing part. To be successful in this kind of writing, you must be completely aware of what the professor expects you to do and accomplish with that particular writing task. For a moment, let’s explore more deeply the elements of this college writing “literacy task.”

Knowledge of Research Skills
Perhaps up to now research has meant going straight to Google and Wikipedia, but college will require you to search for and find more in-depth information. You’ll need to know how to find information in the library, especially what is available from online databases which contain scholarly articles. Researching is also a process, so you’ll need to learn how to focus and direct a research project and how to keep track of all your source information. Realize that researching represents a crucial component of most all college writing assignments, and you will need to devote lots of work to this researching.

The Ability to Read Complex Texts
Whereas your previous writing in school might have come generally from your experience, college writing typically asks you to write on unfamiliar topics. Whether you’re reading your textbook, a short story, or scholarly articles from research, your ability to write well will be based upon the quality of your reading. In addition to the labor of close reading, you’ll need to think critically as you read. That means separating fact from opinion, recognizing biases and assumptions, and making inferences. Inferences are how we as readers connect the dots: an inference is a belief (or statement) about something unknown made on the basis of something known. You smell smoke; you infer fire. They are conclusions or interpretations that we arrive at based upon the known factors we discover from our reading. When we, then, write to argue for these interpretations, our job becomes to get our readers to make the same inferences we have made.

The Understanding of Key Disciplinary Concepts
Each discipline whether it is English, Psychology, or History has its own key concepts and language for describing these important ways of understanding the world. Don’t fool yourself that your professors’ writing assignments are asking for your opinion on the topic from just your experience. They want to see you apply and use these concepts in your writing. Though different from a multiple-choice exam, writing similarly requires you to demonstrate your learning. So whatever writing assignment you receive, inspect it closely for what concepts it asks you to bring into your writing.
Strategies for Synthesizing, Analyzing, and Responding Critically to New Information
You need to develop the skill of a seasoned traveler who can be dropped in any city around the world and get by. Each writing assignment asks you to navigate through a new terrain of information, so you must develop ways for grasping new subject matter in order, then, to use it in your writing. We have already seen the importance of reading and research for these literacy tasks, but beyond laying the information out before you, you will need to learn ways of sorting and finding meaningful patterns in this information.

In College, Everything’s an Argument: A Guide for Decoding College Writing Assignments
Let’s restate this complex “literacy task” you’ll be asked repeatedly to do in your writing assignments. Typically, you’ll be required to write an “essay” based upon your analysis of some reading(s). In this essay you’ll need to present an argument where you make a claim (i.e. present a “thesis”) and support that claim with good reasons that have adequate and appropriate evidence to back them up. The dynamic of this argumentative task often confuses first year writers, so let’s examine it more closely.

Academic Writing Is an Argument
To start, let’s focus on argument. What does it mean to present an “argument” in college writing? Rather than a shouting match between two disagreeing sides, argument instead means a carefully arranged and supported presentation of a viewpoint. Its purpose is not so much to win the argument as to earn your audience’s consideration (and even approval) of your perspective. It resembles a conversation between two people who may not hold the same opinions, but they both desire a better understanding of the subject matter under discussion. My favorite analogy, however, to describe the nature of this argumentative stance in college writing is the courtroom. In this scenario, you are like a lawyer making a case at trial that the defendant is not guilty, and your readers are like the jury who will decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty. This jury (your readers) won’t just take your word that he’s innocent; instead, you must convince them by presenting evidence that proves he is not guilty. Stating your opinion is not enough—you have to back it up too. I like this courtroom analogy for capturing two importance things about academic argument: 1) the value of an organized presentation of your “case,” and 2) the crucial element of strong evidence.

Academic Writing Is Analysis
We now turn our attention to the actual writing assignment and that confusing word “analyze.” Your first job when you get a writing assignment is to figure out what the professor expects. This assignment may be explicit in its expectations, but often built into the wording of the most defined writing assignments are implicit expectations that you might not recognize. First, we can say that unless your professor specifically asks you to summarize, you won’t write a summary. Let me say that again: don’t write a summary unless directly asked to. But what, then, does the professor want? We have already picked out a few of these expectations: You can count on the instructor expecting you to read closely, research adequately, and write an argument where you will demonstrate your ability to apply and use important concepts you have been studying. But the writing task also implies that your essay will be the result of an analysis. At times, the writing assignment may even explicitly say to write an analysis, but often this element of the task remains unstated.

So what does it mean to analyze? One way to think of an analysis is that it asks you to seek How and Why questions much more than What questions. An analysis involves doing three things:

1. Engage in an open inquiry where the answer is not known at first (and where you leave yourself open to multiple suggestions)
2. Identify meaningful parts of the subject
3. Examine these separate parts and determine how they relate to each other

An analysis breaks a subject apart to study it closely, and from this inspection, ideas for writing emerge. When writing assignments call on you to analyze, they require you to identify the parts of the subject (parts of an ad, parts of a short story, parts of Hamlet’s character), and then show how these parts fit or don’t fit together to create some larger effect or meaning. Your interpretation of how these parts fit together constitutes your claim or thesis, and the task of your essay is then to present an argument defending your interpretation as a valid or plausible one to make. My biggest bit of advice about analysis is not to do it all in your head. Analysis works best when you put all the cards on the table, so to speak. Identify and isolate the parts of your analysis, and record important features and characteristics of each one. As patterns emerge, you sort and connect these parts in meaningful ways. For me, I have always had to do this recording and thinking on scratch pieces of paper. Just as critical reading forms a crucial element of the literacy task of a college writing assignment, so too does this analysis process. It’s built in.

Three Characteristics of Academic Writing

I want to wrap up this section by sharing in broad terms what the expectations are behind an academic writing assignment. Chris Thaiss and Terry Zawacki conducted research at George Mason University where they asked professors from their university what they thought academic writing was and its standards. They came up with three characteristics:

1. Clear evidence in writing that the writer(s) have been persistent, open-minded, and disciplined in study. (5)
2. The dominance of reason over emotions or sensual perception. (5)
3. An imagined reader who is coolly rational, reading for information, and intending to formulate a reasoned response. (7)

Your professor wants to see these three things in your writing when they give you a writing assignment. They want to see in your writing the results of your efforts at the various literacy tasks we have been discussing: critical reading, research, and analysis. Beyond merely stating opinions, they also want to see an argument toward an intelligent audience where you provide good reasons to support your interpretations.

The Format of the Academic Essay

Your instructors will also expect you to deliver a paper that contains particular textual features. The following list contains the characteristics of what I have for years called the “critical essay.” Although I can’t claim they will be useful for all essays in college, I hope that these features will help you shape and accomplish successful college essays. Be aware that these characteristics are flexible and not a formula, and any particular assignment might ask for something different.

Characteristics of the Critical Essay

“Critical” here is not used in the sense of “to criticize” as in find fault with. Instead, “critical” is used in the same way “critical thinking” is used. A synonym might be “interpretive” or “analytical.”

It is an argument, persuasion essay that in its broadest sense MAKES A POINT and SUPPORTS IT. (We have already discussed this argumentative nature of academic writing at length.)

The point (“claim” or “thesis”) of a critical essay is interpretive in nature. That means the point is debatable and open to interpretation, not a statement of the obvious. The thesis statement is a clear, declarative sentence that often works best when it comes at the end of the introduction.
Chapter Two: Writing Processes and Critical Reading Practices

Organization: Like any essay, the critical essay should have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. As you support your point in the body of the essay, you should “divide up the proof,” which means structuring the body around clear primary supports (developed in single paragraphs for short papers or multiple paragraphs for longer papers).

Support: (a) The primary source for support in the critical essay is from the text (or sources). The text is the authority, so using quotations is required. (b) The continuous movement of logic in a critical essay is “assert then support; assert then support.” No assertion (general statement that needs proving) should be left without specific support (often from the text(s)). (c) You need enough support to be convincing. In general, that means for each assertion you need at least three supports. This threshold can vary, but invariably one support is not enough.

A critical essay will always “document” its sources, distinguishing the use of outside information used inside your text and clarifying where that information came from (following the rules of MLA documentation style or whatever documentation style is required).

Whenever the author moves from one main point (primary support) to the next, the author needs to clearly signal to the reader that this movement is happening. This transition sentence works best when it links back to the thesis as it states the topic of that paragraph or section.

A critical essay is put into an academic essay format such as the MLA or APA document format.

Grammatical correctness: Your essay should have few if any grammatical problems. You’ll want to edit your final draft carefully before turning it in.

Conclusion
As we leave this discussion, I want to return to what I said was the secret for your success in writing college essays: Your success with academic writing depends upon how well you understand what you are doing as you write and then how you approach the writing task. Hopefully, you now have a better idea about the nature of the academic writing task and the expectations behind it. Knowing what you need to do won’t guarantee you an “A” on your paper—that will take a lot of thinking, hard work, and practice—but having the right orientation toward your college writing assignments is a first and important step in your eventual success.

Discussion
1. How did what you wrote in high school compare to what you have/will do in your academic writing in college?
2. Think of two different writing situations you have found yourself in. What did you need to do the same in those two situations to place your writing appropriately? What did you need to do differently?
3. Think of a writing assignment that you will need to complete this semester. Who’s your audience? What’s the occasion or context? What’s your message? What’s your purpose? What documents/genres are used? How does all that compare to the writing you are doing in this class?

Works Cited
Chapter Three: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism

Chapter 3: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism

Chapter Contributors: Kate Geiselman and Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

Summarizing, Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism
by Steven Krause, *The Process of Research Writing*

adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

- How to Summarize: An Overview
- How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview
- When to Quote, When to Paraphrase
- Four Examples of Quotes and Paraphrases
- How to Avoid Plagiarism in the Research Process
- Plagiarism and the Internet

Learning how to effectively quote and paraphrase research can be difficult and it certainly takes practice. The goal of this chapter is to introduce some basic strategies for summarizing, quoting, and paraphrasing research in your writing and to explain how to avoid plagiarizing your research.

**How to Summarize: An Overview**

A summary is a brief explanation of a longer text. Some summaries, such as the ones that accompany annotated bibliographies, are very short, just a sentence or two. Others are much longer, though summaries are always much shorter than the text being summarized in the first place.

Summaries of different lengths are useful in research writing because you often need to provide your readers with an explanation of the text you are discussing. This is especially true when you are going to quote or paraphrase from a source.

Of course, the first step in writing a good summary is to do a thorough reading of the text you are going to summarize in the first place. Beyond that important start, there are a few basic guidelines you should follow when you write summary material:

**Stay “neutral” in your summarizing.** Summaries provide “just the facts” and are not the place where you offer your opinions about the text you are summarizing. Save your opinions and evaluation of the evidence you are summarizing for other parts of your writing.

**Don’t quote from what you are summarizing.** Summaries will be more useful to you and your colleagues if you write them in your own words.

**Don’t “cut and paste” from database abstracts.** Many of the periodical indexes that are available as part of your library’s computer system include abstracts of articles. Do not “cut” this abstract material and then “paste” it into your own annotated bibliography. For one thing, this is plagiarism. Second, “cutting and pasting” from the abstract defeats one of the purposes of writing summaries and creating an annotated bibliography in the first place, which is to help you understand and explain your research.
How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview

Writers quote and paraphrase from research in order to support their points and to persuade their readers. A quote or a paraphrase from a piece of evidence in support of a point answers the reader’s question, “says who?”

This is especially true in academic writing since scholarly readers are most persuaded by effective research and evidence. For example, readers of an article about a new cancer medication published in a medical journal will be most interested in the scholar’s research and statistics that demonstrate the effectiveness of the treatment. Conversely, they will not be as persuaded by emotional stories from individual patients about how a new cancer medication improved the quality of their lives. While this appeal to emotion can be effective and is common in popular sources, these individual anecdotes do not carry the same sort of “scholarly” or scientific value as well-reasoned research and evidence.

Of course, your instructor is not expecting you to be an expert on the topic of your research paper. While you might conduct some primary research, it’s a good bet that you’ll be relying on secondary sources such as books, articles, and Web sites to inform and persuade your readers. You’ll present this research to your readers in the form of quotes and paraphrases.

A “quote” is a direct restatement of the exact words from the original source. The general rule is any time you use three or more words as they appeared in the original source, you should treat it as a quote. A “paraphrase” is a restatement of the information or point of the original source in your own words.

While quotes and paraphrases are different and should be used in different ways in your research writing (as the examples in this section suggest), they do have a number of things in common. Both quotes and paraphrases should:

• be “introduced” to the reader, particularly the first time you mention a source;
• include an explanation of the evidence which explains to the reader why you think the evidence is important, especially if it is not apparent from the context of the quote or paraphrase; and
• include a proper citation of the source.

The method you should follow to properly quote or paraphrase depends on the style guide you are following in your academic writing. The two most common style guides used in academic writing are the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the American Psychological Association (APA). Both of these different styles are discussed in some detail in the MLA/APA Chapter of this book. Your instructor will probably assign one of these styles before you begin working on your project; however, if he/she doesn’t mention this, be sure to ask.

When to Quote, When to Paraphrase

The real “art” to research writing is using quotes and paraphrases from evidence effectively in order to support your point. There are certain “rules,” dictated by the rules of style you are following, such as the ones presented by the MLA or the ones presented by the APA. There are certain “guidelines” and suggestions, like the ones I offer in the previous section and the ones you will learn from your teacher and colleagues.

But when all is said and done, the question of when to quote and when to paraphrase depends a great deal on the specific context of the writing and the effect you are trying to achieve. Learning the best times to quote and paraphrase takes practice and experience.

In general, it is best to use a quote when:
• The exact words of your source are important for the point you are trying to make. This is especially true if you are quoting technical language, terms, or very specific word choices.

• You want to highlight your agreement with the author’s words. If you agree with the point the author of the evidence makes and you like their exact words, use them as a quote.

• You want to highlight your disagreement with the author’s words. In other words, you may sometimes want to use a direct quote to indicate exactly what it is you disagree about. This might be particularly true when you are considering the antithetical positions in your research writing projects.

In general, it is best to paraphrase when:

• There is no good reason to use a quote to refer to your evidence. If the author’s exact words are not especially important to the point you are trying to make, you are usually better off paraphrasing the evidence.

• You are trying to explain a particular piece of evidence in order to explain or interpret it in more detail. This might be particularly true in writing projects like critiques.

• You need to balance a direct quote in your writing. You need to be careful about directly quoting your research too much because it can sometimes make for awkward and difficult to read prose. So, one of the reasons to use a paraphrase instead of a quote is to create balance within your writing.

Tips for Quoting and Paraphrasing

• Introduce your quotes and paraphrases to your reader, especially on first reference.

• Explain the significance of the quote or paraphrase to your reader.

• Cite your quote or paraphrase properly according to the rules of style you are following in your essay.

• Quote when the exact words are important, when you want to highlight your agreement or your disagreement.

• Paraphrase when the exact words aren’t important, when you want to explain the point of your evidence, or when you need to balance the direct quotes in your writing.

Four Examples of Quotes and Paraphrases

Here are four examples of what I mean about properly quoting and paraphrasing evidence in your research essays. In each case, I begin with a BAD example, or the way NOT to quote or paraphrase.

Quoting in MLA Style

Here’s the first BAD example, where the writer is trying to follow the rules of MLA style:

There are many positive effects for advertising prescription drugs on television. “African-American physicians regard direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines as one way to educate minority patients about needed treatment and healthcare options” (Wechsler, Internet).

This is a potentially good piece of information to support a research writer’s claim, but the researcher hasn’t done any of the necessary work to explain where this quote comes from or to explain why it is important for supporting her point. Rather, she has simply “dropped in” the quote, leaving the interpretation of its significance up to the reader.

Now consider this revised GOOD (or at least BETTER) example of how this quote might be better introduced into the essay:
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In her Pharmaceutical Executive article available through the Wilson Select Internet database, Jill Wechsler writes about one of the positive effects of advertising prescription drugs on television. “African-American physicians regard direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines as one way to educate minority patients about needed treatment and healthcare options.”

In this revision, it’s much more clear what point the writer is trying to make with this evidence and where this evidence comes from.

In this particular example, the passage is from a traditional print journal called *Pharmaceutical Executive*. However, the writer needs to indicate that she actually found and read this article through Wilson Select, an Internet database which reproduces the “full text” of articles from periodicals without any graphics, charts, or page numbers.

When you use a direct quote in your research, you need to indicate page number of that direct quote or you need to indicate that the evidence has no specific page numbers. While it can be a bit awkward to indicate within the text how the writer found this information if it’s from the Internet, it’s important to do so on the first reference of a piece of evidence in your writing. On references to this piece of evidence after the first reference, you can use just the last name of the writer. For example:

Wechsler also reports on the positive effects of advertising prescription drugs on television. She writes...

Paraphrasing in MLA Style

In this example, the writer is using MLA style to write a research essay for a Literature class. Here is a BAD example of a paraphrase:

> While Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (Callahan).

There are two problems with this paraphrase. First, if this is the first or only reference to this particular piece of evidence in the research essay, the writer should include more information about the source of this paraphrase in order to properly introduce it. Second, this paraphrase is actually not of the entire article but rather of a specific passage. The writer has neglected to note the page number within the parenthetical citation.

A GOOD or at least BETTER revision of this paraphrase might look like this:

> John F. Callahan suggests in his article “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” that while Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (381).

By incorporating the name of the author of the evidence the research writer is referring to here, the source of this paraphrase is now clear to the reader. Furthermore, because there is a page number at the end of this sentence, the reader understands that this passage is a paraphrase of a particular part of Callahan’s essay and not a summary of the entire essay. Again, if the research writer had introduced this source to his readers earlier, he could have started with a phrase like “Callahan suggests...” and then continued on with his paraphrase.

If the research writer were offering a brief summary of the entire essay following MLA style, he wouldn’t include a page number in parentheses. For example:
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John F. Callahan’s article “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” examines Fitzgerald’s fascination with the elusiveness of the American Dream in the novels The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night, and The Last Tycoon.

Quoting in APA Style
Consider this BAD example in APA style, of what NOT to do when quoting evidence:

“If the U.S. scallop fishery were a business, its management would surely be fired, because its revenues could readily be increased by at least 50 percent while its costs were being reduced by an equal percentage.” (Repetto, 2001, p. 84).

Again, this is a potentially valuable piece of evidence, but it simply isn’t clear what point the research writer is trying to make with it. Further, it doesn’t follow the preferred method of citation with APA style.

Here is a revision that is a GOOD or at least BETTER example:

Repetto (2001) concludes that in the case of the scallop industry, those running the industry should be held responsible for not considering methods that would curtail the problems of over-fishing. “If the U.S. scallop fishery were a business, its management would surely be fired, because its revenues could readily be increased by at least 50 percent while its costs were being reduced by an equal percentage” (p. 84).

This revision is improved because the research writer has introduced and explained the point of the evidence with the addition of a clarifying sentence. It also follows the rules of APA style. Generally, APA style prefers that the research writer refer to the author only by last name followed immediately by the year of publication. Whenever possible, you should begin your citation with the author’s last name and the year of publication, and, in the case of a direct quote like this passage, the page number (including the “p.”) in parentheses at the end.

Paraphrasing in APA Style
Paraphrasing in APA style is slightly different from MLA style as well. Consider first this BAD example of what NOT to do in paraphrasing from a source in APA style:

Computer criminals have lots of ways to get away with credit card fraud (Cameron, 2002).

The main problem with this paraphrase is there isn’t enough here to adequately explain to the reader what the point of the evidence really is. Remember: your readers have no way of automatically knowing why you as a research writer think that a particular piece of evidence is useful in supporting your point. This is why it is key that you introduce and explain your evidence.

Here is a revision that is GOOD or at least BETTER:

Cameron (2002) points out that computer criminals intent on committing credit card fraud are able to take advantage of the fact that there aren’t enough officials working to enforce computer crimes. Criminals are also able to use the technology to their advantage by communicating via email and chat rooms with other criminals.

Again, this revision is better because the additional information introduces and explains the point of the evidence. In this particular example, the author’s name is also incorporated into the explanation of the evidence as well. In APA, it is preferable to weave in the author’s name into your essay, usually at the beginning of a sentence. However, it would also have been acceptable to end an improved paraphrase with just the author’s last name and the date of publication in parentheses.
Plagiarism is the unauthorized or uncredited use of the writings or ideas of another in your writing. While it might not be as tangible as auto theft or burglary, plagiarism is still a form of theft.

In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious matter because ideas in the forms of research, creative work, and original thought are highly valued. Chances are, your school has strict rules about what happens when someone is caught plagiarizing. The penalty for plagiarism is severe, everything from a failing grade for the plagiarized work, a failing grade for the class, or expulsion from the institution.

You might not be aware that plagiarism can take several different forms. The most well-known, purposeful plagiarism is handing in an essay written by someone else and representing it as your own, copying your essay word for word from a magazine or journal, or downloading an essay from the Internet.

A much more common and less understood phenomenon is what I call accidental plagiarism. Accidental plagiarism is the result of improperly paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, or citing your evidence in your academic writing. Generally, writers accidentally plagiarize because they simply don’t know or they fail to follow the rules for giving credit to the ideas of others in their writing.

Both purposeful and accidental plagiarism are wrong, against the rules, and can result in harsh punishments. Ignoring or not knowing the rules of how to not plagiarize and properly cite evidence might be an explanation, but it is not an excuse.

To exemplify what I’m getting at, consider the examples below that use quotations and paraphrases from this brief passage:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties. Rock started out as an Anglo-American phenomenon and has become an industry. Nonetheless, it was able to capture the hopes of young people around the world and provided enjoyment to those of us who listened to or played rock. Sixties pop was the conscience of one or two generations that helped bring the war in Vietnam to a close. Obviously, neither rock nor pop has solved global poverty or hunger. But is this a reason to be “against” them? (ix).

And just to make it clear that I’m not plagiarizing this passage, here is the citation in MLA style:


Here’s an obvious example of plagiarism:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties.

In this case, the writer has literally taken one of Lévy’s sentences and represented it as her own. That’s clearly against the rules.

Here’s another example of plagiarism, perhaps less obvious:
The same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people.

While these aren’t Lévy’s exact words, they are certainly close enough to constitute a form of plagiarism. And again, even though you might think that this is a “lesser” form of plagiarism, it’s still plagiarism.

Both of these passages can easily be corrected to make them acceptable quotations or paraphrases.

_in the introduction of his book Cyberculture, Pierre Lévy observes that “Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties” (ix)._

_Pierre Lévy suggests_ that the same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people (ix).

Note that changing these passages from examples of plagiarism to acceptable examples of a quotation and a paraphrase is extremely easy: properly cite your sources.

This leads to the “golden rule” of avoiding plagiarism:

_Often, students are unclear as to whether or not they need to cite a piece of evidence because they believe it to be “common knowledge” or because they are not sure about the source of information. When in doubt about whether or not to cite evidence in order to give credit to a source (“common knowledge” or not), you should cite the evidence._
It’s Not Plagiarism If It’s On The Web, Right?
by Matt Barton, James Kalmbach, and Charles Lowe, Writing Spaces

It’s Not Plagiarism If It’s on the Web, Right? You wish. Let’s think for a second about the difference between copyright violations and plagiarism, a helpful distinction to keep in mind when discussing how this stuff works online: Copyright violation is a legal issue.

Because we want people to make awesomely creative content (Words! Music! Art! Philosophy! Etc.!), the United States has laws that allow content creators to control how their creations are used for a certain amount of time. The law states that people have an automatic copyright on their own creations. Anything you create is automatically copyrighted once it is fixed in a medium.

When you are writing a paper in your word processor and save it to your hard drive, it is copyrighted. Take a picture with your digital camera or phone. The moment it is saved onto your camera or phone memory, it’s copyrighted. No copyright notice required on your part.

Copyright gives content creators a chance to make money from their work and hopefully continue making more. As a copyright holder of a creative work, you control how that work can be redistributed and whether or not it can be modified. There are certain circumstances where it’s legal to use copyrighted material in ways beyond what the copyright owner allows. These are called “fair use” situations, but let’s not get into that yet.

Plagiarism is an ethical issue. While violations of copyright are determined in court and are mandated in laws, acts of plagiarism are often not illegal at all (though they can be). Instead, plagiarism occurs when someone uses content (usually text, but not necessarily) in a way that isn’t allowed by the community (e.g., writing in a school setting or academic publishing) in which the content is being used. With that distinction in mind, we can see how using text or images found online can violate standards of copyright, plagiarism, neither, or both.

The same basic principles you use for your college research papers apply when you write for the web. The short version: if you use other people’s words, put quotation marks around them; if you use other people’s words or ideas, acknowledge them. Similarly, you should also acknowledge your use of images or other media elements. (See the next section for more information.)

In terms of what can be quoted, there may be legal issues involved, but generally you are allowed to quote any material that is freely available on the web in the same way that you can in your research writing. By convention and respect for the copyright holder, though, it’s a good idea to quote only a few lines of text, or at most a single paragraph. You may also quote small portions of text from print sources. Copying all of the text of a source (print or digital) into your text would be a copyright violation.
There are a few differences between how you handle citing sources in a research paper and on the web. When using quoted material, some bloggers use the rich possibilities of the web to do more than just use quotation marks. Blogging templates often provide a way to indicate long quotations through some design element: a different type font or size; a text-box of some kind; a change of background color; large quotation marks; etc. If you use many quotations in your posts, you may want to think about using some design element to set off those quotations visually.

Good news for bloggers in all this. For acknowledging source authors, you are let off the hook in terms of MLA Works Cited pages or APA References pages. Yippee! Instead, bloggers normally acknowledge authors by linking to their articles or website. If information is taken from a print source, it’s pretty standard to link either to the Amazon page for the particular book or to its page on a publisher’s website.

**Reading**

**Annoying Ways People Use Sources**

by Kyle D. Stedman, *Writing Spaces*

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**How Slow Driving Is Like Sloppy Writing**

I hate slow drivers.* When I’m driving in the fast lane, maintaining the speed limit exactly, and I find myself behind someone who thinks the fast lane is for people who drive ten miles per hour below the speed limit, I get an annoyed feeling in my chest like hot water filling a heavy bucket. I wave my arms around and yell, “What . . . ? But, hey . . . oh come on!” There are at least two explanations for why some slow drivers fail to move out of the way:

1. They don’t know that the generally accepted practice of highway driving in the U.S. is to move to the right if an upcoming car wants to pass. Or,
2. They know the guidelines but don’t care.

But here’s the thing: writers can forget that their readers are sometimes just as annoyed at writing that fails to follow conventions as drivers are when stuck behind a car that fails to move over. In other words, there’s something similar between these two people: the knowledgeable driver who thinks, “I thought all drivers knew that the left lane is for the fastest cars,” and the reader who thinks, “I thought all writers knew that outside sources should be introduced, punctuated, and cited according to a set of standards.”

One day, you may discover that something you’ve written has just been read by a reader who, unfortunately, was annoyed at some of the ways you integrated sources. She was reading along and then suddenly exclaimed, “What . . . ? But, hey . . . oh come on!” If you’re lucky, this reader will try to imagine why you typed things the way you did, giving you the benefit of the doubt. But sometimes you’ll be slotted into positions that might not really be accurate. When this frustrated reader walks away from
your work, trying to figure out, say, why you used so many quotations, or why you kept starting and ending paragraphs with them, she may come to the same conclusions I do about slow drivers:

1. You don’t know the generally accepted practices of using sources (especially in academic writing) in the U.S. Or,

2. You know the guidelines but don’t care.

And it will be a lot harder for readers to take you seriously if they think you’re ignorant or rude.

This judgment, of course, will often be unfair. These readers might completely ignore the merits of your insightful, stylistically beautiful, or revolutionarily important language—just as my anger at another driver makes me fail to admire his custom paint job. But readers and writers don’t always see eye to eye on the same text. In fact, some things I write about in this essay will only bother your pickiest readers (some teachers, some editors, some snobby friends), while many other readers might zoom past how you use sources without blinking. But in my experience, I find that teachers do a disservice when we fail to alert students to the kind of things that some readers might be annoyed at—however illogical these things sometimes seem. People are often unreasonably picky, and writers have to deal with that—which they do by trying to anticipate and preemptively fix whatever might annoy a broad range of readers. Plus, the more effectively you anticipate that pickiness, the more likely it is that readers will interpret your quotations and paraphrases in the way you want them to—critically or acceptingly, depending on your writing context.

It helps me to remember that the conventions of writing have a fundamentally rhetorical nature. That is, I follow different conventions depending on the purpose and audience of my writing, because I know that I’ll come across differently to different people depending on how well I follow the conventions expected in any particular writing space. In a blog, I cite a source by hyperlinking; in an academic essay, I use a parenthetical citation that refers to a list of references at the end of the essay. One of the fundamental ideas of rhetoric is that speakers/writers/composers shape what they say/write/create based on what they want it to do, where they’re publishing it, and what they know about their audience/readers. And those decisions include nitty-gritty things like introducing quotations and citing paraphrases clearly: not everyone in the entire world approaches these things the same way, but when I strategically learn the expectations of my U.S. academic audience, what I really want to say comes across smoothly, without little annoying blips in my readers’ experience. Notice that I’m not saying that there’s a particular right or wrong way to use conventions in my writing—if the modern U.S. academic system had evolved from a primarily African or Asian or Latin American cultural consciousness instead of a European one, conventions for writing would probably be very different. That’s why they’re conventions and not rules.

The Annoyances

Because I’m not here to tell you rules, decrees, or laws, it makes sense to call my classifications annoyances. In the examples that follow, I wrote all of the annoying examples myself, but all the examples I use of good writing come from actual student papers in first year composition classes at my university; I have their permission to quote them.

**Armadillo Roadkill: Dropping in a Quotation Without Introducing It First**

Everyone in the car hears it: buh-BUMP. The driver insists to the passengers, “But that armadillo—I didn’t see it! It just came out of nowhere!”

Sadly, a poorly introduced quotation can lead readers to a similar exclamation: “It just came out of nowhere!”
And though readers probably won’t experience the same level of grief and regret when surprised by a quotation as opposed to an armadillo, I submit that there’s a kinship between the experiences: both involve a normal, pleasant activity (driving; reading) stopped suddenly short by an unexpected barrier (a sudden armadillo; a sudden quotation).

Here’s an example of what I’m talking about:

We should all be prepared with a backup plan if a zombie invasion occurs. “Unlike its human counterparts, an army of zombies is completely independent of support” (Brooks 155). Preparations should be made in the following areas. . . .

Did you notice how the quotation is dropped in without any kind of warning? (Buh-BUMP.)

**The Fix:** The easiest way to effectively massage in quotations is by purposefully returning to each one in your draft to see if you set the stage for your readers—often, by signaling that a quote is about to come, stating who the quote came from, and showing how your readers should interpret it. In the above example, that could be done by introducing the quotation with something like this (new text bolded):

We should all be prepared with a backup plan if a zombie invasion occurs. Max Brooks suggests a number of ways to prepare for zombies’ particular traits, though he underestimates the ability of humans to survive in harsh environments. For example, he writes, “Unlike its human counterparts, an army of zombies is completely independent of support” (155). His shortsightedness could have a number of consequences. . . .

In this version, I know a quotation is coming (“For example”), I know it’s going to be written by Max Brooks, and I know I’m being asked to read the quote rather skeptically (“he underestimates”). The sentence with the quotation itself also now begins with a “tag” that eases us into it (“he writes”).

Here’s an actual example from Alexsandra. Notice the way she builds up to the quotation and then analyzes it:

In the first two paragraphs, the author takes a defensive position when explaining the perception that the public has about scientists by saying that “there is anxiety that scientists lack both wisdom and social responsibility and are so motivated by ambition . . .“ and “scientists are repeatedly referred to as ‘playing God’” (Wolpert 345). With this last sentence especially, his tone seems to demonstrate how he uses the ethos appeal to initially set a tone of someone that is tired of being misunderstood.

Alexsandra prepares us for the quotation, quotes, and then analyzes it. I love it. This isn’t a hard and fast rule—I’ve seen it broken by the best of writers, I admit—but it’s a wise standard to hold yourself to unless you have a reason not to.

**Dating Spider-Man: Starting or Ending a Paragraph with a Quotation**

An annoyance that’s closely connected to Armadillo Roadkill is the tendency writers sometimes have of starting or ending paragraphs with quotations. This isn’t technically wrong, and there are situations when the effect of surprise is what you’re going for. But often, a paragraph-beginning or paragraph-closing quotation feels rushed, unexplained, disjointed.

It’s like dating Spider-Man. You’re walking along with him and he says something remarkably interesting—but then he tilts his head, hearing something far away, and suddenly shoots a web onto the nearest building and zooms away through the air. As if you had just read an interesting quotation dangling at the end of a paragraph, you wanted to hear more of his opinion, but it’s too late—he’s already moved on. Later, he suddenly jumps off a balcony and is by your side again, and he starts talking about something you don’t understand. You’re confused because he just dropped in and expected you
to understand the context of what was on his mind at that moment, much like when readers step into a paragraph that begins with a quotation. Here’s an example:

[End of a preceding paragraph:] . . . Therefore, the evidence clearly suggests that we should be exceptionally careful about deciding when and where to rest.

“When taking a nap, always rest your elbow on your desk and keep your arm perpendicular to your desktop” (Piven and Borgenicht 98). After all, consider the following scenario. . . .

There’s a perfectly good reason why this feels odd—which should feel familiar after reading about the Armadillo Roadkill annoyance above. When you got to the quotation in the second paragraph, you didn’t know what you were supposed to think about it; there was no guidance.

**The Fix** is the same: in the majority of situations, readers appreciate being guided to and led away from a quotation by the writer doing the quoting. Readers get a sense of pleasure from the safe flow of hearing how to read an upcoming quotation, reading it, and then being told one way to interpret it. Prepare, quote, analyze.

I mentioned above that there can be situations where starting a paragraph with a quotation can have a strong effect. Personally, I usually enjoy this most at the beginning of essays or the beginning of sections—like in this example from the very beginning of Jennifer’s essay:

> “Nothing is ever simple: Racism and nobility can exist in the same man, hate and love in the same woman, fear and loyalty, compromise and idealism, all the yin-yang dichotomies that make the human species so utterly confounding, yet so utterly fascinating” (Hunter). The hypocrisy and complexity that Stephen Hunter from the *Washington Post* describes is the basis of the movie *Crash* (2004).

Instantly, her quotation hooks me. It doesn’t feel thoughtless, like it would feel if I continued to be whisked to quotations without preparation throughout the essay. But please don’t overdo it; any quotation that opens an essay or section ought to be integrally related to your topic (as is Jennifer’s), not just a cheap gimmick.

**Uncle Barry and His Encyclopedia of Useless Information: Using Too Many Quotations In a Row**

You probably know someone like this: a person (for me, my Uncle Barry) who constantly tries to impress me with how much he knows about just about everything. I might casually bring up something in the news (“Wow, these health care debates are getting really heated, aren’t they?”) and then find myself barraged by all of Uncle Barry’s ideas on government sponsored health care—which then drifts into a story about how his cousin Maxine died in an underfunded hospice center, which had a parking lot that he could have designed better, which reminds him of how good he is at fixing things, just like the garage door at my parents’ house, which probably only needs a little. . . . You get the idea. I might even think to myself, “Wait, I want to know more about that topic, but you’re zooming on before you contextualize your information at all.”

This is something like reading an essay that relies too much on quotations. Readers get the feeling that they’re moving from one quotation to the next without ever quite getting to hear the real point of what the author wants to say, never getting any time to form an opinion about the claims. In fact, this often makes it sound as if the author has almost no authority at all. You may have been annoyed by paragraphs like this before:

> Addressing this issue, David M. Potter comments, “Whether Seward meant this literally or not, it was in fact a singularly accurate forecast for territorial Kansas” (199). Of course, Potter’s view is contested, even though he claims, “Soon, the Missourians began to perceive the advantages
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of operating without publicity” (200). Interestingly, “The election was bound to be irregular in any case” (201).

Wait—huh? This author feels like Uncle Barry to me: grabbing right and left for topics (or quotes) in an effort to sound authoritative.

The Fix is to return to each quotation and decide why it’s there and then massage it in accordingly. If you just want to use a quote to cite a fact, then consider paraphrasing or summarizing the source material (which I find is usually harder than it sounds but is usually worth it for the smoothness my paragraph gains). But if you quoted because you want to draw attention to the source’s particular phrasing, or if you want to respond to something you agree with or disagree with in the source, then consider taking the time to surround each quotation with guidance to your readers about what you want them to think about that quote.

In the following passage, I think Jessica demonstrates a balance between source and analysis well. Notice that she only uses a single quotation, even though she surely could have chosen more. But instead, Jessica relies on her instincts and remains the primary voice of authority in the passage:

Robin Toner’s article, “Feminist Pitch by a Democrat named Obama,” was written a week after the video became public and is partially a response to it. She writes, “The Obama campaign is, in some ways, subtly marketing its candidate as a post-feminist man, a generation beyond the gender conflicts of the boomers.” Subtly is the key word. Obama is a passive character throughout the video, never directly addressing the camera. Rather, he is shown indirectly through speeches, intimate conversations with supporters and candid interaction with family. This creates a sense of intimacy, which in turn creates a feeling of trust.

Toner’s response to the Obama video is like a diving board that Jessica bounces off of before she gets to the really interesting stuff: the pool (her own observations). A bunch of diving boards lined up without a pool (tons of quotes with no analysis) wouldn’t please anyone—except maybe Uncle Barry.

Am I in the Right Movie? Failing to Integrate a Quotation into the Grammar of the Preceding Sentence

When reading drafts of my writing, this is a common experience: I start to read a sentence that seems interesting and normal, with everything going just the way I expect it to. But then the unexpected happens: a quotation blurs itself into the sentence in a way that doesn’t fit with the grammar that built up to quotation. It feels like sitting in a movie theater, everything going as expected, when suddenly the opening credits start for a movie I didn’t plan to see. Here are two examples of what I’m talking about. Read them out loud, and you’ll see how suddenly wrong they feel.

1. Therefore, the author warns that a zombie’s vision “are no different than those of a normal human” (Brooks 6).

2. Sheila Anne Barry advises that “Have you ever wondered what it’s like to walk on a tightrope—many feet up in the air?” (50)

In the first example, the quoter’s build-up to the quotation uses a singular subject—a zombie’s vision—which, when paired with the quotation, is annoyingly matched with the plural verb are. It would be much less jolting to write, “a zombie’s vision is,” which makes the subject and verb agree. In the second example, the quoter builds up to the quotation with a third-person, declarative independent clause: Sheila Anne Barry advises. But then the quotation switches into second person—you—and unexpectedly asks a question—completely different from the expectation that was built up by the first part of the sentence.
The Fix is usually easy: you read your essay out loud to someone else, and if you stumble as you enter a quotation, there’s probably something you can adjust in your lead-in sentence to make the two fit together well. Maybe you’ll need to choose a different subject to make it fit with the quote’s verb (reader instead of readers; each instead of all), or maybe you’ll have to scrap what you first wrote and start over. On occasion you’ll even feel the need to transparently modify the quotation by adding an [s] to one of its verbs, always being certain to use square brackets to show that you adjusted something in the quotation. Maybe you’ll even find a way to quote a shorter part of the quotation and squeeze it into the context of a sentence that is mostly your own, a trick that can have a positive effect on readers, who like smooth water slides more than they like bumpy slip-and-slides. Jennifer does this well in the following sentence, for example:

In *Crash*, no character was allowed to “escape his own hypocrisy” (Muller), and the film itself emphasized that the reason there is so much racial tension among strangers is because of the personal issues one cannot deal with alone.

She saw a phrase that she liked in Muller’s article, so she found a way to work it in smoothly, without the need for a major break in her thought. Let’s put ourselves in Jennifer’s shoes for a moment: it’s possible that she started drafting this sentence using the plural subject characters, writing “In *Crash*, no characters were allowed. . . .” But then, imagine she looked back at the quote from Muller and saw that it said “escape his own hypocrisy,” which was a clue that she had to change the first part of her sentence to match the singular construction of the quote.

I Can’t Find the Stupid Link: No Connection Between the First Letter of a Parenthetical Citation and the First Letter of a Works Cited Entry

You’ve been in this situation: you’re on a website that seems like it might be interesting and you want to learn more about it. But the home page doesn’t tell you much, so you look for an “About Us” or “More Information” or “FAQ” link. But no matter where you search—Top of page? Bottom? Left menu?—you can’t find the stupid link. This is usually the fault of web designers, who don’t always take the time to test their sites as much as they should with actual users.

The communication failure here is simple: you’re used to finding certain kinds of basic information in the places people usually put it. If it’s not there, you’re annoyed.

Similarly, a reader might see a citation and have a quick internal question about it: What journal was this published in? When was it published? Is this an article I could find online to skim myself? This author has a sexy last name—I wonder what his first name is? Just like when you look for a link to more information, this reader has a simple, quick question that he or she expects to answer easily. And the most basic way for readers to answer those questions (when they’re reading a work written in APA or MLA style) is (1) to look at the information in the citation, and (2) skim the references or works cited section alphabetically, looking for the first letter in the citation. There’s an assumption that the first letter of a citation will be the letter to look for in the list of works cited.

In short, the following may annoy readers who want to quickly learn more about the citation:

*Essay Text:* A respected guide on the subject suggests, “If possible, always take the high ground and hold it” (*The Zombie Survival Guide* 135).


The reader may wonder when *The Zombie Survival Guide* was published and flip back to the works cited page, but the parenthetical citation sends her straight to the Z’s in the works cited list (because initial
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A’s and The’s are ignored when alphabetizing). However, the complete works cited entry is actually with the B’s (where it belongs).

The Fix is to make sure that the first word of the works cited entry is the word you use in your in-text citation, every time. If the works cited entry starts with Brooks, use (Brooks) in the essay text. Citations not including last names may seem to complicate this advice, but they all follow the same basic concept.

For instance, you might have:

• A citation that only lists a title. For instance, your citation might read (“Gray Wolf General Information”). In this case, the assumption is that the citation can be found under the G section of the works cited page. Leah cites her paraphrase of a source with no author in the following way, indicating that I should head to the G’s if I want to learn more about her source:

        Alaska is the only refuge that is left for the wolves in the United States, and once that is gone, they will more than likely become extinct in this country (“Gray Wolf General Information”).

• A citation that only lists a page number. Maybe the citation simply says (25). That implies that somewhere in the surrounding text, the essay writer must have made it stupendously clear what name or title to look up in the works cited list. This happens a lot, since it’s common to introduce a quotation by naming the person it came from, in which case it would be repetitive to name that author again in the citation.

• A quotation without a citation at all. This happens when you cite a work that is both A) from a web page that doesn’t number the pages or paragraphs and B) is named in the text surrounding the quotation. Readers will assume that the author is named nearby. Stephanie wisely leaves off any citation in the example below, where it’s already clear that I should head to the O’s on the works cited page to find information about this source, a web page written by Opotow:

        To further this point, Opotow notes, “Don’t imagine you’ll be unscathed by the methods you use. The end may justify the means. . . . But there’s a price to pay, and the price does tend to be oneself.”

I Swear I Did Some Research! Dropping in a Citation Without Making it Clear What Information Came From That Source

Let’s look in depth at this potentially annoying passage from a hypothetical student paper:

        It’s possible that a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the universe will open new doors of understanding. If theories from sociology, communication, and philosophy joined with physics, the possibilities would be boundless. This would inspire new research, much like in the 1970s when scientists changed their focus from grand-scale theories of the universe to the small concerns of quantum physics (Hawking 51).

In at least two ways, this is stellar material. First, the author is actually voicing a point of view; she sounds knowledgeable, strong. Second, and more to the point of this chapter, the author includes a citation, showing that she knows that ethical citation standards ask authors to cite paraphrases and summaries—not just quotations.

But on the other hand, which of these three sentences, exactly, came from Hawking’s book? Did Hawking claim that physics experts should join up with folks in other academic disciplines, or is that the student writer? In other words, at which point does the author’s point of view meld into material taken specifically from Hawking?
I recognize that there often aren’t clean answers to a question like that. What we read and what we know sometimes meld together so unnoticeably that we don’t know which ideas and pieces of information are “ours” and which aren’t. Discussing “patchwriting,” a term used to describe writing that blends words and phrases from sources with words and phrases we came up with ourselves, scholar Rebecca Moore Howard writes, “When I believe I am not patchwriting, I am simply doing it so expertly that the seams are no longer visible—or I am doing it so unwittingly that I cannot cite my sources” (91).

In other words, all the moves we make when writing came from somewhere else at some point, whether we realize it or not. Yikes. But remember our main purpose here: to not look annoying when using sources.

And most of your instructors aren’t going to say, “I understand that I couldn’t tell the difference between your ideas and your source’s because we quite naturally patchwrite all the time. That’s fine with me. Party on!” They’re much more likely to imagine that you plopped in a few extra citations as a way of defensively saying, “I swear I did some research! See? Here’s a citation right here! Doesn’t that prove I worked really hard?”

**The Fix:** Write the sentences preceding the citation with *specific words and phrases that will tell readers what information came from where.* Like this (bolded words are new):

> It’s possible that a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the universe will open new doors of understanding. **I believe that** if theories from sociology, communication, and philosophy joined with physics, the possibilities would be boundless. This would inspire new research, much like **the changes Stephen Hawking describes happening** in the 1970s when scientists changed their focus from grand-scale theories of the universe to the small concerns of quantum physics (51).

Perhaps these additions could still use some stylistic editing for wordiness and flow, but the source-related job is done: readers know exactly which claims the essay writer is making and which ones Hawking made in his book. The last sentence and only the last sentence summarizes the ideas Hawking describes on page 51 of his book.

One warning: you’ll find that scholars in some disciplines (especially in the sciences and social sciences) use citations in the way I just warned you to avoid. You might see sentences like this one, from page 64 of Glenn Gordon Smith, Ana T. Torres-Ayala, and Allen J. Heindel’s article in the *Journal of Distance Education*:

> Some researchers have suggested “curriculum” as a key element in the design of web-based courses (Berge, 1998; Driscoll, 1998; Meyen, Tangen, & Lian, 1999; Wiens & Gunter, 1998).

Whoa—that’s a lot of citations. Remember how the writer of my earlier example cited Stephen Hawking because she summarized his ideas? Well, a number of essays describing the results of experiments, like this one, use citations with a different purpose, citing previous studies whose general conclusions support the study described in this new paper, like building blocks. It’s like saying to your potentially skeptical readers, “Look, you might be wondering if I’m a quack. But I can prove I’m not! See, all these other people published in similar areas! Are you going to pick fights with all of them too?” You might have noticed as well that these citations are in APA format, reflecting the standards of the social sciences journal this passage was published in. Well, in this kind of context APA’s requirement to cite the year of a study makes a lot of sense too—after all, the older a study, the less likely it is to still be relevant.

**Conclusion: Use Your Turn Signals**

You may have guessed the biggest weakness in an essay like this: what’s annoying varies from person to
person, with some readers happily skimming past awkward introductions to quotations without a blink, while others see a paragraph-opening quotation as something to complain about on Facebook. All I’ve given you here—all I can give you unless I actually get to know you and your various writing contexts—are the basics that will apply in a number of academic writing contexts. Think of these as signals to your readers about your intentions, much as wise drivers rely on their turn signals to communicate their intentions to other drivers. In some cases when driving, signaling is an almost artistic decision, relying on the gut reaction of the driver to interpret what is best in times when the law doesn’t mandate use one way or the other.

I hope your writing is full of similar signals. Now if I could only convince the guy driving in front of me to use his blinker . . .

Discussion

1. Because so many of these guidelines depend on the writer’s purpose, publication space, and audience, it can be difficult to know when to follow them strictly and when to bend them. What are some specific writing situations where a writer is justified to bend the standards of how to incorporate sources?

2. Choose one of the annoyances. Then, look through a number of different pieces of writing from different genres and collect two examples of writers who followed your chosen guideline perfectly and two who didn’t. For each source you found, jot a sentence or two describing the context of that source and why you think its writer did or did not follow the guideline.

3. Rank the annoyances in order of most annoying to least annoying, pretending that you are a college professor. Now, rank them from the point of view of a newspaper editor, a popular blogger, and another college student. What changes did you make in your rankings?

Works Cited

Chapter Three: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism

Chapter Four: Narrative

Chapter 4: Narrative
Chapter Contributor: Caroline Reynolds

Introduction
by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

In its most basic form, a narrative is a story. It can be a story about an event, a person, or even a place that has made an impact on an individual in some way. You will be asked to write a narrative of your own in English composition, and the readings in this chapter are designed to help you think about how to get started on that assignment.

Your story should have a clear purpose; in other words, your reader should know why you chose to write about this subject and how it has affected you. Narratives use dialogue and rich descriptive details to provide readers with a true sense of the story being told. You might often hear the advice “show don’t tell” in reference to narratives, and this advice refers to how the writer of a narrative provides detail to create a picture in the mind of the reader. However, think about how you might take that advice one step further to create a dominant impression in the mind of your reader. What overall feeling do you wish to impart as you write about your experience? How can you bring that feeling into vivid relief using the strategies of sensory description, simile, and metaphor discussed in the article that follows?

Writing Strategies for Narratives

Description: Using Figurative Language and Sensory Details
adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

Using Description
The goal of description is to convey a person, place, or thing in such a way that a picture is formed in the reader’s mind. Capturing an event through descriptive language involves paying close attention to details by using all of your five senses (touch, sight, smell, taste, and sound). These senses are important to descriptive writing because they help the reader understand what the author is trying to say. As a descriptive writer, the more vividly you are able to describe what you have sensed, the more engaged audience will be with your text.

Grammatically speaking, descriptive language is the use of nouns and adjectives in order to most specifically describe the experiences of a particular sense. By making the language you use more powerful, you may use description in order to allow your reader to truly sense what you are writing about. To this end, one of description’s main goals is making the abstract seem more concrete.
Similes and Metaphors
We can add descriptive language by using similes and metaphors to create a picture in our readers' heads by comparing two objects to one another. Similes and metaphors help to make connections between two ideas, concepts, or objects that clarify or give new meaning.

A simile is a comparison using the words like or as. It usually compares two dissimilar objects. For example, “The bread was as dry as a bone.” The comparison links a piece of bread that has become hard and white to a bone that is also hard and white. Bones often dry out, and so does bread. These similar characteristics are what make the simile effective.

A metaphor states that one thing is something else. It is a comparison, but it does NOT use like or as to make the comparison. For example, “The athlete's stomach was a bottomless pit.” The comparison implies that the athlete's stomach will not fill up easily or quickly. The athlete can eat lots of food.

To make a simile or metaphor, identify an object like a sunset, tree, or river, or a concept like love, peace, or anger. Then think of another object that has some similar traits. Decide whether the words "like" or "as" will help make the connection more understandable. A good simile or metaphor will make the reader look at both objects in a new perspective.

By adding similes and metaphors to a paper, the writer can appeal to the readers' imagination and make the writing more interesting to read. Similes and metaphors add spark to descriptions.

Sensory Descriptions
Another way to add detail to a piece of writing is through the use of sensory descriptions. Sensory descriptions rely on the use of the five senses to give readers a clear awareness of the person, place, or thing being described. It is important to remember that while the use of sensory description is effective, overusing it is not. Add only the sensory details that are relevant to the person, place, or thing you're describing.

Examples of Sensory Words:
Sound Imagery
- Quiet solitude
- Grasshoppers chirping at night
- Trees rustling in the wind
- The howl of a wolf
- Birds singing
- Leaves crunching
- Fire crackling
Smell Imagery
- Chlorine at a pool
- Freshly cut grass
- Flowers in spring
- Morning dew
- Freshly baked banana bread
- Acrid campfire smoke
Examples of Touch Imagery
- Cold, wet snowflakes falling on your nose
- Corse sandpaper
- Rough, dry tree bark
- Wet sand beneath your feet
- Moist steam rising from a hot pan on the stove
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Examples of Visual Imagery
The brilliant rays of sunset
The churning blue waterfall
Powerful deer racing across the field
Clean snow falling softly in the sun
Corn stalks rustling in the breeze

Examples of Taste Imagery
The tart bite of lemon juice
Steaming, bitter black coffee
Fresh, succulent strawberries
Crunchy chocolate chip cookies
Cotton candy, sweetly melting in your mouth

Readings
Storytelling, Narration, and the “Who I Am” Story
by Catherine Ramsdell, Writing Spaces, Vol. 2

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Green Eggs and Ham was the story of my life. I wouldn’t eat a thing when I was a kid, but Dr. Seuss inspired me to try cauliflower!
— Jim Carrey

It’s all storytelling, you know. That’s what journalism is all about.
— Tom Brokaw

People have forgotten how to tell a story. Stories don’t have a middle or an end any more. They usually have a beginning that never stops beginning.
— Steven Spielberg

Introduction
Are stories just a form of entertainment—like movies, television shows, books, and video games?* Or are they something more? This chapter takes the stance that stories are a fundamental and primary form of communication, and without them, we would lose an important way to teach our children, to train our employees, to sell our products, and to make information memorable to those of any age.
Consider a Jewish story Annette Simmons references in her book The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling:

Truth, naked and cold, had been turned away from every door in the village. Her nakedness frightened the people. When Parable found her she was huddled in a corner, shivering and hungry. Taking pity on her, Parable gathered her up and took her home. There, she dressed Truth in story, warmed her and sent her out again. Clothed in story, Truth knocked again at the doors and was readily welcomed into the villagers’ houses. They invited her to eat at their tables and warm herself by their fires. (27)

Certainly stories can be a form of entertainment—a book to curl up with on a cold rainy afternoon, a movie to share with a best friend, a video game to conquer—but stories can also be much more and, as will be discussed at the end of the chapter, today stories can be found just about anywhere. Furthermore, because stories can be found anywhere from a movie theatre to a corporate boardroom, everyone should know how to tell a good story.

In her book, The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling, Simmons talks about seven different kinds of stories everyone should learn how to tell. One of them is the “Who I Am” story. Simply put, a Who I Am story shows something about its author, and this type of story fits into the genre of memoir or creative nonfiction. Here is an example from Simmons’ book: Skip looked into the sea of suspicious stockholders and wondered what might convince them to follow his leadership. He was 35, looked 13 and was third generation rich. He could tell they assumed he would be an unholy disaster as a leader.

He decided to tell them a story.

“My first job was drawing the electrical engineering plans for a boat building company. The drawings had to be perfect because if the wires were not accurately placed before the fiberglass form was poured, a mistake might cost a million dollars, easy. At 25, I already had two masters’ degrees. I had been on boats all my life and frankly, I found drawing these plans a bit . . . mindless. One morning I got a call at home from a $6/hour worker asking me ‘are you sure this is right?’ I was incensed. Of course I was sure—‘just pour the damn thing.’ When his supervisor called me an hour later and woke me up again and asked ‘are you sure this is right?’ I had even less patience. ‘I said I was sure an hour ago and I’m still sure.’

It was the phone call from the president of the company that finally got me out of bed and down to the site. If I had to hold these guys by the hand, so be it. I sought out the worker who had called me first. He sat looking at my plans with his head cocked to one side. With exaggerated patience I began to explain the drawing. But after a few words my voice got weaker and my head started to cock to the side as well. It seems that I had (being left-handed) transposed starboard and port so that the drawing was an exact mirror image of what it should have been. Thank God this $6/hour worker had caught my mistake before it was too late. The next day I found this box on my desk. The crew bought me a remedial pair of tennis shoes for future reference. Just in case I got mixed up again—a red left shoe for port, and a green right one for starboard. These shoes don’t just help me remember port and starboard. They help me remember to listen even when I think I know what’s going on.” As he held up the shoebox with one red and one green shoe, there were smiles and smirks. The stockholders relaxed a bit. If this young upstart had already learned this lesson about arrogance, then he might have learned a few things about running companies, too. (1–2)

This example shows some of the reasons why people tell Who I Am stories. Chances are that if Skip had gone into this meeting and said “Look, I know I’m young, but I’ve got a lot of experience, I know what
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I’m doing, I’ve learned a lot from my mistakes. Just trust me,” he would not have won over his audience. Please keep this example and the basic definition of the Who I Am story in mind while reading through the next section.

Your Who I Am story should start to answer the question “who are you?” However, this story should only focus on one characteristic or aspect of your personality. Think back to Skip and the Who I Am story from the beginning of this chapter. His story helped prove he was ready to be a leader and ready to run a corporation.

As with most other types of writing, brainstorming can be a useful tool. To begin, you might just think about all the ways to finish the sentence “I am . . .” The word you choose to finish this sentence then becomes the subject of your Who I Am story. If a subject is not jumping out at you, think about the way your mother, best friend, significant other, or pet might describe you. Think about a characteristic that only the people closest to you see—for example, has anyone ever told you “when I first met you, I never would have guessed that you were so funny (or competitive or happy)”?

Once you have a characteristic in mind, keep brainstorming and think of one specific example or event that illustrates this characteristic. This example will become your story. Again, much like a topic, sometimes an example, or story, will just jump to mind. However, if you cannot think of an example right away, look through some old pictures, scrapbooks, or yearbooks. Reread journals or listen to favorite songs. All of these things can spark memories, and one of these memories can become the example or event on which your Who I Am story will focus. This event does not have to be exciting or flamboyant.

Simple but heartfelt stories often are the most effective. Many things can be faked in life, but sincerity is generally not one of them.

Writing the “Who I Am” Story

Once you have the topic, just start writing. Writing a story is not like baking a cake—there is no formula or recipe that guarantees a perfect story. But here are some steps to consider:

1. Ask some questions about the event you are going to write about. When did this event take place? What are the starting and ending points? Where did this event take place? Who was there? Was there a conflict? A resolution?

2. Write down everything you remember. Of course, there are numerous ways to write a first draft, but for a Who I Am story, simply writing down everything you remember about the event is a good place to start. Usually, it is better to have more writing than what you need. So start by writing everything down in chronological order. Do not worry about any rhetorical strategies or making it sound good.

3. Go do something else. Once you have the entire story written down, set it aside. Go take a nap or play with your dog, and come back to the story later. Then reread it and see if you left anything out. Time permitting, go through this process of putting the story aside and then rereading it several times.

4. Summarize the main point of the story in one or two sentences. Go through the story and eliminate everything that does not relate to this main point. Do not worry about length right now. Focus on quality and creating a unified story.

5. Think about creating a dominant impression. Is the story sad, thoughtful, sarcastic, or humorous? If you have trouble deciding on a dominant impression, think about setting the story to music. What song would you pick—Mozart’s “Moonlight Sonata,” something by the Violent Femmes, a sultry jazz tune—and what emotion does this song conjure up?
6. Keeping the main point and dominant impression in mind, add details and expand the most important parts of your story. Real time should now become narrative time. Add concrete details and imagery. Imagine the different senses to which the story could appeal. We are a very visual culture, but go beyond describing what things look like—consider incorporating smells or sounds. Think about the way something feels when touched. Also think about how these details can help draw a reader in. Consider this an example from a student’s Who I Am story:

At the beginning of every school year, I am obligated to introduce myself to a new sea of adolescent hormones swimming with impulsiveness, curiosity, and unfiltered tourette-like verbal ejaculations. Sure, I could stand before the little urchins, and with trident in hand, I could dictate the rules of my class and cast off a long list of life experiences that made me the immortal that stands before them or I could let them place their expectations upon me creating an environment of perceived equality. Being a believer in a democratic classroom, I always opt for the latter.

Look at the way this student builds on the details: the words “sea,” “swimming” and “trident” work beautifully together. And look at the choices the student made: using the words “adolescent hormones” and “urchins” instead of students; “unfiltered tourette-like verbal ejaculations” could have simply been opinions or obnoxious comments. The story includes a lot of visual elements, but the phrase “verbal ejaculations” also appeals to the ears. These words, phrases, and ideas all work together to, as clichéd as it sounds, paint a picture of the author of this story.

The author of this story is a student, but she is also a middle-school teacher. The main point of the story is to show who she is as a teacher. Everything in this paragraph relates to that main point. We do not know the color of her hair, whether she is wearing a shirt or a sweater, or if she is tall or short. After all, none of these things relate to the point of this story. Great detail and description and emotions are very important to the Who I Am story. But they need to be the right details, descriptions, and emotions, and they need to be used at the right time.

7. Make certain the story shows and does not tell. The ultimate success of the Who I Am story depends on how well you show, not tell, who you are (i.e. use more indirect characterization than direct (characterization). Have faith in your words and in the story you are telling. Trust that the story works and do not end the story with a statement like “clearly this event shows that I am a trustworthy person.” Let the story do its job. Consider two more paragraphs from our middle-school teacher’s story:

On the first day of class last year, I allowed students to take seats at their leisure. I sat on my desk and when everyone was settled, I quietly commanded their attention by placing a large black top hat upon my head. Conversations abruptly stopped as my curious audience took notice. ‘If I were to say that hats are a metaphor for the different roles we play in our lives, what do you think that means?’ I was met with blank stares. ‘What if I said that I play many roles every day? I am a teacher, a mother, a daughter, a coworker, and a friend. Are the expectations for those different roles the same or different?’ A hand raises and a girl with pale skin, lively eyes and thick auburn hair answers, ‘Of course they’re different. I don’t act the same around my friends as I do in front of my parents!’ She has a smug ‘as if’ expression.

‘You’re absolutely right,’ I acknowledge. ‘Now what if I were to ask you to define the expectations of my role as your teacher?’ Eyebrows rise as the class considers this. ‘I’m going to pass out sticky notes and I want each of you to write down a word or phrase that describes what my job is as your teacher. When you are done, I want you to place your note on the strip of blue paper that runs up the wall in the back of the room. Each of you should place your note above the note of the person that went before you so that we create a column of sticky notes. Does everyone understand?’ A thin-faced, black boy with large
eyes and bright teeth pipes up, “So we get to tell you how to do your job?” I thoughtfully pause before answering, ‘Well . . . yah!’

What do we learn about the author from reading this passage? What kind of teacher is she? We could describe her as creative, brave, caring, and dedicated. We could decide that she is not afraid to take some risks. We know that she loves her job. Does she directly state any of these things? No. But her story shows that she is all of these things.

8. **Look at the introduction of your story.** Will it grab a reader’s attention? Think about sitting in a doctor’s office or waiting for your car to be repaired. You pick up a magazine and start to thumb through it. How long do you give an article to grab your attention before turning the page? Some people flip to the next page if the title of the article does not interest them; other more generous readers will read the first sentence or two before deciding to continue reading or to move on to the next page. Something in the opening paragraph, hopefully in the first sentence or two, should grab the reader and make him or her want to read on. Here is an example from another student’s Who I Am story:

I thought by the time I was thirty I would know what I wanted to be when I grew up. But here I am on the eve of my thirty-first birthday, and I am still searching, searching for where I fit into the world, amidst all the titles I have been given such as Sydney’s Mom, Tripp’s Wife, and Janice’s Daughter. Then there are all the roles I play: maid, chef, bookkeeper, personal shopper, and teacher. Of course that’s just what I do and who I do it for. The real question remains, when you take all of that away, who am I?

This is the first paragraph of the student’s Who I Am essay, and it does several things nicely. The conversational tone draws us in. We almost feel as if we are getting to peek inside the author’s head. “Tripp’s Wife,” “Janice’s Daughter,” “chef,” “personal shopper” are lovely specifics, and equally important, these are specifics to which most people can relate. Perhaps we are Bob’s son or Suzie’s boyfriend instead of a daughter or a wife, but we can still see the similarities between the author’s life and our own. And because of that, we want to know how she answers the question “who am I?”

9. **Treat this story like any other paper.** Have a solid organizational scheme (chronological often works well), keep one main idea per paragraph, use transitional phrasing, vary the sentence structure, and make sure the ideas flow into each other. Reflect on word choice and particularly verb choices. Just think, for example, of all the different synonyms for the word walk. A character could strut, saunter, stroll, sashay, or skip. She could mosey, meander, or march. Powerful verbs are a great way to add panache and detail to a story without making it wordy or slowing the pace.

10. **Proofread, edit, and proofread again.** Give the story to a friend and ask them to read it. Do not tell them what the paper is about or what you are trying to accomplish. Instead just ask them what they learned or what three words they would use to describe your story.

11. **And the last bit of advice—have fun.** The best storytellers enjoy telling stories. When you are telling a story, pick a story that matters to you and a story that you really want to share. Let your love for that story come through, and let others see you through your story.

**Looking Forward: Storytelling in the Professional World**

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, storytelling is not just for entertainment anymore. It’s not just a mindless academic exercise either; storytelling is quickly becoming a cornerstone of the nonprofit and corporate worlds. Storytelling can be a part of corporate training, public relations, politics, journalism, and of course, the two industries we are going to focus on: grant writing and advertising. Cheryl Clarke’s book *Storytelling for Grantseekers: A Creative Guide to Nonprofit Fundraising* has been highly praised by both grantwriters and grant readers. For decades grants have been notoriously
boring—both to write and to read. Clarke’s book is starting to change all that. Clarke begins by noting the similarities between grant writing and storytelling:

Storytelling is a powerful art form. Stories entertain, educate, and enlighten. They have the ability to transport an audience to another location and teach them about issues and people they may know nothing about. The same is true of grant writing. (xv)

Clarke continues by breaking down the different parts of the grant writing process. She relates that often the grant writing process starts with a letter of intent, a one to two-page letter summarizing the request that is sent to the funding organization. If the funding organization thinks your request has merit, they will ask you (or your organization) to submit a full grant proposal. Clarke likens the letter of intent to a short story and the full grant proposal to a novel.

Like short stories and novels, grants should also have heroes, villains (or antagonists) and a conflict. The hero is, of course, the nonprofit agency. As Clarke notes,

Nonprofit agencies do heroic work, and they are the heroes of every proposal we write. Throughout the world today, nonprofits are working diligently to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, heal the sick, teach children, conserve the environment, save endangered species, and present music performances and art exhibitions, among other important activities. . . . As grant writers, we have the opportunity to tell others these amazing stories. (52)

The antagonist is simply the need or problem. Hunger, global warming, abused animals, disease—any one of these could be the villain of the grant proposal. The nonprofit and the need become the characters in the story and supply the conflict and tension. Clarke suggests giving these characters a voice, stating “quotes are especially powerful because through them the proposal reviewer ‘hears’ directly from your agency’s clients in their own words” (81). These quotes become the dialogue in the story. Grant proposals often include other elements traditionally seen in novels, such as setting, back stories, and resolutions.

Clarke clearly shows the advantages of using storytelling techniques in grant writing, and many believe storytelling is an equally important part of advertising as a close examination of the “1984” Macintosh commercial will indicate. In 1984, Apple was in trouble. As Richard Maxwell and Robert Dickman note in their book *The Elements of Persuasion: Use Storytelling to Pitch Better, Sell Faster and Win More Business*, “at that time the computer industry was in transition . . . Apple had been a major player when computers were seen as expensive toys for hobbyists or learning platforms for children. But when corporations began seriously going digital, they naturally turned to a name they had come to trust—IBM. IBM PC computers became ‘industry standard,’ with all the purchasing and advertising muscle that implied. (11)

In response, Apple’s CEO Steve Jobs created the Macintosh computer, but he needed an advertisement that would bring attention to this computer. The “1984” commercial did just that. The “1984” commercial (available on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYecfV3ubP8) shows a dystopia: a dismal gray world where Big Brother is seen (and heard) on every television screen. Row after row of people stare mindlessly at huge television screens, watching propaganda. A woman in red shorts runs through the crowd and hurls a hammer at the largest screen, destroying it and silencing Big Brother. The commercial closes with the tagline “On January 24, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you’ll see why 1984 won’t be like 1984.”

The commercial ran only once nationally (during the 1984 Super Bowl) and is generally credited with two things. The first is saving Apple. As Maxwell and Dickman note, “The result of this ad was explosive. Seven days later there wasn’t a Macintosh left unsold on any store shelf in America, and back orders
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were beginning to stretch out for months” (12). Second, many advertising gurus believe that the “1984” commercial was one of the first advertisements to use a story.

Much like the stories Clarke talks about, the “1984” commercial has a hero: the Macintosh computer, which is personified by the attractive blonde in the short red shorts. The villain is the status quo and corporate America, both of which are supposed to symbolize IBM. The smashing of the television screen ends the conflict and provides resolution. This story also has something else: passion. As Maxwell and Dickman note: “But at its cohesive core, what made this ad white-hot was Steve Job’s passionate belief that a computer was meant to be a tool to set people free” (12). And Maxwell and Dickman believe passion is another essential element of story.

This is, of course, only one example; today most commercials tell a story, and we can certainly see why. Maxwell and Dickman explain “A good story plays as well on TV as it does whisper to a guy in the back of a union meeting hall. It’s as powerful in the powder room as it is in the boardroom. People love a good story. We can’t get enough of them. And a good story is infectious. It spreads like wildfire” (46).

Again, storytelling now appears in many forms of professional and workplace communication; grant writing and advertising are only two examples. So have fun telling your stories, enjoy them, learn to make them come alive. At the same time, you’ll be developing a marketable skill because, appropriately enough, storytelling has become a valuable commodity in corporate America.

Discussion

1. Maxwell and Dickman believe that “a story is a fact, wrapped in an emotion that compels us to take an action that transforms our world.” How would you define the term story? What do you think are the most important elements of a good story? What examples help support your thoughts?

2. How could stories and storytelling fit into your major field of study? What types of stories do you think professionals in your field might find useful?

Works Cited

Chapter 5: Thesis Statements

Chapter Contributor: Lisa Mahle-Grisez

Introduction

by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

Thesis statements are so important to academic writing that we’ve devoted an entire chapter just to the subject! A thesis statement is an essential assertion drives your essay. Thesis statements vary along with the type of paper you are writing; for instance, an analytical thesis statement will differ from an argumentative thesis statement. All thesis statements have one thing in common: thesis statements serve to focus your topic and create a purpose for writing. We rarely think of thesis statements as “surprising,” but as Andrea Scott explains below, the element of surprise is crucial to engaging your reader and eventually persuading him or her that your thesis statement is true.

Keep in mind that thesis statements often appear near the beginning of an essay, but not always. If you are confused about where to put your thesis statement, ask for clarification from your teacher about where to put thesis statements within specific writing genres and assignments.

The major types of thesis statements you will employ in ENG 1101 and 1201 are briefly explained below and in further detail in Rhonda Dietrich’s piece, “The Guiding Idea and Argumentative Thesis Statement” that appears later in this chapter.

A narrative thesis statement or “guiding idea” guides your reader through your “story” and help the reader understand why your narrative is important enough to be written (and to be read).

An analytical thesis statement offers your appraisal of how or why the text under analysis performs as it does.

An evaluative thesis statement offers your position on the value of the thing you are evaluating.

An argumentative thesis statement establishes a claim that you will prove is true by using evidence to support it.
Moving Beyond the Five-Paragraph Theme

As an instructor, I’ve noted that a number of new (and sometimes not-so-new) students are skilled wordsmiths and generally clear thinkers but are nevertheless stuck in a high-school style of writing. They struggle to let go of certain assumptions about how an academic paper should be. Chapter 1 points to the essay portion of the SAT as a representative artifact of the writing skills that K-12 education imparts. Some students who have mastered that form, and enjoyed a lot of success from doing so, assume that college writing is simply more of the same. The skills that go into a very basic kind of essay—often called the five-paragraph theme—are indispensable. If you’re good at the five-paragraph theme, then you’re good at identifying a clear and consistent thesis, arranging cohesive paragraphs, organizing evidence for key points, and situating an argument within a broader context through the intro and conclusion.

In college you need to build on those essential skills. The five-paragraph theme, as such, is bland and formulaic; it doesn’t compel deep thinking. Your professors are looking for a more ambitious and arguable thesis, a nuanced and compelling argument, and real-life evidence for all key points, all in an organically structured paper. (“Organic” here doesn’t mean “pesticide-free” or containing carbon; it means the paper grows and develops, sort of like a living thing.)

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 contrast the standard five-paragraph theme and the organic college paper. The five-paragraph theme, outlined in Figure 3.1 is probably what you’re used to: the introductory paragraph starts broad and gradually narrows to a thesis, which readers expect to find at the very end of that paragraph. In this idealized format, the thesis invokes the magic number of three: three reasons why a statement is true. Each of those reasons is explained and justified in the three body paragraphs, and then the final paragraph restates the thesis before gradually getting broader. This format is easy for readers to follow, and it helps writers organize their points and the evidence that goes with them. That’s why you learned this format.

Figure 3.2, in contrast, represents a paper on the same topic that has the more organic form expected in college. The first key difference is the thesis. Rather than simply positing a number of reasons to think that something is true, it puts forward an arguable statement: one with which a reasonable person might disagree. An arguable thesis gives the paper purpose. It surprises readers and draws them in. You hope your reader thinks, “Huh. Why would they come to that conclusion?” and then feels compelled to read on. The body paragraphs, then, build on one another to carry out this ambitious argument. In the classic five-paragraph theme (Figure 3.1) it hardly matters which of the three reasons you explain first or second. In the more organic structure (Figure 3.2) each paragraph specifically leads to the next.
Figure 3.1, The five-paragraph "theme"

The last key difference is seen in the conclusion. Because the organic essay is driven by an ambitious, non-obvious argument, the reader comes to the concluding section thinking "OK, I'm convinced by the argument. What do you, author, make of it? Why does it matter?" The conclusion of an organically structured paper has a real job to do. It doesn't just reiterate the thesis; it explains why the thesis matters.
The substantial time you spent mastering the five-paragraph form in Figure 3.1 was time well spent; it’s hard to imagine anyone succeeding with the more organic form without the organizational skills and habits of mind inherent in the simpler form. But if you assume that you must adhere rigidly to the simpler form, you’re blunting your intellectual ambition. Your professors will not be impressed by obvious theses, loosely related body paragraphs, and repetitive conclusions. They want you to undertake an ambitious independent analysis, one that will yield a thesis that is somewhat surprising and challenging to explain.

The Three-Story Thesis: From the Ground Up

You have no doubt been drilled on the need for a thesis statement and its proper location at the end of the introduction. And you also know that all of the key points of the paper should clearly support the central driving thesis. Indeed, the whole model of the five-paragraph theme hinges on a clearly stated and consistent thesis. However, some students are surprised—and dismayed—when some of their early college papers are criticized for not having a good thesis. Their professor might even claim that the
Chapter Five: Thesis Statements

paper doesn’t have a thesis when, in the author’s view it clearly does. So, what makes a good thesis in college?

1. A good thesis is non-obvious. High school teachers needed to make sure that you and all your classmates mastered the basic form of the academic essay. Thus, they were mostly concerned that you had a clear and consistent thesis, even if it was something obvious like “sustainability is important.” A thesis statement like that has a wide-enough scope to incorporate several supporting points and concurring evidence, enabling the writer to demonstrate his or her mastery of the five-paragraph form. Good enough! When they can, high school teachers nudge students to develop arguments that are less obvious and more engaging. College instructors, though, fully expect you to produce something more developed.

2. A good thesis is arguable. In everyday life, “arguable” is often used as a synonym for “doubtful.” For a thesis, though, “arguable” means that it’s worth arguing: it’s something with which a reasonable person might disagree. This arguability criterion dovetails with the non-obvious one: it shows that the author has deeply explored a problem and arrived at an argument that legitimately needs 3, 5, 10, or 20 pages to explain and justify. In that way, a good thesis sets an ambitious agenda for a paper. A thesis like “sustainability is important” isn’t at all difficult to argue for, and the reader would have little intrinsic motivation to read the rest of the paper. However, an arguable thesis like “sustainability policies will inevitably fail if they do not incorporate social justice,” brings up some healthy skepticism. Thus, the arguable thesis makes the reader want to keep reading.

3. A good thesis is well specified. Some student writers fear that they’re giving away the game if they specify their thesis up front; they think that a purposefully vague thesis might be more intriguing to the reader. However, consider movie trailers: they always include the most exciting and poignant moments from the film to attract an audience. In academic papers, too, a well specified thesis indicates that the author has thought rigorously about an issue and done thorough research, which makes the reader want to keep reading. Don’t just say that a particular policy is effective or fair; say what makes it so. If you want to argue that a particular claim is dubious or incomplete, say why in your thesis.

4. A good thesis includes implications. Suppose your assignment is to write a paper about some aspect of the history of linen production and trade, a topic that may seem exceedingly arcane. And suppose you have constructed a well-supported and creative argument that linen was so widely traded in the ancient Mediterranean that it actually served as a kind of currency. That’s a strong, insightful, arguable, well-specified thesis. But which of these thesis statements do you find more engaging?

Version A:

Linen served as a form of currency in the ancient Mediterranean world, connecting rival empires through circuits of trade.

Version B:

Linen served as a form of currency in the ancient Mediterranean world, connecting rival empires through circuits of trade. The economic role of linen raises important questions about how

shifting environmental conditions can influence economic relationships and, by extension, political conflicts.

Putting your claims in their broader context makes them more interesting to your reader and more impressive to your professors who, after all, assign topics that they think have enduring significance. Finding that significance for yourself makes the most of both your paper and your learning.

How do you produce a good, strong thesis? And how do you know when you’ve gotten there? Many instructors and writers find useful a metaphor based on this passage by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.\(^3\)

There are one-story intellectuals, two-story intellectuals, and three-story intellectuals with skylights. All fact collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one-story men. Two-story men compare, reason, generalize using the labor of fact collectors as their own. Three-story men idealize, imagine, predict—their best illumination comes from above the skylight.

One-story theses state inarguable facts. Two-story theses bring in an arguable (interpretive or analytical) point. Three-story theses nest that point within its larger, compelling implications.

The biggest benefit of the three-story metaphor is that it describes a process for building a thesis. To build the first story, you first have to get familiar with the complex, relevant facts surrounding the problem or question. You have to be able to describe the situation thoroughly and accurately. Then, with that first story built, you can layer on the second story by formulating the insightful, arguable point that animates the analysis. That’s often the most the time-consuming part: brainstorming, elaborating and comparing alternative ideas, finalizing your point. With that specified, you can frame up the third story by articulating why the point you make matters beyond its particular topic or case.

For example, imagine you have been assigned a paper about the impact of online learning in higher education. You would first construct an account of the origins and multiple forms of online learning and assess research findings about its use and effectiveness. If you’ve done that well, you’ll probably come up with a well-considered opinion that wouldn’t be obvious to readers who haven’t looked at the issue in depth. Maybe you’ll want to argue that online learning is a threat to the academic community. Or perhaps you’ll want to make the case that online learning opens up pathways to college degrees that traditional campus-based learning does not. In the course of developing your central, argumentative point, you’ll come to recognize its larger context; in this example, you may claim that online learning can serve to better integrate higher education with the rest of society, as online learners bring their educational and career experiences together.

To outline this example:

**First story:** Online learning is becoming more prevalent and takes many different forms.

**Second story:** While most observers see it as a transformation of higher education, online learning is better thought of an extension of higher education in that it reaches learners who aren’t disposed to participate in traditional campus-based education.

**Third story:** Online learning appears to be a promising way to better integrate higher education with other institutions in society, as online learners integrate their educational experiences with the other realms of their life, promoting the freer ow of ideas between the academy and the rest of society.

Here’s another example of a three-story thesis:

3 Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., *e Poet at the Breakfast Table* (New York: Houghton & Mifflin, 1892)
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_First story:_ Edith Wharton did not consider herself a modernist writer, and she didn’t write like her modernist contemporaries.

_Secend story:_ However, in her work we can see her grappling with both the questions and literary forms that fascinated modernist writers of her era. While not an avowed modernist, she did engage with modernist themes and questions.

_Third story:_ Thus, it is more revealing to think of modernism as a conversation rather than a category or practice.

_Here’s one more example:_

_First story:_ Scientists disagree about the likely impact in the U.S. of the light brown apple moth (LBAM), an agricultural pest native to Australia.

_Second story:_ Research findings to date suggest that the decision to spray pheromones over the skies of several southern Californian counties to combat the LBAM was poorly thought out.

_Third story:_ Together, the scientific ambiguities and the controversial response strengthen the claim that industrial-style approaches to pest management are inherently unsustainable. A thesis statement that stops at the first story isn’t usually considered a thesis. A two-story thesis is usually considered competent, though some two-story theses are more intriguing and ambitious than others. A thoughtfully crafted and well informed three-story thesis puts the author on a smooth path toward an excellent paper.

The concept of a three-story thesis framework was the most helpful piece of information I gained from the writing component of DCC 100. The first time I utilized it in a college paper, my professor included “good thesis” and “excellent introduction” in her notes and graded it significantly higher than my previous papers. You can expect similar results if you dig deeper to form three-story theses. More importantly, doing so will make the actual writing of your paper more straightforward as well. Arguing something specific makes the structure of your paper much easier to design.

_Three-Story Theses and the Organically Structured Argument_

The three-story thesis is a beautiful thing. For one, it gives a paper authentic momentum. The first paragraph doesn’t just start with some broad, vague statement; every sentence is crucial for setting up the thesis. The body paragraphs build on one another, moving through each step of the logical chain. Each paragraph leads inevitably to the next, making the transitions from paragraph to paragraph feel wholly natural. The conclusion, instead of being a mirror-image paraphrase of the introduction, builds out the third story by explaining the broader implications of the argument. It offers new insight without departing from the ow of the analysis.

I should note here that a paper with this kind of momentum often reads like it was knocked out in one inspired sitting. But in reality, just like accomplished athletes and artists, masterful writers make the difficult things look easy. As writer Anne Lamott notes, reading a well written piece feels like its author sat down and typed it out, “bounding along like huskies across the snow.” However, she continues,

  This is just the fantasy of the uninitiated. I know some very great writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely
feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. Not one of them writes elegant first drafts. All right, one of them does, but we do not like her very much.4

Experienced writers don’t figure out what they want to say and then write it. They write in order to figure out what they want to say.

Experienced writers develop theses in dialog with the body of the essay. An initial characterization of the problem leads to a tentative thesis, and then drafting the body of the paper reveals thorny contradictions or critical areas of ambiguity, prompting the writer to revisit or expand the body of evidence and then refine the thesis based on that fresh look. The revised thesis may require that body paragraphs be reordered and reshaped to fit the emerging three-story thesis. Throughout the process, the thesis serves as an anchor point while the author wades through the morass of facts and ideas. The dialogue between thesis and body continues until the author is satisfied or the due date arrives, whatever comes first. It’s an effortful and sometimes tedious process. Novice writers, in contrast, usually oversimplify the writing process. They formulate some first-impression thesis, produce a reasonably organized outline, and then flesh it out with text, never taking the time to reflect or truly revise their work. They assume that revision is a step backward when, in reality, it is a major step forward.

Another benefit of the three-story thesis framework is that it demystifies what a “strong” argument is in academic culture. In an era of political polarization, many students may think that a strong argument is based on a simple, bold, combative statement that is promoted in the most forceful way possible. “Gun control is a travesty!” “Shakespeare is the best writer who ever lived!” When students are encouraged to consider contrasting perspectives in their papers, they fear that doing so will make their own thesis seem mushy and weak. However, in academics a “strong” argument is comprehensive and nuanced, not simple and polemical. The purpose of the argument is to explain to readers why the author—through the course of his or her in-depth study—has arrived at a somewhat surprising point. On that basis, it has to consider plausible counter-arguments and contradictory information. Academic argumentation exemplifies the popular adage about all writing: show, don’t tell. In crafting and carrying out the three-story thesis, you are showing your reader the work you have done.

The model of the organically structured paper and the three-story thesis framework explained here is the very foundation of the paper itself and the process that produces it. Your professors assume that you have the self-motivation and organizational skills to pursue your analysis with both rigor and flexibility; that is, they envision you developing, testing, refining and sometimes discarding your own ideas based on a clear-eyed and open-minded assessment of the evidence before you.

Other Resources

1. The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offers an excellent, readable rundown on the five-paragraph theme, why most college writing assignments want you to go beyond it, and those times when the simpler structure is actually a better choice.

2. There are many useful websites that describe good thesis statements and provide examples. Those from the writing centers at Hamilton College, Purdue University, and Clarkson University are especially helpful.

Exercises

1. Find a scholarly article or book that is interesting to you. Focusing on the abstract and introduction, outline the first, second, and third stories of its thesis.

2. Here is a list of one-story theses. Come up with two-story and three-story versions of each one. A. Television programming includes content that some find objectionable. B. One percent of children and youth who are overweight or obese has risen in recent decades. C. First-year college students must learn how to independently manage their time. D. The things we surround ourselves with symbolize who we are.

3. Find an example of a five-paragraph theme (online essay mills, your own high school work), produce an alternative three-story thesis, and outline an organically structured paper to carry that thesis out.

4. Go to the SAT website about the essay exam, choose one of the highly rated sample essays. In structure, how does it compare to the five-paragraph theme? How does it compare to the organic college essay? Use the SAT essay example you found to create alternative examples for Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

The Guiding Idea and Argumentative Thesis Statement
How are they different? How are they used?

by Rhonda Dietrich, Writing Commons

Two Types of Essays
Your composition professor has given you an assignment, requiring you to write an essay in which you identify your favorite book and explain why you like it best. Later she assigns an essay in which you take a stand either for or against homeschooling. Both assignments require you to write a paper, yet the essays called for are in two different genres. Thus, you will need to present your views in two different ways.

Two Types of Main Point
Although these genres are different, they are similar in that both require your essay to have a main point. In fact, it is crucial that you have a central idea in both types of essay. Neither paper will be successful without it. It’s that important. It is also highly recommended that you present your main idea toward the end of your first paragraph, so readers will know at the onset what point you plan to make in your essay. It also should be around 1-2 sentences long. However, that’s where the similarity ends. As you will see, you need to present a guiding idea when discussing your favorite book; however, when taking a position on the controversial issue of homeschooling, you will have to present your point of view in an argumentative thesis statement. Let’s take a closer look at both ways of presenting the main point of an essay to get a better idea of why and how each is used.
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The Guiding Idea

Purpose
It may seem that papers in which you state your favorite book, relate your most cherished memory, or describe your little sister don’t need a central idea. After all, you aren’t trying to convince anyone to vote for a certain political candidate or to ban smoking in public places. However, without a main point even these types of essays will have no coherence. The guiding idea provides this crucial ingredient. Without this expressly written main point, the paper will be unclear and unfocused, and readers will often be confused about the idea you are trying to get across.

Criteria
For the guiding idea to be effective it must be:

Clear: If readers can’t understand it, it is as if your paper doesn’t have one.

Example of a good guiding idea: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone is my favorite book because it includes a wide variety of characters. Note: The sentence is clear and leaves no question in the reader’s mind regarding what the student wants to say in the essay.

Example of an unclear guiding idea: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone is good, so I like it. Note: The sentence is unclear because the reader doesn’t know if this is the student’s favorite book or why the student thinks it is “good.”

Specific: If it contains vague words such as “good” and “things,” it will not be effective in getting your point across.

Example of a specific guiding idea: During the summer of my thirteenth year, I developed a passion for British Romantic poetry due to its celebration of nature. Note: This makes clear what the writer’s main idea is. It is also likely to make the reader want to read on.

Example of a vague guiding idea: During the summer of my thirteenth year, I learned that there are a lot of good things about Romantic poetry. Note: The words “good things” are too vague to give the reader a clear understanding of the writer’s main point. The vague terms may also make the statement a little boring for the reader and may not entice him or her to read on.

Simple to support: In other words, if it is presented unclearly, vaguely, or in an overly complex way, it will be very difficult to back it up effectively in the rest of the essay.

Example of a supportable guiding idea: If you follow these five easy steps, you will soon be enjoying a delicious piece of chocolate cake with your friends. Note: Here the student only has to explain in detail each of these steps in order to support the central point of the essay.

Example of an unsupportable guiding idea: Nobody likes baking cakes. Note: There is nowhere to go in this paper. The writer doesn’t know everyone, so it would be impossible to prove this in the essay.

Exercise 1
Ask the following questions about a paper with a guiding question. Perhaps your narrative used the guiding question format? Then in a paragraph answer the following questions:

How clear is the guiding idea?

How well does the writer stay focused on it? Give examples from the paper to back up your answer.

Which supporting point sticks out to you? Why?
Chapter Five: Thesis Statements

The Argumentative Thesis Statement

**Purpose**
On the other hand, if you want to convince your reader that your position on the issue of homeschooling or capital punishment is valid, you will need to present your point of view in an argumentative thesis statement. With this statement, you not only tell readers what you think about an issue, but you also let them know what you intend to prove in your paper. For this reason there is no need to explain to readers that you will back up your thesis in your essay. Setting out to prove the validity of your point of view as your paper continues marks the difference between stating an opinion and presenting an argument.

**Criteria**
Although the thesis statement's purpose is different from that of the guiding idea, the two are similar in some very important ways. Both express the writer's central idea or main point and, thus, need to be clear and specific. In addition, the two need to be written in a way that makes it possible for the writer to support them effectively. However, because the thesis statement presents an argument that must be convincing to readers, it needs to have some important characteristics of its own:

**It must be logical and reasonable.** Clearly, if you want to your reader to “listen” to what you have to say, you need to show that you have thought out your argument from all angles.

- Example of a reasonable thesis: The habit of bullying is caused by parental neglect.  
- **Note:** Whether or not the reader agrees, it seems like a reasonable claim and one that could be supported in the essay.

- Example of an unreasonable thesis: All Democrats should be thrown out of the country.  
- **Note:** This thesis suggests an impossible solution to an unknown problem and, thus, cannot be supported.

**It must be controversial.** This is often difficult for students who are used to writing reports on various subjects in high school. However, presenting a controversial main argument is crucial. If you don’t need to convince your readers that your main point is valid, then you don’t have any reason to write a persuasion paper.

- Example of a controversial thesis: The Health Care Reform Act threatens our civil liberties. Note: If you have watched the news lately, you know that many liberals and conservatives battle over this issue. Thus, no matter what position you choose, half of your readers will probably disagree with your stance, and you will definitely need to convince them that your view is valid.

- Example of a non-controversial thesis: War is bad. Note: Most readers would agree. Thus, the writer has no need to prove anything in the paper, and it will be boring to write and to read. Also, many times students who present this type of thesis find it very hard to fill the assigned number of pages.

**It must be provable.** For your thesis statement to be effective, you must be able to prove its validity with supporting arguments and logical evidence. However, there are times when the thesis statement’s soundness cannot be proven.

- Example of a provable thesis: The laws surrounding legalized physician-assisted suicide don’t go far enough in protecting doctors from prosecution. Note: This writer here can present case studies, quotes from experts, and strong supporting arguments to convince the reader that this argument is valid.
Chapter Five: Thesis Statements

Example of an unsupportable thesis: Euthanasia is wrong. Note: There is no way to back up this thesis. It is impossible to prove the validity of statements that include value judgments such as “right,” “wrong,” “immoral,” “moral,” etc.

**It must be an opinion.** This rule may seem obvious, but is sometimes difficult for students used to writing facts-based papers. Often they are convinced that putting an opinion in a paper constitutes bias and, thus, it should be avoided. However, hopefully, by now it has become clear that all effective arguments are based on opinions. For an example of the effective opinion-based thesis, review the logical, controversial, and provable thesis statements given above. Note: Each one presents a personal viewpoint that will need to be backed up through supporting arguments and evidence in order to be convincing to readers.

Example of a fact-based thesis: There are many types of dogs. Note: This thesis presents a fact rather than an opinion; thus, the writer will simply report data concerning various dogs. There is no personal viewpoint that needs to be backed up by supportive evidence.

**Other Requirements of the Argumentative Thesis**
While the list above provides many crucial criteria for the thesis, there are others that need to be mentioned briefly as well. Your thesis statement should never be in the form of a question, and it should always present your view and not someone else’s. Thus, always avoid quoting or paraphrasing someone in your thesis.

**Exercise 2**
Read each thesis statement below and determine if it is effective. If it isn’t state, identify which of the characteristics discussed above that it violates.

Example: It is important to spay or neuter pets.

Answer: This thesis is not controversial.

Students who cheat on tests should be shot.
The Internet makes it easy to learn a lot of facts.
Cheating on income taxes is wrong.
Many people assign stereotypes to homosexuals out of fear.
Penguins mostly live on the North Pole.
Chapter 6: Profile

Introduction

by Kate Geiselman, Sinclair Community College

The purpose of a profile is to give the reader new insight into a particular person, place, or event. The distinction between a profile and, for example, a memoir or a biography is that a profile relies on newly acquired knowledge. It is a first-hand account of someone or something as told by the writer.

You have probably read profiles of famous or interesting people in popular magazines or newspapers. Travel and science publications may profile interesting or unusual places. All of these are, in effect, observation essays. A curious writer gathers as much information as s/he can about a subject, and then presents it in an engaging way. A good profile shows the reader something new or unexpected about the subject.

Dialogue, description, specific narrative action, and vivid details are all effective means of profiling your subject. Engage your reader’s senses. Give them a sense of what it’s like to be in a particular place. Try to show your reader what’s behind the scenes of a familiar place or activity, or introduce them to someone unique.

A profile is not strictly objective. Rather than merely reporting facts, a profile works to create a dominant impression. The focus of a profile is on the subject, not on the writer’s experience. However, the writer is still “present” in a profile, as it is s/he who selects which details to reveal and decides what picture they want to paint. It is the writer’s job to use the information and writing strategies that best contribute to this dominant impression, which was a concept discussed in the narrative introduction as well.

Above all, a profile should have a clear angle. In other words, there should be an idea or purpose guiding it. Why do you think your subject is something other people will be interested in reading about? What is the impression you hope to convey? The answer to these questions will help you discover your angle.

Writing Strategies for Profiles

Conducting research

Observation
The best way to conduct research about your subject is to observe it firsthand. Once you have decided on a topic, you should spend some time gathering information about it. If you decide to profile a place, pay a visit to it and take notes. Write down everything you can; you can decide later whether or not it’s relevant. If you have a smartphone, take pictures or make recordings to refer to later. Most people think of observing as something you do with your eyes, but try to use of all of your senses. Smells, sounds, and sensations will add texture to your descriptions. You may also spend time observing your subject at his/her work or in different contexts. Again, write everything down so you don’t forget the key details. Remember, it’s the specific details that will distinguish the great profiles from the merely proficient ones.
Interviewing
If you choose to profile a person, you will want to conduct an interview with him/her. Before doing so, plan what you are going to ask. You probably have a good idea of why this person will be a good subject for a profile, so be sure your questions reflect that. Saying “tell me about yourself” is unlikely to get your subject talking. Saying, “tell me what it was like to be the first person in your family to go to college,” will get a much more specific answer.

Organizing your profile
Once you have gathered all of your information, it’s time to start thinking about how to organize it. There are all different ways to write a profile, but the most common organizational strategies are chronological, spatial, and topical. Most profiles are some combination of the three.

Chronological order is presenting details as they happened in time, from start to finish. A chronological profile of a person might talk about their past, work up to their present, and maybe even go on to plans for the future. A chronological profile of an event might begin and end when the event itself does, narrating the events between in the order they happened. If you’re profiling a place, a chronological profile might begin with your first impressions arriving there and end with your departure. The advantage to writing in chronological order is that your writing will unfold naturally and transition easily from start to finish. The disadvantage, though, is that strict chronological order can get tedious. Merely recounting a conversation or experience can be dry, and can also pull focus from the subject onto the writer’s experience.

Spatial organization is presenting information as it occurs in space or by location. This is a great choice if you’re writing about a place. Think of it as taking your reader on a tour: from room to room of a house, for example. For an event, you might move your reader from place to place. If you are writing about a concert, for instance, you might describe the venue from the outside, then the seating area, then the stage. Spatial organization can even work for a person, depending on your focus. Try profiling a person at home, work, and school, for example.

Topical organization is just what it sounds like: one topic at a time. Think first of what you want to say about a person or place and organize details and information by subject. A profile of a person might talk about their home life, their work, and their hobbies. A topical profile of a place might focus on the physical space, the people who inhabit it, its historical significance, etc. Look at the information you gather from observation and/or interviewing and see if any topics stand out, and organize your paper around them.

Most profiles are some combination of chronological, spatial, and topical organization. A profile might begin with a chronological narrative of a hockey game, and then flashback to provide some background information about the star player. Then it might go on to talk about that player’s philosophy of the sport, returning to the narrative about the game later on. As you read the sample essays, notice how the writers choose details and arrange them in order to create a specific impression.

Using description
Vivid descriptions are key in a profile. They immerse your reader in the subject and add texture and depth to your writing. However, describing something is more than deploying as many adjectives as possible. In fact, the best descriptions may not have any adjectives at all. They rely instead on sensory detail and figurative language.

Sensory detail is exactly what it sounds like: appealing to as many of the reader’s senses as possible. Adjectives can be vague, and even subjective. Think about this example:

“My grandmother always smelled good.”
Chapter Six: Profile

What does good mean? What does good smell like? Do we even agree on what kinds of things smell good? Instead, try this:

“My grandmother always smelled good: like Shalimar, Jergen’s lotion, and menthol cigarettes.”

Now your reader knows much more. Perhaps they are even familiar enough with those scents that they can imagine what that combination would smell like. Moreover, you have delivered some emotional information here. Not every reader would agree that the smell of cigarettes is “good,” but perhaps that smell is comforting to you because you associate it so strongly with someone you care about.

Of course, smell is not the only sense you can appeal to. Sights, sounds, temperatures and tastes will also enliven your writing.

Figurative language can add depth and specificity to your descriptions. Use metaphors, similes, comparisons and images creatively and purposefully. Consider the following:

“She was so beautiful.”

Not only is this technically not a sentence (it’s not a complete thought…how beautiful is she?), but “beautiful” just doesn’t tell us much. It is, like “good,” both vague and subjective. We don’t all have the same standards of beauty, nor is beauty one particular quality. Try a comparison instead:

“She was so beautiful that conversation stopped every time she entered a room.”

True, we don’t know much about what she looks like, but we do know that nearly everyone finds her striking.

Similes (comparisons using like or as) are not only efficient, but are also more vivid than adjectives. Compare these two sentences:

“He was short and muscular.” vs. “He was built like a bulldog.”

See?

Readings

Write With Clarity
by Joseph M. Moxley, Writing Commons

You tend to use less explicit descriptions (such as clichés, qualifiers, wordy constructions, overuse of prepositional phrases, vague constructions). How might your discussion be more precise and engaging? How might your revise this sentence to make it clearer, more active, more convincing, and more connected to other sentences or ideas?
These questions touch on one of the foundations of effective writing—clarity. Excessive wordiness (often caused by passive constructions) can confuse readers and require them to spend more time trying to understand your sentences rather than your ideas. Writing clearly and concisely entails frequent revision, but there are some guiding principles to help refine your writing:

**Be specific.**
When we speak, we use voice inflection and hand gestures to convey our points, but we don’t have this luxury when we write. We have words, but words alone require more effort. Consider the word "dog." For some, this word evokes, or calls to mind, your four-legged best friend; for others, the word may conjure images of that guy who never called. If the word dog makes up part of a sentence, we may be able to tell that the writer refers to an animal that barks—but there are still 5,000 different kinds of dogs, so which type of dog is it? After all, there is a big difference between a Chihuahua and a Pit Bull. Getting specific ensures that your reader understands the message you're trying to convey.

**Be active.**
“Active voice” refers to the relationship between the subject and the verb of a sentence. In an active sentence, the subject carries out the action of the verb, i.e., “Joseph (subject) ate (verb) the burrito.” In passive sentences, however, the subject no longer acts but is acted upon by the verb: "The burrito was eaten (verb) by Joseph (subject)" or "The burrito was eaten" (if the subject is unknown). Below are some more examples. Note that in these examples, the sentences become shorter and more specific because active writing forces the writer to be clearer and more assertive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The reason he left his job at the bank was because his health began</td>
<td>He left his job at the bank because his health began to fail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The balloon was blown up by me.</td>
<td>I blew up the balloon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The boat has been destroyed by a hurricane.</td>
<td>A hurricane destroyed the boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dragon has been killed by the heroine.</td>
<td>The heroine killed the dragon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Don’t just be. Do!**
The overuse of “to be” verbs can weaken the effect of your writing. Remember that because verbs indicate the action and energy of your sentences, they are very important. Active verbs add flavor to our sentences. When we rely too much on “to be” verbs, our writing becomes wordy and boring. Including active verbs shortens the sentences and makes them easier to understand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overuse of &quot;To Be&quot;</th>
<th>Active Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One difference between watching television and reading is that reading is an</td>
<td>Reading differs from watching television because reading requires active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity that is dependent upon more participation while watching television</td>
<td>participation while watching television allows the viewer to sit back and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a more passive activity.</td>
<td>relax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am about to be fired.</td>
<td>My boss will soon fire me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you are okay with this proposition, let me know. If you accept this proposition, let me know.

People are always saying that I am an intellectually gifted person. People often praise me for my intellectual giftedness.

Be positive
Readers enjoy reading what is rather than what is not. When you compose a piece of writing, be sure to make assertions by avoiding bland or hesitant language. Consider the following sentence: “She did not think that studying algebra was a valuable way to spend the morning.” Now here’s a revision in the positive: “She thought studying algebra was a waste of the morning.” In the revised version, it is clear what she thinks about studying: it wasted the morning. In general, avoid using the word not when another word can replace it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Form</th>
<th>Positive Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not interesting</td>
<td>Boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not honest</td>
<td>Dishonest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Trifling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not paying attention</td>
<td>Ignoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not big</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avoid Repetition
Sometimes writers strive for word counts rather than precision. Unfortunately, this rarely fools the reader. While the impulse to write more seems reasonable, it often leads to repetitive, bland paragraphs. As you revise, look for words that restate sentiments. Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repetitive</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrible tragedy</td>
<td>Tragedy implies terrible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large in size</td>
<td>Large indicates a size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual facts</td>
<td>Actuality requires factuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink in color</td>
<td>Pink is a color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely whole</td>
<td>Being whole entails completion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering point of view
Because a profile is a first-hand account, you will need to consider point of view carefully. Many profiles
are written entirely in third person. Others use first person. Different instructors may have different expectations, so be sure to consult your assignment guidelines to see what your options are.

In a third-person profile, the writer is not “present” in the writing. S/he does not refer to his/her own actions or use first-person pronouns, but is more of an objective observer or “fly on the wall.” Most journalistic profiles are written from this point of view. The advantage of using third person is that it places your subject firmly at the center of your paper.

In a first-person profile, the writer is an active participant, sharing his/her observations with the reader. First person narration closes the distance between writer and reader and makes the subject feel more personal. On the downside, it can pull focus from your subject. If you use first person, be sure you’re not intruding on your subject too much or making the piece about you.

The First Person

By Fredrik deBoer, Writing Commons

The first person—“I,” “me,” “my,” etc.—can be a useful and stylish choice in academic writing, but inexperienced writers need to take care when using it.

There are some genres and assignments for which the first person is natural. For example, personal narratives require frequent use of the first person (see, for example, "Employing Narrative in an Essay"). Profiles, or brief and entertaining looks at prominent people and events, frequently employ the first person. Reviews, such as for movies or restaurants, often utilize the first person as well. Any writing genre that involves the writer’s taste, recollections, or feelings can potentially utilize the first person.

But what about more formal academic essays? In this case, you may have heard from instructors and teachers that the first person is never appropriate. The reality is a little more complicated. The first person can be a natural fit for expository, critical, and researched writing, and can help develop style and voice in what can often be dry or impersonal genres. But you need to take care when using the personal voice, and watch out for a few traps.

First, as always, listen to your teacher, instructor, or professor. Follow the guidelines given to you; if you’re not supposed to use the first person in a particular class or assignment, don’t! Also, recognize that, while it is not universally valid or helpful, the common advice to avoid the first person in academic writing comes from legitimate concerns about its misuse. Many instructors advise their students in this way due to experience with students misusing the first person.

Why do teachers often counsel against using the first person in an academic paper? Used too frequently or without care, it can make a writer seem self-centered, even self-obsessed. A paper filled with “I,” “me,” and “mine” can be distracting to a reader, as it creates the impression that the writer is more interested in him- or herself than the subject matter. Additionally, the first person is often a more casual mode, and if used carelessly, it can make a writer seem insufficiently serious for an academic project. Particularly troublesome can be constructions like “I think” or “in my opinion;” overused, they can make a writer appear unsure or noncommittal. On issues of personal taste and opinion, statements like “I believe” are usually inferred, and thus repeatedly stating that a statement is only your opinion is redundant. (Of course, if a statement is someone else’s opinion, it must be responsibly cited.)
Given those issues, why is the first person still sometimes an effective strategy? For one, using the first person in an academic essay reminds the audience (and the author) of a simple fact: that someone is writing the essay, a particular person in a particular context. A writer is in a position of power; he or she is the master of the text. It’s easy, given that mastery, for writers and readers alike to forget that the writer is composing from a limited and contingent perspective. By using the first person, writers remind audiences and themselves that all writing, no matter how well supported by facts and evidence, comes from a necessarily subjective point of view. Used properly, this kind of reminder can make a writer appear more thoughtful and modest, and in doing so become more credible and persuasive.

The first person is also well-suited to the development of style and personal voice. The personal voice is, well, personal; to use the first person effectively is to invite readers into the individual world of the writer. This can make a long essay seem shorter, an essay about a dry subject seem more engaging, and a complicated argument seem less intimidating. The first person is also a great way to introduce variety into a paper. Academic papers, particularly longer ones, can often become monotonous. After all, detailed analysis of a long piece of literature or a large amount of data requires many lines of text. If such an analysis is not effectively varied in method or tone, a reader can find the text uninteresting or discouraging. The first person can help dilute that monotony, precisely because its use is rare in academic writing.

The key to all of this, of course, is using the first person well and judiciously. Any stylistic device, no matter its potential, can be misused. The first person is no exception. So how to use the first person well in an academic essay?

First, by paying attention to the building blocks of effective writing. Good writing requires consistency in reference. Don’t mix between first, second, and third person. Although referring to yourself in the third person in an academic essay is rare (I hope!), sometimes references to “the author” or “this writer” can pop up and cause confusion. “This author feels it is to my advantage…” is a good example of mixing third person references (this author) with first person reference (my advantage). If you must use the third person, keep it consistent throughout your essay: “This author feels it is to his advantage…” Be aware, however, that such references can often sound pretentious or inflated. In most cases it will be better to keep to the simpler first person voice: “I feel it is to my advantage.”

Similarly, be cautious about mixing the second and first person. Second person reference (“You feel,” “you find,” “it strikes you,”) can be a useful tool, particularly when trying to build a confessional or conversational tone. But as with the third person, mixing second and first person is an easy trap to fall into, and confuses your prose: “I often feel as if you have no choice….” While such constructions can potentially be grammatically correct, they are unnecessarily confusing. When in doubt, use only one form of reference for yourself or your audience, and be clear in distinguishing them. Again, use caution: as the second person essentially speaks for your readers, it can seem presumptuous. In most cases, the first person is a better choice.

Finally, consistency is important when employing either the singular or plural first person (“we,” “us,” “our”). The first person plural is often employed in literary analysis: “we have to balance Gatsby’s story with Nick’s skepticism.” Here, I would recommend maintaining consistency not just within a sentence or paragraph, but within the entire text. Shifting from speaking about what I feel or think to what we feel or think invites the question of what, exactly, has changed. If a writer has made observations of the type “we know,” and then later of the type “I believe,” it suggests that the writer has lost some perspective or authority.
Once you’ve assured that you’re using the first person in a consistent, grammatically correct fashion, your most important tools are restraint and caution. As I indicated above, part of the power of the first person in an academic essay is that it is a rarely used alternative to the typical third person mode. This power only persists if you use the first person in moderation. Constantly peppering your academic essays with the first person dilutes its ability to provoke a reader. You should use the first person rarely enough to ensure that, when you do, the reader notices; it should immediately contrast with the convention you’ve built in your essay.

Given this need for restraint, student writers would do best to use the first person only when they have a deliberate purpose for using it. Is there something different about the particular passage, paragraph, or moment into which you want to introduce the first person? Do you want to call attention to a particular issue or idea in your paper, particularly if you feel less certain about that idea, or more personally connected to it? Finally, have you established a consistent use of the third person, so that using the first person here represents a meaningful change? After a long, formal argument, the first person can feel like an invitation for the reader to get a little closer.

Think of the first person as a powerful spice. Just enough can make a bland but serviceable dish memorable and tasty. Too much can render it inedible. Use the first person carefully, when you have a good reason to do so, and it can enliven your academic papers.

**Using appropriate verb tense**

Often, profiles will be written in present tense. This gives the reader the sense that s/he is “there,” experiencing the subject along with the writer. Present tense lends a sense of immediacy and intimacy that past tense may not. It may also help the writer stay focused on the “here and now,” rather than reflecting on the past, as s/he might in a memoir. Other times, writers may need to shift tenses to talk about previous events or background information. Be sure to use verb tenses carefully, shifting only purposefully, correctly, and when the subject demands it. You can read more on tense shifts here.

**Finding a topic and an angle**

Virtually anything can be the subject of a profile. What matters is that you have something to say about it. People are an endless source of material; everyone has a story. Make a list of people you know who

- have lived through important historical events: war, the civil rights era, the Depression, etc.
- have been through challenging experiences: survived a major health crisis, difficult childhood, etc.
- have an unusual job or hobby, or special talent or skill.
- have unique personalities: they are eccentric, funny, selfless, energetic, artistic, etc.

Places can be equally interesting. Consider a local establishment, a natural wonder, a festival or celebration, a landmark, a museum, a gathering place, etc. What makes that place interesting and worth visiting? What makes it special or noteworthy?

Don’t just think about what you want to write about; instead, think about what you want to say about it. Why is it interesting to you, and why might your audience find it worth reading about?

**Sample profiles**

As you read the sample profiles in this chapter, consider the following:

What dominant impression is the writer trying to convey?
How effectively does the writer use sensory detail and figurative language?
What is the writer’s point of view (first person, third person, or mixed)?
Chapter Six: Profile

How is the profile organized (chronological, spatial, topical, or some combination thereof)?
What tense does the writer use, and what effect does this have?
Chapter Seven: Evaluation

Chapter 7: Evaluation
Chapter Contributors: Caroline Reynolds, Dair Arnold, and Lisa Mahle-Grisez

Introduction
by Scott McLean, Writing for Success
adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

An evaluation judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations in everyday experiences are often not only dictated by set standards, but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge. For example, at work, a supervisor may complete an employee evaluation by judging his subordinate’s performance based on the company’s goals. If the company focuses on improving communication, the supervisor will rate the employee’s customer service according to a standard scale. However, the evaluation still depends on the supervisor’s opinion and prior experience with the employee. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine how well the employee performs at his or her job.

An academic evaluation communicates your opinion, and its justifications, about a document or a topic of discussion. Evaluations are influenced by your reading of the document, your prior knowledge, and your prior experience with the topic or issue. Because an evaluation incorporates your point of view and reasons for your point of view, it typically requires more critical thinking and a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills.

In ENG 1101 and 1201 you may be asked to evaluate any number of things – a document, a film, a research source, or even an experience. Keep in mind that an evaluation depends on a set of criteria that you establish to determine the worth of what you are evaluating. For instance, to evaluate a movie, you will need to set a list of criteria for what makes a good horror film or a good romantic comedy. Often your instructor will ask you to move past that original statement about “good or bad” and to be more specific in your evaluation. (Refer to evaluative thesis statements in Chapter 5.)

Reviews and Recommendations
by Joe Moxley, Writing Commons

Reviews present an author’s opinion or interpretation. Writing an evaluative text involves defining criteria and then applying these criteria to assess a subject. Writers of effective evaluative texts go beyond making global proclamations--statements such as "I think the movie is boring" or "The musician stinks." Instead, effective evaluative texts provide the background information and evidence that readers need to understand their assessment.

Why Write Reviews and Recommendations?
In school, you will be asked to evaluate instructors, other students, textbooks, theories, and research
studies. As part of your everyday life, you will conduct evaluations and read others’ evaluations of products to make informed consumer decisions. Just about anything can be evaluated, including:

• Consumer goods (e.g., consumer electronics, cars, boats)
• Places (e.g., homes, restaurants, ski resorts, vacation destinations)
• Performances (e.g., movies, CDs, music videos, plays, speeches)
• Web sites
• Events
• People (e.g., politicians, writers, co-workers)
• Ideas/theories
• Photographs, paintings, etchings
• Advertising
• Careers or academic degree

Conducting evaluations is a fundamental way to better understand and improve our world. When you write evaluative texts, you are asking critical questions, such as: Is this the right college or academic degree for me? Was the movie suspenseful, entertaining, worthwhile? Should I wear these clothes?

Evaluation texts are typically acts of persuasion. Beyond entertaining you with their wit and intelligence, critics of movies, restaurants, and music want you to accept their judgment. As experts, these critics want to be arbiters of good taste—and, often, they want to help you by sharing the results of their experience and research.

Even when authors attempt to present an objective, detached tone/voice, they often want readers to agree with their analyses. At times, writers may even be deceptive about their biases. Remarkably, some reviews are pure fictions, created by marketing executives. For example, Sony Pictures was harshly rebuked for creating David Manning, a fictional critic, who (not surprisingly) energetically and positively reviewed their films. [“David Manning, Imaginary Film Critic” by Robert Fulford]

Occasionally, however, the topic isn’t contentious. The author may not be attempting to persuade readers one way or another, focusing, instead, on informing readers or analyzing a complex topic. For example, the building inspector may not care whether the buyer purchases the home; his report applies preset criteria to judging the market value of the property (comparables, quality of construction, condition of roof, appliances, plumbing, etc.). In turn, the medical examiner wants to discern the cause of death and write an objective report.
Diverse Rhetorical Situations
As illustrated in the chart below, people write and read evaluative texts for a variety of communication situations, and they employ a variety of media. The driving purpose of most reviews is argument; even when writers adopt a detached, formal, and objective voice, they are asserting that their interpretation is accurate and reliable. Occasionally writers assume other voices--perhaps adopting a satirical or irreverent tone. Usually, writers base their reviews on personal experience and informal "primary research" (questionnaires, interviews, or ethnographies), perhaps explaining their reaction to a movie, play, or exhibition. They may or may not conduct formal secondary research--i.e., actually research or see what others have said about the subject they are reviewing (library or Internet research). In general, though, they are well read on the topic they write about.

Sampling of Rhetorical Situations

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Rhetorical Analysis of Online Readings
Consider the context, audience, purpose, and media invoked by the following readings. Also examine how ideas are developed in these texts. Are assertions grounded in personal experience, interviews with authorities, questionnaires, Internet and library research, or empirical research? As demonstrated below, people write critical reviews for many different reasons, addressing a variety of audiences.

For years, professional columnists have written reviews of movies, music, film, and restaurants in newspapers and magazines. Today, many reviews can easily be found online:

- AllMusic.com provides thousands of reviews of musician's works: "Our experts use a 1 to 5 star system with 5 being considered the best rating. It is important to note that our album ratings are localized; we only compare a release to other releases by the same artist. We won't compare a Britney Spears album to the latest release by Incubus."

- AllGame.com provides thousands of reviews of games.
- AllMovie.com reviews movies.

More recently, Internet sites have empowered people to add their two cents. In other words, users can complete surveys or write reviews. Consider, for example, the following sites that provide a forum for people to review movies, Web sites, and music:

- The National Museum of Photography, Film, and Television provides many film reviews and presents an easy online form by which users can submit their own reviews. Reviews range from informal and incomplete to professional and thorough.
- Magdalena Ball created The Compulsive Reader, an interactive Web site, to encourage people to discuss books and movies.
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- Targeting an academic audience, H-Net Reviews presents reviews on books, articles, games, and multimedia. H-Net Reviews invites participation from readers; editors proof and copyedit submissions.
- Readerville.com provides free, subscription-based forums that enable users to discuss serious fiction and nonfiction.
- Amazon.com encourages reviews of books and CDs, yet it requires users to log in before submitting their reviews.

Companies, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations often bring in outside consultants to evaluate and improve work flow, written documents, or decision-making processes. Occasionally, a whistle blower will write an internal document that forces insiders to reconsider their practices. For example, in a classified 13-page memo to FBI Director Robert Mueller, Coleen Rowley, an FBI veteran of 21 years, critiqued FBI headquarters, suggesting FBI's upper management ignored the advice of field agents regarding the possibility of terrorists using commercial airliners to destroy buildings. Rowley's whistle blowing letter resulted in Senate hearings in Washington, D.C.

Internet users sometimes debate the value of particular Internet browsers (e.g., Internet Explorer vs. Netscape Navigator), operating systems (Windows vs. Macintosh), and search engines:

- ShareWareJunkies.com provides hundreds of software reviews. Readers are invited to apply to be reviewers. The site contains advertisements but the reviews are free.
- Based on users' feedback and well-defined criteria, Danny Sullivan created the 2001 Search Engine Watch Award.
- Architects frequently critique the design of buildings. For example, in the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative Quarterly, the editor critiques Frank Gehry's controversial new building at Case Western Reserve.
- The Internet Scout Report provides summaries and reviews of Web sites likely to interest "researchers, educators, and anyone else with an interest in high-quality online material."
- PickaProf.com enables students to share their evaluations of their professors.
- Medical Matrix provides a free, subscription-based, peer-reviewed, ranked assessment of medical Web sites: "Medical Matrix is a free directory of selected medical sites on the Internet. The Medical Matrix search engine is available by subscription. Each site listing has been carefully evaluated by reviewers from our panel of physicians and medical librarians." Clearly, professionals in the medical field are the targeted audience for this Web site.
- Medical Resource Database identifies its target audience as "Nurses, Physicians, Dentists, Students, Health consumers/Patients." It reviews Web sites that provide information in the following areas: "Anatomy, Physiology, Internal Medicine, Physical Therapy, Exercise Therapy, Pharmacology, Dermatology, Dentistry, Acupuncture, Nursing, Gastroenterology, Surgery, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Urology, Pulmonology, Cardiology, Ophthalmology, Prevention, Naturopathy, Sports Medicine, Radiology, Lab, Psychology, Neurology, Psychiatry, Pediatrics, Infectious Diseases, Primary Care, Endocrinology."
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- Books Dealing With Children's Mental Health Topics. Written for parents and child-development psychologists, this review site focuses on texts on a variety of issues and topics.

Evaluation texts address a range of audiences, purposes, and media and use a variety of methods to generate knowledge, including Internet and library research, and interview, questionnaire, and ethnographic research methods. Accordingly, the following analysis of key features is presented as a series of considerations as opposed to a comprehensive blueprint.

Focus

Writers bring focus to their evaluations by revealing the criteria they are using to judge the topic being evaluated. They often present their argument up front, providing readers with a good roadmap of their argument and reasoning.

Writers routinely define the criteria they will employ to evaluate a subject.

Development

You can develop your evaluation report by conducting library/Internet or field research. For example, to write a movie, music, or restaurant review, you could watch the movie, listen to the CD, or go to the restaurant. You might read reviews of a movie, music CD, or restaurant. By researching your topic, you will gain an understanding of appropriate criteria to use to judge it.

Reading sample evaluative texts can help you find and adopt an appropriate voice and persona. By reading samples, you can learn how others have prioritized particular criteria.

Below are some additional suggestions for developing your evaluation report, including advice on how to create an appropriate voice, provide background material, establish the criteria for judging the topic, and use visuals to develop and convey your message.

Establish an Appropriate Voice

First person is commonly used in arts reviews, while reviews of products tend to stifle the personal voice, adopting more of an objective tone.

If you appear overly biased or emotional, readers are likely to dismiss your reasoning. Readers of reviews expect authors to be courteous and temperate. If you've identified important problems with the movie, CD, book—whatever you're critiquing—you should be honest and thorough, yet you need to provide a compassionate tone, remembering that it's easier to critique than create.

If you critique a matter severely, some readers may hope to dismiss your interpretation as idiosyncratic. Under such circumstances, in addition to providing the evidence needed to substantiate your opinion, you need to be careful about presenting your voice/persona. You need to establish your credibility.

Consider, for example, Coleen Rowley's letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller. In this letter, Rowley provides evidence that the FBI "did fully appreciate the terrorist risk/danger posed by Moussaoui [one of the 9/11 terrorist hijackers] and his possible co-conspirators even prior to September 11th."

Throughout her letter, Rowley vigorously details what the FBI knew about Moussaoui, including his training at flight schools, his role as a terrorist, and affiliations with radical fundamentalist Islamic groups associated with Osama bin Laden. Then, in the conclusion, perhaps looking over the shoulder of Director Mueller to members of the press and public, she asserts her lifelong commitment to the FBI, providing personal details that narrate her loyalty:

I have been an FBI agent for over 21 years and, for what it's worth, have never received any form of disciplinary action throughout my career. From the 5th grade, when I first wrote the FBI
and received the "100 Facts about the FBI" pamphlet, this job has been my dream. I feel that my career in the FBI has been somewhat exemplary, having entered on duty at a time when there was only a small percentage of female Special Agents. I have also been lucky to have had four children during my time in the FBI and am the sole breadwinner of a family of six. Due to the frankness with which I have expressed myself and my deep feelings on these issues, (which is only because I feel I have a somewhat unique, inside perspective of the Moussaoui matter, the gravity of the events of September 11th and the current seriousness of the FBI's and United States' ongoing efforts in the "war against terrorism"), I hope my continued employment with the FBI is not somehow placed in jeopardy. I have never written to an FBI Director in my life before on any topic. Although I would hope it is not necessary, I would therefore wish to take advantage of the federal "Whistleblower Protection" provisions by so characterizing my remarks.

[Coleen Rowley's Memo to FBI Director Robert Mueller]

Provide Necessary Background Information
Readers expect you to be knowledgeable about the topic. They appreciate a summary where you describe the significance of the work and relate it to previous works by the author or other significant works. If you're discussing a musician's work, for example, you should refer to other works produced by the musician and place the work within a music tradition. If you're discussing a movie, you should be aware of the genre of the movie (suspense, drama, comedy, romance, etc.) as well as other works created by the director.

Establish Evaluative Criteria
When evaluating consumer goods, writers explicitly define their evaluative criteria. In more informal circumstances or when the topic is particularly emotionally charged, writers may choose to imply their criteria. In general, clarity is enhanced by an explicit statement of evaluative criteria in your introduction.

Below [is an example] of evaluative criteria presented by [an author] to introduce their topics:

- **Why Open Source Software/Free Software** by David A. Wheeler: This paper provides quantitative data that, in many cases, using open source software / free software is a reasonable or even superior approach to using their proprietary competition according to various measures. This paper examines market share, reliability, performance, scalability, security, and total cost of ownership. It also has sections on non-quantitative issues, unnecessary fears, usage reports, other sites providing related information, and ends with some conclusions.

Use Visuals
Wherever possible, provide visuals to help readers understand your reasoning:

- If you're critiquing a Web site, use screenshots and callout to clarify your interpretation (see, e.g., The Paladin Newspaper Redesign by Danae Shell or Critique of /placeholders/external_placeholder.html?http%3A%2F%2Fextremegen.org).
- Use photographs to illustrate your analysis. If you're critiquing a restaurant or a place, take pictures. For example, note the thumbnail pictures in Sarah R. Stein's The '1984' Macintosh Ad or the pictures of the building critiqued in Frank Gehry as Urbanist?
- Use tables and figures to summarize evaluative criteria and the results of your interpretation. Note, for example, how David Wheeler provides summary tables for
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each criteria he evaluates: Why Open Source Software/Free Software. Below is an example of one of the figures used in Wheeler's reports, which supports his argument regarding the popularity of Open Source Software (see image below)

Organization
Evaluative texts aren't written like mystery novels: You don't bury your conclusions at the end of the story. Instead, provide your argument up front, clearly define why the evaluation is important, what evaluative criteria were used, how the evaluation was performed, and what your conclusions are.

Consider numbering the evaluative points you are addressing. If it's an online document, you may wish to create internal hyperlinks so readers can jump from point to point in your text. At the very least, use headings and subheadings.

Writing Strategies for Evaluation
adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

How to Evaluate
A big question you might have is: how do I evaluate my subject? That depends on what your subject is.

If you are evaluating a piece of writing, then you are going to need to read the work thoroughly. While you read the work, keep in mind the criteria you are using to evaluate. The evaluative aspects may be: grammar, sentence structure, spelling, content, usage of sources, style, or many other things. Another thing to consider when evaluating a piece of writing is whether the writing appeals to its target audience. Is there an emotional appeal? Does the author engage the audience, or is the piece lacking something? If you can, make notes directly on your work itself so that you remember what you want to write about in your essay.

If you are evaluating anything else, use your head. You need to try, use, or test whatever thing you are evaluating. That means you should not evaluate a 2005 Chevrolet Corvette unless you have the $45,000 (or more) to buy one, or the money to rent one. You also need the know-how of driving a car of that power and a base of knowledge of other cars that you have tested to make a fair comparison.

On the note of comparisons, only compare things that are reasonably alike. People don't care to know how an apple compares to a backpack; that is for a different type of essay. Compare different types of apples to each other and different types of backpacks against each other. That is what people are looking for when reading comparisons in an evaluation essay.

Whatever you are evaluating, make sure to do so thoroughly. Take plenty of notes during the testing phase so that your thoughts stay fresh in your mind. You do not want to forget about a part of the subject that you did not test.

Structure of the Essay

Introduction
In the introduction of your evaluative essay, you should clearly state the following: - what you are evaluating (the subject -- like a 2009 Toyota Prius) - the purpose of your evaluation - what criteria you are evaluating your subject on (mileage, price, performance, etc.)
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For example, you should not just write that you are judging the taste of an apple. You should explain that you are judging the sweetness, bitterness, and crispness of the apple.

Body
Be sure to be very descriptive and thorough when evaluating your subject. The more you leave out of the essay, the more unanswered questions your readers are left with. Your goal should be to cover all aspects of the subject and to tell the audience how good or bad it is. Consider, for example, not only what quality the subject possesses, but what is missing. Good evaluations measure the quality or value of a subject by considering what it has and what it lacks.

Conclusion
The conclusion for an evaluative essay is pretty straightforward. Simply go over the main points from the body of your essay. After that, make an overall evaluation of the subject. Tell the audience if they should buy it, eat it, use it, wear it, etc. and why.
Chapter 8: Analysis
Chapter Contributors: Lisa Cook, Lisa Mahle-Grisez

Introduction
by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

Any kind of analysis, by nature, breaks an entity (a text, an ad, an image) down into its parts to better make sense of its meaning. You read about analysis previously in Lennie Irvin’s article “Academic Writing” in chapter one. As she points out, the biggest tasks college writers confront is analyzing their assignments in order to successfully complete them. (Re-read that article for a brush up!)

In English composition you will be asked to write some sort of analysis, whether it is of an argument or advertisement or another sort of text. In this chapter, we focus on these various kinds of analyses. In writing an ad analysis, a writer examines the components of an advertisement to determine how the advertisement as a whole reflects and also shapes our culture’s ideas about gender, race, class, sexuality and other categories of difference. An ad analysis usually consists of a series of well-developed paragraphs in which the writer discusses the images that the ads portray and analyzes the visual and linguistic elements of the ad or ads.

In an ad analysis, you consider the predominant focus of the ad/ads. Does the ad play on stereotypes? Does the ad make assumptions? What is your overall assertion about the ad or ads? As a regular consumer of advertising in this country, what educated assertion can you make about the ads you have chosen? The readings in here will give you some ideas for questions to ask as you construct an ad analysis, and the readings will also help you apply a lens with which to view your ads and make assertions about them.

In this chapter, you also will find information about writing a textual analysis. In a textual analysis, a writer deconstructs a text to find the underlying assumptions in the text. Textual, rhetorical or argument analyses draw heavily on the persuasive elements of rhetoric first established by Aristotle; namely, the elements of ethos, logos, and pathos. In the readings for this section, you will read more about these rhetorical devices and how writers employ them to persuade.

In section three, you will find information about writing a visual analysis, elements of which could be applied to a website, a painting, or even a quilt.

In section four, you are introduced to the concept of the literary analysis. Two short stories, one from Edgar Allen Poe and the other from Susan Glaspell, are included in this chapter. You will become familiar with the elements of literary analysis and the schools of literary criticism in this chapter, as well.

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

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

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

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

The structure and form of an analysis can vary as widely as the many reasons for producing one. Though an analysis should include attention to each of the four main components, it should not be written in a formulaic manner, like those tiresome five-paragraph essays you might recall from high school: “I spent my summer vacation in three ways: working, partying and relaxing. Each of these activities helped me in three aspects of my life: mentally, physically and psychologically.” At best, formulaic essays serve as training wheels that need to come off when you are ready for more sophisticated kinds of writing.

Rigorous analysis doesn’t rely on formulas or clichés, and its elements may occur in different orders and with various emphases, depending on your purpose and audience. In fact, individual elements may sometimes blend together because a section may serve more than one function. With practice, you
won’t even need to recall the acronym AXES when producing an analysis, because you will have mastered when and how to express each of its components.

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

> Our revels now are ended. These, our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits and Are melted into air; into thin air. And, like the baseless fabric of this vision The cloud capped towers, the great globe itself, Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, And like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep

(Act IV, Scene 1: 148-57).

**Response 1: Review (assertion emphasis)**

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

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

**Response 2: Summary (example emphasis)**

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

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

**Response 3: Description (explanation emphasis)**

In Prospero’s speech, Shakespeare points out how life, plays, and dreams are always being interrupted. He makes a lot of comparisons between these different areas of existence, yet makes them all seem somewhat similar. I never really thought about how they are all so similar, but Shakespeare helps me consider ways they all kind of fit together.
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Though you should explain how you derived your assertions from your examples and not just let the piece speak for itself, you should not do so in too general a manner. You do not want to give the impression that you are trying to remember the details of a piece that you are too lazy to pull out and reconsider, but that you are engaging in a close reading or a careful consideration of all the aspects of an issue. Your analysis should seem like it was a challenge for you to write, and not something that you pieced together from vague recollections.

Response 4: Analysis (attention to each aspect)

In *The Tempest*, William Shakespeare connects plays, lives, and dreams by showing that while each contains an illusion of permanence, they’re all only temporary. The “baseless fabric of this vision” of “cloud capped towers” may immediately refer to the painted sets contained within the “great globe itself,” the name of Shakespeare’s theater. Yet when we measure time in years rather than hours, we can see that most of the real “cloud capped towers” of the Seventeenth Century have already faded and at some point in the future even the globe we live on will disappear and “leave not a rack behind.” Likewise, it is not just the actors who are “such stuff as dreams are made on,” but all of us. We are unconscious of the world before we are born and after we die, so our waking lives mirror our sleeping lives. Thinking of it this way leaves me with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I find it a bit disturbing to be reminded that neither we nor our world are permanent and all that we do will dissipate in time. On the other hand, it inspires me to enjoy my life further and not to worry too much about my inability to accomplish every one of my goals because nothing I do will last forever anyway.

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

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

Key Takeaways

- We use analysis many times throughout the day, especially when trying to persuade others to see our points of view.
• Analysis consists of four main components: assertions (our points of view), examples (evidence that supports these points of view), explanations (justifications of these points of view), and significance discussions of why these points of view matter.

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

Writing Strategies for Analysis
by Randall Fallow, Exploring Perspectives: A Concise Guide to Analysis
adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

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

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

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

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

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

Now that we’ve looked at each of these areas of analysis more carefully, let’s go back to the main example from the first chapter, the passage from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. At the end, I provide an example of a paragraph that includes each aspect of analysis, but while these aspects are all present, none of them are developed fully enough for even a brief essay on the passage. Beginning with the examples, the paragraph makes brief reference to the “baseless fabric of the vision of cloud capped towers” and to the “great globe itself,” pointing out how these phrases refer to items associated with Shakespeare’s theater as well as the world outside of it. But we could also discuss other terms and phrases that appear in the quote. For instance, we could discuss the implications of the word “revels” in the first line. These days we probably wouldn’t say “revels” but instead “celebrations,” or, less formally, “partying,” but the word clearly refers back to the play within the play that comes to an abrupt end. In this context, the implication is that above all, the purpose of plays should be for enjoyment, a sentiment reflected in the epilogue when Prospero speaks directly to the audience: “gentle breath of yours my sails/Must fill, or else my project fails,/Which was to please.”

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

Now we can go back and expand the main assertion. Instead of simply writing, in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare connects plays, lives, and dreams by showing that while each contains an illusion of permanence, they’re all only temporary. And because all of these insights came about from examining the implications of only one word, “revels,” the essay will continue to expand as we consider more details of the passage and consult related research. Eventually, however, we will need to stop expanding our analysis and consider how to present it more deliberately.

Introducing the Essay

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These are just a few suggestions for grabbing the reader’s attention and many other possibilities exist (though try to avoid beginning with a dictionary definition unless you want to provide your own twist on it). Whichever way you decide to open your paper, make certain that you go on to relate your lead-in to the main perspective or thesis you have on your subject. For instance, you wouldn’t want to start an essay by telling a joke that has nothing to do with the subject of your analysis, just to get an easy laugh. However, it would be fine if you were to write:

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

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

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

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

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

This same advice works well for writing transitions not only between paragraphs but also within them. If you do not provide transitional clues as to how the sentences link together, the reader is just as likely to get lost:
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I love my two pets. My cat, Clyde is very independent. My dog, Mac, barks if I leave him alone for very long. I can leave Clyde alone for four days. I’m only taking Clyde with me to college. I have to come home twice a day to feed Mac. Mac does a lot of tricks. Clyde loves to purr on my lap.

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

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

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

Ending the Essay

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

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

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

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

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

A long section without any significance may cause your readers to feel bored, a section without assertions may cause them to feel confused, and a section without examples or explanations may cause them to feel skeptical.

### Visual Literacy: A Broad Introduction

from Utah State University, *Intermediate Writing: Research Writing in A Persuasive Mode*  
adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

In order to understand what visual literacy is, you have to consider that photographs, advertisements, and cartoons have a common language. Visual literacy can be defined as the set of skills involved in the criticism and interpretation of images. In order to be an informed citizen, it is imperative that you learn how to understand visual messages. Each day people are bombarded by different ideas and opinions just by getting out of bed. They are on TV, the box of cereal you used for breakfast, the bus you rode to class, and even your clothes. Because people are constantly bombarded with images, they rarely stop to think about what the intended message of the creator.

Each time you see an image you should realize that the creator wants to convey a particular idea. Oftentimes, the main idea will not be directly stated by the image, or there may be multiple things said by one image. In order to understand the underlying meaning of an image, you should ask yourself three questions:

1. **What is the central purpose of the image?**
2. **By what means does the artist achieve his or her purpose?**
3. **Why does the image succeed or not succeed?**

Additionally, you can ask the following questions about the image:

1. **What kind of angle is the picture or video taken from?**
2. **What kind of colors are used in the picture?**
3. **Outdoors or indoors?**
4. **How many people are in the visual argument? Who are they? How can you tell?**
5. **What time of day? What season?**
6. **Are there any words in the picture? If so, what do they say?**
7. **How close together or fall apart are the objects or people in the picture?**
8. Are there any symbols visible?
9. How do I feel as I look at the visual argument? How does the creator want me to feel?
10. Are the objects/people in the visual argument familiar to you?
Advertisements comprise thirty percent of the material aired on television, and many of us will view more than two million commercials in our lifetimes. The A. C. Nielson Company reports that, by the age of sixty-five, the average U.S. citizen will have spent nine years of his or her life watching television—twenty-eight hours a week, two months a year. And in one year, the average youth will spend nearly twice as many hours in front of the tube (fifteen hundred hours) as he or she spends at school (nine hundred hours). [1] We may turn the box off eventually, but the advertisements remain. We are surrounded by them: they cover billboards, cereal boxes, food wrappers, bathroom stalls, tee shirts, and tennis shoes. They seep into our music, our newscasts, and our conversations. We recognize corporate logos and hum jingles (“Ba Da Ba Ba Ba”). In short, advertisements inform every aspect of our lives. Yet we often give them very little thought. We may make aesthetic judgments about them (e.g., "That commercial was funny" or "That commercial was stupid") or view them as innocent means to purchasing ends, but we rarely acknowledge them as messages that require critical attention.

Advertisements, however, do more than entertain and sell more than just products. They suggest standards of normalcy, of coolness, of sexiness, of happiness, and so on—standards that shape the way
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that we view and interpret the world. They also serve the profit-driven interests of the corporations that create them. As cultural critic Naomi Klein explains, "Quite simply, every company with a powerful brand is attempting to develop a relationship with consumers that resonates so completely with their sense of self that they will aspire, or at least consent, to be serfs under these feudal brandlords" (149).

[2] In other words, advertisements are hardly innocent means to purchasing ends and, more often than not, hardly true reflections of our senses of self. Instead, they are a powerful force in creating our senses of self. Therefore, advertisements do require a critical eye.

Whenever you analyze an ad, it may be useful to ask yourself some questions:

1. Who appears in the ad? A celebrity or someone well known? An unfamiliar figure? What are the expressions of the people featured in the ad?

2. What is the setting of the ad, and what does it suggest about the message?

3. Who is the audience for the ad, and how do you know?

4. How are language and conversation used in the ad? What, if anything, do the people featured in the ad say? In print advertisements, are there conversation bubbles? For commercials, consider any conversations that might take place.

5. In what ways does the ad attempt to manipulate the consumer into buying the particular product it sells? On what emotions and desires does the ad play? In other words, how is pathos used?

6. Consider issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. In what ways, if any, are they present in the ad? What does their presence in or absence from the ad suggest about the message?

Works Cited


Gender, Race and Advertising

by Kathy Peiss, University of Pennsylvania, *Race & Ethnicity in Advertising: America in the 20th Century*
www.raceandethnicity.org

Summary

Gender is central to our understanding of racial and ethnic images in American advertising. Since the late nineteenth century, advertising has contributed to the ways Americans understand ideals of masculinity and femininity. These ideals, which remain consistent today, promote men as handsome, well groomed, fit, and usually authoritative, and women, whatever their jobs or achievements, remain largely defined by their beauty—youthful, symmetrical faces, full lips, straight noses, and styled hair. And these idealized gender representations are also steeped in race: they present white women and men as the central figures in the world of production and consumption. African Americans, Asian
Americans, Latino/as and Native Americans have struggled against racial and gender representations in which they are subservient to whites and deemed non-consumers. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, an increase in agencies owned by people of color altered advertising's visual landscape and pushed white-owned agencies to expand their appeal to a diverse American population. Although dimensions of earlier gender ideals have changed over time—and the gendered representations of people of color have been transformed—there remain profound limits to the ways masculinity and femininity can be imagined in advertising.

Essay

Racial and ethnic images are ever-present in American advertising. So too are images of gender. Since the late nineteenth century, advertisers have depicted men and women to showcase their products, suggest appropriate consumer behavior, and foster fantasies and aspirations. In so doing, ads contribute to the ways Americans understand ideals of masculinity and femininity. Advertising is so much a part of our everyday experience that those ideals may often be taken for granted. A close examination of the ads on this website, however, suggest how much gender, race, and ethnicity have been intertwined in visual culture—indeed, they are mutually constituted. They not only convey ideas about African Americans, Asians, Latino/as, Jews, and other distinct groups, they also present white women and men as the central figures in the world of production and consumption.

Late-nineteenth-century trade cards, such as those in the Warshaw Collection, drew upon stock figures of ladies and gentlemen, maids and servants, white Americans and non-Western people of color. The advertisements reinforced familiar images from minstrelsy, the stage, world’s fairs, scientific illustrations, and magazines. They contrasted upright, even-featured white American men to effeminate Orientals and animal-like Africans. One trade card made this explicit with a picture of a Darwin Fan, which showed the evolutionary stages from the ‘savage’ to the ‘civilized,’ featuring in succession a monkey and African, Chinese, Native American, and Caucasian men. Other ads, in that era of imperialism, presented a dominant Uncle Sam offering superior products to the nations and peoples of the globe. In a similar vein, a popular 1910s billboard presented a robust and forceful Theodore Roosevelt returning to the United States accompanied by stereotyped African pygmies. “Roosevelt Scoured Africa,” it said, “the Gold Dust Twins Scour America.”

Theodore Roosevelt was an exemplar and advocate of a new model of masculinity that emphasized physical strength, sports, and competition as the route to male success. This ideal was widely embraced by advertisers in the early 20th century. Tobacco companies created baseball cards to promote their wares; razor manufacturers and clothing stores tied their products to athletes. “Go Ahead Man,” read the title of one clothing ad, featuring a runner on his mark and two men in stylish suits. The emphasis on physicality was, ironically, directed at affluent white men, especially those in the burgeoning urban professional and business class. Fears about such men losing their strength and virility in white-collar jobs were widespread. Roosevelt himself had given a popular speech on the “strenuous life,” and serial fiction and magazines were filled with images of cowboys, Boy Scouts, and soldiers.

Depictions of women in late 19th century trade cards emphasized white women’s gentility and refinement through Anglo-Saxon physiognomy, proper hairstyles, and fashionable clothing. Often ads would show such ladies talking with their African American cooks or Irish maids. Interestingly, while the lady oversaw the running of her household, often the domestic worker ‘instructed’ the lady of the household on the best product to purchase— in effect, the underling speaking for the company. An 1888 advertising calendar reported this kitchen conversation:
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Mistress: Well cook, as long as buckwheat flour is in season we must have buckwheat cakes for breakfast. What yeast will you use?

Cook: Fleischmann's yeast ma'am is my choice. I can make anything in de bakin line wif it. It's a right smart yeast.

Using familiar visual stereotypes, such advertising underscored class divisions and racial/ethnic hierarchies.

At the same time, advertisers drew upon foreign and exotic images to tie American women to styles and practices that would encourage new forms of consumption. This was common in advertising for personal grooming and beauty products; Palmolive ads, for example, featured scenes of Cleopatra to underscore the long lineage of women’s beauty culture: Here Cleopatra was depicted as a white woman, attended by a dark-skinned servant. Other ads illustrated national dress and ethnic customs from around the world. “How to Ask for a Cup of Coffee in 32 Languages” is an example of such advertising. The ad’s armchair tourism fostered a sense of cosmopolitanism among American women, even as it simplified the diversity of nations and peoples into visual “types.”

These were not the only images of womanhood in the early twentieth century. Women were entering colleges and universities, seeking professional advancement, and demanding the right to vote. Critics of women’s rights often described this “New Woman” as a masculinized rejection of the ‘natural’ feminine pursuits of home and children. Yet many illustrators and photographers found the New Woman a compelling figure, and captured the sensuality and social freedom she epitomized in riding a bicycle, enjoying the beach, or flirting with men. In the early decades of the twentieth century, advertisers incorporated elements of the New Woman into their work, although typically in ways that limited broader claims for liberty and equality. Cigarette ads of the 1920s encouraged women to smoke—previously seen as a disreputable female activity—by claiming this was a form of liberation. Ads for kitchen appliances highlighted the modern woman’s leisure and “emancipation” from domestic work through labor saving devices. Even beauty product ads tried to insist that women could be intelligent, accomplished, and attractive, but their message emphasized the centrality of appearance—and men—to women’s identity. “Most men ask ‘Is she pretty?’—not ‘Is she clever?’ read the headline of one Palmolive ad.

This was a time when the modern advertising industry emerged and professionalized. Unlike the trade card era, advertising executives, copywriters, and illustrators became intentional and strategic in their depiction of gendered consumers. Advertisers increasingly approached women as the “chief purchasing agent” in their families or, as home economist Christine Frederick put it, “Mrs. Consumer.” These firms pioneered in the use of market research to assess consumer attitudes. Yet they understood the consumer as a white, middle-class American, ignoring the buying habits and desires of working-class people, immigrants, and African Americans. In the new mass-circulation advertising, African Americans continued to appear as workers, not consumers, holding subservient roles as maids, cooks, and porters. Some of the most offensive racial depictions, common in the late 19th century trade cards, gave way to a modicum of dignity, but the images of minstrelsy and primitivism did not disappear. For example, a 1947 radio ad underscored the modernity of the white female consumer, listening to an upscale receiver in her living room, by juxtaposing her photograph to a primitive drawing of an African male playing a drum. “All the world’s your neighbor,” it exclaimed, but safely at a distance.

When African Americans and other minority groups challenged their limited and stereotyped depiction in mainstream advertising, their critiques often centered on gender. In the 1910s and 1920s, African American commentators decried the plantation “Mammies” and stooping “Uncles” who appeared in the
ads. Within African American newspapers and periodicals, black-owned businesses often revised gender imagery, depicting black men and women as modern and up to date. Cosmetics firms such as Madame C. J. Walker and Overton-Hygienic featured impeccably groomed social leaders and fashionable actresses, the equal of white women. Joe Louis and other black sports figures endorsed soft drinks, cigarettes, and automobiles, presenting an image of masculine athleticism, accomplishment, and respectability.

The civil rights movement focused on political equality, opportunity, and justice, but also struggled for inclusion and dignity in visual culture. Advertising images became more diverse in the latter decades of the twentieth century; minority-owned agencies created ads that spoke directly to black, Hispanic, and Asian-American consumers, even as the large firms and mass-market businesses expanded their appeal to a diverse American population. Still, we might question the extent to which gender representations have been challenged and changed over time.

The feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s harshly criticized the sexual objectification of women in advertising. Similar to the early 20th century, advertisers responded with an awkward recognition of the push for equality, epitomized by Virginia Slims’ slogan, “You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby.” Breck recognized young women’s ability as well as beauty in a mid-1970s campaign, in which the firm sponsored the America’s Junior Miss contest, which awarded college scholarships. These “Breck Girls” included Donna Alexander, the first black woman to reach the finals of the contest and a veterinary science student at the University of Pennsylvania. She not only represented academic achievement, but also black pride, in her confident look and short Afro.

Contemporary advertising reflects much greater inclusivity than ever before, as the campaigns of firms like Uniworld, owned by people of color and addressing a diverse audience, clearly reveal. But advertising rarely upsets conventional understandings of gender. Men are handsome, well groomed, fit, and usually authoritative. Women, whatever their jobs or achievements, remain largely defined by their beauty—youthful, symmetrical faces, full lips, straight noses, and styled hair. Although dimensions of these gender ideals have changed over time —and the gendered representations of people of color have been transformed—there remain profound limits to the ways masculinity and femininity can be imagined in advertising.

**Language for Analyzing Ads**

by Jennifer Yirinec, Writing Commons

Advertising executives and marketing experts more than likely hope that we remain oblivious to the underlying messages that ads contain and that we perceive their work purely from entertainment and consumerist perspectives rather than for the purpose of critical assessment.

But to critically examine the techniques and appeals advertisers use to lure us into supporting certain products, services, claims, or even individuals is an opportunity to hone our analytical skills—skills that enable us to be informed readers of texts and knowledgeable consumers of persuasion. To begin, let’s consider specific words and phrases that can be used in ad analysis:
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**Nostalgia:** Advertisements for Coca-Cola, summer vacation destinations, or even political candidates can stir up sentiments or memories of “the good old days.” In a commercial, for example, the use of black and white film and/or flashbacks—illustrated by clothes, music, and/or historical events—can invite a specific audience to reflect on the past and evoke a sense of nostalgia.

**Merchants of “cool”:** According to PBS, merchants of “cool” are “creators and sellers of popular culture who have made teenagers the hottest consumer demographic in America.”[1] Such merchants may include Abercrombie & Fitch, Hollister, Hot Topic, and Aéropostale. Each relies on the tween and teen markets to keep its empire in business and markets its definition of “cool” as the coolest when it comes to youth culture.

**The myth of the “ideal you”:** Today, in many cases, advertisers still sell their products in a way that invites us to be the “best” versions of ourselves. Cultural stereotypes substantiate this idea of the “best” self, which exists only in the shared imagination of the advertiser and audience.


Analyzing Ads: Gender
by Angela Eward-Mangione, Emma Brown, and Susan Gail Taylor, *Writing Commons*

We need to be aware of how advertisers appeal to us, and we should think critically about the persuasive messages we encounter to ensure we are savvy, not passive, consumers. Because consumers purchase products with which they identify, it is important to examine the subtexts of advertisements as well as the role those subtexts play in determining what products men and women choose to associate with their personal identities.

The subtexts of a visual argument are closely associated with both intended audience and meaning. For example, a simple message such as, “You should buy this product,” means nothing without a subtext to clarify who “you” is, particularly in relationship to the product. Is “you” a 21st-century American woman? A 20th-century American woman? An American woman of the 1930s is a very a different “you” than one of, for example, the 2010s. The power of subtexts should not be underestimated: they reflect and influence the ways that men and women think about themselves and the ways that subliminal messages function in advertising.

This ad has generated much controversy because of its clearly delineated audience. Why might advertisers restrict their audience to one gender? How is masculinity defined in this commercial? Also, see questions in the checklist below, and try to critically (not necessarily negatively, but thoughtfully) approach this ad.

**Gender Subtexts in Ads: One Example—“The Homemaker Myth”**
That Susie Sunshine belongs in the home instead of the workplace and that Johnny Sunshine isn’t and could never be a homemaker are ideas based on stereotypes. Consider laundry detergent advertisements: men are rarely shown doing the laundry. In most laundry detergent commercials, a mother is depicted as the official domestic caretaker, who lovingly rids her family’s clothes of grass and food stains. For some families, this may be typical. However, there are issues of gender role expectations at play in such advertisements.
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**Considering the Contexts of ADS: Male and Female Consumers then and Now**
When analyzing an ad in terms of gender, it is certainly important to identify the ad's intended audience. It is equally important to consider the ad's publishing context. As definitions of femininity have evolved, commercials trying to sell products to women have changed—and the same goes for commercials advertising products for men. Consider the following sets of commercials: given what you know about the era in which each ad appeared, analyze the ad's depiction of and appeals to male and female consumers.

**A Checklist for Analyzing Gender in Print Advertisements**

**Context:** What is the context for the ad's publication? Where did it first appear—on television, on the radio, on the Internet, or in print? What magazine or online site is it published at? If applicable, where is/was the original billboard located? How would readers/viewers see or have seen this ad?

**Audience:** Who is the intended audience for this ad?

**Product:** What is the ad trying to sell? Can you identify it at first glance? The primary function of a visual advertisement is to sell a specific product, service, or idea: Is the product prominently displayed? Or, is it less noticeable than other aspects of the advertisement?

**People:** Who is pictured in the ad? Are the models male or female?

**Roles:** What roles appear to have been assigned to the models? Are the roles stereotypical?

**Appearance:** What type of clothing are the models wearing? Do they appear to be wearing makeup? How is their hair styled? Does their overall ensembles reflect the product well—why or why not? Does the ad suggest that people who purchase the advertised product will look like the models in the ad?

**Body position:** Are the models sitting or standing? Where are they in relation to the other elements of the ad? If there is more than one individual pictured in the ad, consider their positions in relation to one another. Does one model's body position seem inferior or superior to the other's? What relationship does he or she have with the product being advertised?

**Body language:** What are the models' postures? Are they standing straight and tall, leaning against something, sitting down, or hunching over? Where are their arms? How are their heads positioned? Is there a clear emotion being conveyed by either of the models' body language? If both male and female models are featured in the ad, consider their body language toward one another. Based on body language, can you make any assumptions about the relationships between the male(s) and female(s) represented in the ad?

**Movement:** Is there explicit action or movement in the ad? Implied action or movement?

**Gaze:** Are the models' eyes visible in the ad? If so, are they downcast? Looking out at the audience? Locked on another model? Focused on the product the ad is trying to sell? If they are not visible, are they obstructed or covered by the product? Or, is a model’s face cut out of the ad entirely?

**Subtexts:** What are the underlying arguments or assertions of the ad? That men should pursue women aggressively? That women should pursue men aggressively? That women should be passive? That women should be mothers? That men should be family-oriented? That men should work in the professional business world? Look for subtexts that both support and refute traditional gender stereotypes.

**Written language:** Is there text in the ad? If so, is the text informational? Does it directly relate to the product? Does it contain a slogan or catchphrase? Something else? What level of language is used? Slang? Jargon? Can it be interpreted in multiple ways?
Typically, the first thing we look for in a photograph is ourselves. Advertisers recognize this fact and use it to their advantage. Because of this, we can learn a lot about a company’s target customer base by observing the people featured in its advertisements.

The appearance (and, in commercials, the sounds) of the people as well as the setting (location) of an advertisement speaks to both the company’s target audience and its assumptions about that audience. When reading an advertisement in terms of race, it is important to notice which demographics are represented, and which are not, since companies construct ads with a distinct awareness of their target demographic. This may mean that the represented demographic in the advertisement embodies the company’s actual or target customer. However, the presence of an African American woman in an advertisement for a department store may not mean that the store’s target audience is only African American women. Keep in mind that some advertisements do not necessarily depict their target consumer directly; sometimes, they may depict how the consumer might see him- or herself—or alternatively, how he or she might see others. Because racial identification informs the way we interpret advertisements and, likewise, works as an advertising strategy, advertisements can reflect our society’s changing conceptions of and attitudes toward racial constructs.

**Racial and Cultural Stereotypes**

When looking at an advertisement through the lens of race, it is important to note how individuals of various races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds are portrayed. It’s also important to note how stereotypes may be at work in the advertisement as well as how they affect the message. Many races, ethnicities, and cultural groups are often misrepresented in advertising through stereotypes that advertisers exploit under the pretense that they are attempting to identify with a specific audience. In your analysis, be sure to take notice of factors such as appearance and attire, body language and gestures, setting, speech, socioeconomic status, and education.

**A Checklist for Analyzing Race in Print Advertisements**

**Context:** What is the context for this ad’s publication? Where did it first appear—on television, on the radio, on the Internet, or in a print source? What magazine or online site is it published at? If applicable, where is the original billboard located? How would readers/viewers see or have seen this ad (driving by at 60 mph, as a small banner at the top of a website, as a glossy spread in a magazine, etc.)?

**Audience:** Who is the intended audience of this ad?

**Product:** What is the ad trying to sell? Can you identify it at first glance? The primary function of a visual advertisement is to sell a specific product, service, or idea: Is the product prominently displayed? Or, is it less noticeable than other aspects of the advertisement? On what expectations are the advertisers banking? Of what does the ad say that its audience is in need? That is, what need does the product aim to fulfill? Is there a correlation implied between the product and a particular race? If so, what is the demographic associated with the advertisement?

**People:** Who is pictured in the ad? Of what race or ethnicity are the models/characters?
Body position: Are the models/characters sitting, standing, or moving? Where are they in relation to the other elements of the ad? If there are models/characters of different races or ethnicities featured in the ad, consider their positions in relation to one another: Does one model’s/character’s body position seem inferior or superior to the other’s? Is his or her position contrasted against that of an individual of another race or ethnicity? Based on body positions, can you make any assumptions about the relationships between the represented demographics? What relationship do they have with the product being advertised?

Body language: What are the models'/characters’ postures? Are they standing straight and tall, leaning against something, sitting down, or hunching over? Where are their arms? How are their heads positioned? Is there a clear emotion being conveyed by the models’ body language? If there are models of different races or ethnicities featured in the ad, consider their body language toward one another: Based on body language, can you make any assumptions about the relationships between the represented demographics?

Movement: Is there explicit action or movement in the ad? Implied action or movement? How are the characters interacting with each other in the commercial?

Diversity: What races or cultures are represented in the ad? Are the ethnicities of the models evident? If there is more than one individual pictured in the ad, consider their appearances in relation to one another: Are they all of the same general physical appearance and/or age? Are there equal numbers of people representing each race? What can these observations tell you about the target audience of the ad?

Subtexts: What are the underlying arguments or assertions of the ad? Is there an obvious correlation between race and the product? Is there an assumption made that a person of a certain race or culture might find the product particularly interesting or useful? That is, does the advertisement directly target a particular race, or does it seem racially nonspecific? If targeted, what does the ad communicate about the norms of the demographic’s lifestyle, needs, and desires? Look for subtexts that both support and refute traditional racial stereotypes.

Written language: Is there text in the ad? If so, is the text informational? Does it directly relate to the product? Does it contain a slogan or catchphrase? Something else? What level of language is used? Slang? Jargon? Does the language seem targeted toward a particular race? Can it be interpreted in multiple ways?

Analyzing Ads: Socioeconomic Status

by Susan Taylor and Mary Kay Madden, Writing Commons

To what social class do you belong? How do you know? Can others tell by how you talk, dress, and act? By how much money you have? By your level of education? By your occupation? Despite the presumed cultural ideal of social equality in America, key markers such as income and education are often used for social classification.

Advertisers for many goods and services often frame their rhetorical appeals—their strategies of persuasion—in terms of audiences who are presumed to belong to a particular, often loosely defined,
social class. Frequently, these appeals rely on stereotypical qualities associated with various socioeconomic classes. For example, an advertisement for an expensive women’s pant suit may appear in a magazine like *Vogue* (generally regarded as appealing to an upper-middle-class or upper-class audience), and may feature a svelte, glamorous model unlikely to grace the pages of a flyer for Walmart (generally regarded as appealing to a lower-middle-class or working-class audience). Rhetorical appeals can work on many socioeconomic levels. A relatively expensive perfume like Chanel N° 5 may appeal to members of the lower-middle or working class as a symbol of upward mobility. When analyzing an ad, you might pay close attention to how the ad appeals to you based upon assumptions regarding your socioeconomic status: What rhetorical moves (e.g., tone, composition, dialogue) enact those appeals?

What might you say about the movement in this commercial? The music? The changes in the model? How does these factors reflect certain assumptions about socioeconomic status, and what do they make you think buying a Honda-brand vehicle will do for a consumer?

**Blue Collar versus White Collar**

If we are analyzing an advertisement in which a model is working in a construction area digging a ditch, we might discuss the concept of blue-collar work.

On the other hand, if we are analyzing an advertisement in which a professional is depicted in what looks to be a high-powered office, we might discuss the concept of white-collar work. Advertising executives may have chosen those models and work settings in order to speak to a specific audience. That is, issues of socioeconomic status—including income, education, technical skill, dress, race, and gender—may be at play in creating images and scenarios that specific audiences will believe to be realistic in representing a version of reality. Keep in mind that socioeconomic status is a somewhat complex and controversial issue in American society today, particularly with regard to definitions of class levels. If you feel that an advertisement is capitalizing upon socioeconomic stereotypes, why do you think the advertiser has done this? Contrariwise, if an advertisement is resisting stereotypes, what do you think the advertiser is trying to accomplish?

**A Checklist for Analyzing Socioeconomic Status in Print Advertisements**

1. Who appears to be the target audience for the advertisement?
2. What seems to be the general tone of the advertisement? Serious? Playful? Satiric?
3. Do you notice any other appeals to stereotypes regarding education or income levels (e.g., the “corporate elite,” the "nouveau riche," or the “literary elite,” who may or may not earn high incomes but wield “power” by virtue of educational or literary achievements)?
4. How would you characterize the overall appearance of the models in the ad? If applicable, how would you characterize their clothing? To what social class would you connect each model's attire? Are brand names evident (e.g., Ralph Lauren, Ecco)? Are the models well-groomed or scruffy? Healthy or unhealthy? Thin and fit or heavy and out of shape? Do the models' qualities suggest they are from a particular social class? If so, how? Is the advertiser relying on stereotypical characterizations, then? Why do you think the advertiser chose to portray them in these ways?
5. What would you guess the average income is of the individuals featured in the ad and/or of the audience to which the ad appeals?
6. Do you notice any particular political appeals that may be related to class? With what social class would you associate these appeals and why?
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Does the ad appeal to any stereotypes based on gender or race? On what evidence do you ground your assumption? (Refer to the checklists in "Analyzing Ads: Gender" and "Analyzing Ads: Race" for more specific questions on analyzing gender and race in advertisements.)

If possible, what do you infer to be the highest degree of education that the individuals featured in the ad hold? Also in terms of level of education, who do you believe is the intended audience?

What is the setting for the advertisement? An elegant spa? A pizza parlor?

If text appears in the ad, what level of language is used, and for what purpose? Slang? Other informal language? Technical jargon? Standard American English? Dialect? With what class do you associate the use of this level of language? What is the effect of language use in this advertisement?

Are symbols, metaphors, hyperbole, allusions, and/or other forms of figurative language used? If so, what is the effect? Does the use of figurative language evoke appeals to class in any way?

What appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos do you find? Are these appeals related to class issues? Do you notice the use of any logical fallacies related to class issues (e.g., ad hominem, the slippery slope)? How effective are they?

In what ways does the advertisement appeal to class? Is the goal of the ad to encourage consumers to spend for the purpose of obtaining, or acquiring the appearance of, a higher socioeconomic status? (Examples of such strategy might be ads for a BMW or a Porsche that suggest the consumer would be more likely to attract members of the opposite sex if he or she were to purchase the advertised car.) Or, does the ad urge individuals to pursue an elite status (e.g., an American Express credit card) that will provide the illusion of upward class mobility.

Section 2: Textual Analysis (Argument Analysis)

Understanding Arguments
by Joe Moxley, Writing Commons

As a reader, a developing writer, and an informed student and citizen, it is extremely important for you to be able to locate, understand, and critically analyze others’ purposes in communicating information. Being able to identify and articulate the meaning of other writers’ arguments and theses enables you to engage in intelligent, meaningful, and critical knowledge exchanges. Ultimately, regardless of the discipline you choose to participate in, textual analysis—the summary, contextualization, and interpretation of a writer’s effective or ineffective delivery of his or her perspective on a topic, statement of thesis, and development of an argument—will be an invaluable skill. Your ability to critically engage in knowledge exchanges—through the analysis of others’ communication—is integral to your success as a student and as a citizen.

Textual Analysis: The Thesis

A foundational skill of textual analysis is the ability to identify a writer’s thesis—the component of an argument that communicates his or her position on a particular topic. In order to learn how to better recognize a thesis in a written text, let’s consider the following argument:
So far, [Google+] does seem better than Facebook, though I’m still a rookie and don’t know how to do even some basic things. It’s better in design terms, and also much better with its “circles” allowing you to target posts to various groups.

Example: following that high school reunion, the overwhelming majority of my Facebook friends list (which I’m barely rebuilding after my rejoin) are people from my own hometown. None of these people are going to care too much when my new book comes out from Edinburgh. Likewise, not too many of you would care to hear inside jokes about our old high school teachers, or whatever it is we banter about.

Another example: people I know only from exchanging a couple of professional emails with them ask to be Facebook friends. I’ve never met these people and have no idea what they’re really like, even if they seem nice enough on email. Do I really want to add them to my friends list on the same level as my closest friends, brothers, valued colleagues, etc.? Not yet. But then there’s the risk of offending people if you don’t add them. On Google+ you can just drop them in the “acquaintances” circle, and they’ll never know how they’re classified. But they won’t be getting any highly treasured personal information there, which is exactly the restriction you probably want for someone you’ve never met before.

I also don’t like too many family members on my Facebook friends list, because frankly they don’t need to know everything I’m doing or chatting about with people. But on Google+ this problem will be easily manageable. (Harman).

The first sentence, “[Google+] does seem better than Facebook” (Harman), doesn’t communicate the writer’s position on the topic; it is merely an observation. A position, also called a “claim,” often includes the conjunction “because,” providing a reason why the writer’s observation is unique, meaningful, and critical.

Therefore, if the writer’s sentence, “[Google+] does seem better than Facebook” (Harman), is simply an observation, then in order to identify the writer’s position, we must find the answer to “because, why?” One such answer can be found in the author’s rhetorical question/answer, “Do I really want to add them to my friends list on the same level as my closest friends, brothers, valued colleagues, etc.? Not yet” (Harman). The writer’s “because, why?” could be “because Google+ allows me to manage old, new, and potential friends and acquaintances using separate circles, so that I’m targeting posts to various, separate groups.” Therefore, the writer’s thesis—his position—could be something like, “Google+ is better than Facebook because its design enables me to manage my friends using separate circles, so that I’m targeting posts to various, separate groups instead of posting the same information for everyone I’ve added to my network.”

In addition to communicating a position on a particular topic, a writer’s thesis outlines what aspects of the topic he or she will address. Outlining intentions within a thesis is not only acceptable, but also one of a writer’s primary obligations, since the thesis relates his or her general argument. In a sense, you could think of the thesis as a responsibility to answer the question, “What will you/won’t you be claiming and why?”

To explain this further, let’s consider another example. If someone were to ask you what change you want to see in the world, you probably wouldn’t readily answer “world peace,” even though you (and many others) may want that. Why wouldn’t you answer that way? Because such an answer is far too broad and ambiguous to be logically argued. Although world peace may be your goal, for logic’s sake, you would be better off articulating your answer as “a peaceful solution to the violence currently
occuring on the border of southern Texas and Mexico,” or something similarly specific. The distinction between the two answers should be clear: the first answer, “world peace,” is broad, ambiguous, and not a fully developed claim (there wouldn’t be many, if any, people who would disagree with this statement); the second answer is narrower, more specific, and a fully developed claim. It confines the argument to a particular example of violence, but still allows you to address what you want, “world peace,” on a smaller, more manageable, and more logical scale.

Since a writer’s thesis functions as an outline of what he or she will address in an argument, it is often organized in the same manner as the argument itself. Let’s return to the argument about Google+ for an example. If the author stated his position as suggested—“Google+ is better than Facebook because its design enables me to manage my friends using separate circles, so that I’m targeting posts to various, separate groups instead of posting the same information I’ve added to my network”—we would expect him to first address the similarities and differences between the designs of Google+ and Facebook, and then the reasons why he believes Google+ is a more effective way of sharing information. The organization of his thesis should reflect the overall order of his argument. Such a well-organized thesis builds the foundation for a cohesive and persuasive argument.

Textual Analysis: The Argument

“Textual analysis” is the term writers use to describe a reader’s written explanation of a text. The reader’s textual analysis ought to include a summary of the author’s topic, an analysis or explanation of how the author’s perspective relates to the ongoing conversation about that particular topic, an interpretation of the effectiveness of the author’s argument and thesis, and references to specific components of the text that support his or her analysis or explanation.

An effective argument generally consists of the following components:

- A thesis. Communicates the writer’s position on a particular topic.
- Acknowledgement of opposition. Explains existing objections to the writer’s position.
- Clearly defined premises outlining reasoning. Details the logic of the writer’s position.
- Evidence of validating premises. Proves the writer’s thorough research of the topic.
- A conclusion convincing the audience of the argument’s soundness/persuasiveness. Argues the writer’s position is relevant, logical, and thoroughly researched and communicated.

An effective argument also is specifically concerned with the components involved in researching, framing, and communicating evidence:

- The credibility and breadth of the writer’s research
- The techniques (like rhetorical appeals) used to communicate the evidence (see “The Rhetorical Appeals”)
- The relevance of the evidence as it reflects the concerns and interests of the author’s targeted audience
- What topic has the author written about? (Explain in as few words as possible.)

To identify and analyze a writer’s argument, you must critically read and understand the text in question. Focus and take notes as you read, highlighting what you believe are key words or important phrases. Once you are confident in your general understanding of the text, you’ll need to explain the
author’s argument in a condensed summary. One way of accomplishing this is to ask yourself the following questions:

• What is the author’s point of view concerning his or her topic?
• What has the author written about the opposing point of view? (Where does it appear as though the author is “giving credit” to the opposition?)
• Does the author offer proof (either in reference to another published source or from personal experience) supporting his or her stance on the topic?
• As a reader, would you say that the argument is persuasive? Can you think of ways to strengthen the argument? Using which evidence or techniques?
• What topic has the author written about? (Explain in as few words as possible.) The author’s topic is two social networks—Google+ and Facebook.
• What is the author’s point of view concerning his or her topic? The author is “for” the new social network Google+.
• What has the author written about the opposing point of view? (Where does it appear as though the author is “giving credit” to the opposition?)
• Does the author offer proof (either in reference to another published source or from personal experience) supporting his or her stance on the topic?

Your articulation of the author’s argument will most likely derive from your answers to these questions. Let’s reconsider the argument about Google+ and answer the reflection questions listed above:

The author makes a loose allusion to the opposing point of view in the explanation, “I’m still a rookie and don’t know how to do even some basic things” (Harman). (The author alludes to his inexperience and, therefore, the potential for the opposing argument to have more merit.)

Yes, the author offers proof from personal experience, particularly through his first example: “following that high school reunion, the overwhelming majority of my Facebook friends list (which I’m barely rebuilding after my rejoin) are people from my hometown” (Harman). In his second example, he cites that “[o]n Google+ you can just drop [individuals] in the ‘acquaintances’ circle, and they’ll never even know how they’re classified” (Harman) in order to offer even more credible proof, based on the way Google+ operates instead of personal experience.

As a reader, would you say that the argument is persuasive? Can you think of ways to strengthen the argument? Using which evidence or techniques?

Yes, I would say that this argument is persuasive, although if I wanted to make it even stronger, I would include more detailed information about the opposing point of view. A balanced argument—one that fairly and thoroughly articulates both sides—is often more respected and better received because it proves to the audience that the writer has thoroughly researched the topic prior to making a judgment in favor of one perspective or another.

Work Cited
<http://doctorzamalek2.wordpress.com/author/doctorzamalek>
The website *eHow* has a page on “How to Freestyle Rap” (“Difficulty: Moderately Challenging”), and I’m trying to figure out what I think about it. On one hand, it seems like it would be against the ethos of an authentic rapper to use a page like this to brush up on freestyle skills. After all, the page is hosted on a corporate website owned by Demand Media, Inc., the same people behind, among other things, a golf site.

But on the other hand, the advice seems solid. The *eHow* page encourages me to follow an easy, seven-step model:

“Learn the basics.”

“Just start flowing.”

“Write down some good rhymes ahead of time.”

“Work on your wordplay.”

“Practice at home in your spare time.”

“Have a rap battle.”

“Rap what you know.” (“How to Freestyle Rap”)

The page treats freestyling as an art that can be practiced effectively by anyone, as long as the rapper is willing to research, take risks, spend time developing the craft, practice with a community and for an audience, and stay true to him/herself—i.e., to keep it real.

And here’s the thing: I think rhetoric is the same way. That is, it’s an art that can be practiced effectively by anyone, as long as the rhetor (the person who is communicating rhetorically) is willing to research, take risks, spend time developing the craft, practice with a community and for an audience, and stay true to him/herself.

You don’t hear me though.

***

That’s right: rhetoric is an art. But not necessarily art the way we think of it. The ancient Greeks called rhetoric a *techne*, a word they used to mean “a craft or ability to do something, a creative skill; this can be physical or mental, positive or negative, like that of metalworking or trickery” (Papillion 149).

Other examples of *techne*? Ship-building, for one. [1] You’d better not muddle your way through the art of building a ship, or you’ll ruddy well sink.

Rhetoric developed as an oral art, the art of knowing how to give an effective speech—say, in a court, in a law-making session, or at a funeral speech. And if you muddled your way through a speech, not
convincing anyone, not moving anyone, looking like a general schmuck in a toga, you’d ruddy well sink there, too.

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So rhetoric is an art. But of what? The shortest answer: it’s an art of communication, whether written, spoken, painted, streamed, or whatever.

But how do you judge when communication has worked, when it’s effective? In other words, how do you know when someone has used rhetorical skills well?

That’s easy: when an audience says it’s effective. So:

- An anchor on a conservative news show makes a jab at President Obama. Conservative watchers thought the jab was well-deserved and well-timed; it was rhetorically effective for them. Liberal watchers thought it was a cheap shot; it wasn’t rhetorically effective for them.

- A student writes an essay arguing that advertisements are so pervasive in the U.S. that he can’t even go to the bathroom without seeing Coke’s logo. His roommate reads it and doesn’t think advertising is a big deal; he’s not convinced, so it’s not a rhetorically effective essay for him. But his teacher reads it and thinks it’s cleverly argued and bitingly true. It works for her; it’s rhetorically effective for her.

- Eminem ends a rap battle to raucous applause from the people in the room, but the old grandmother in the back of the club thinks it was all a lot of noise. To her, Eminem’s rapping wasn’t rhetorically effective.

So rhetoric can’t be judged completely objectively. It wouldn’t make sense to say that someone’s rhetoric was “right” or “wrong” (though it can be “better” or “worse” for specific audiences). It all comes down to the audience.

Also, notice that all of those examples describe situations where the rhetor is being persuasive in one way or another. That’s a common definition of rhetoric—that it’s the art of persuasion. And persuasion is important—we’re constantly trying to convince people, either subtly or overtly, to understand our points of view, and people are constantly trying to convince us of their points of view.

But I like to think of rhetoric as being about more than just persuasion, which starts to sound all bossy and manipulative when I think of that way. Instead, I think rhetoric is the art of making a connection with an audience. It’s a series of techniques to help me share the way I see things with someone else. And depending on who I’m sharing with, I’ll use different techniques. I wouldn’t communicate my views to my wife in the same way that I would to the U.S. president, or to Jay-Z.

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The best rappers are surprising. You lean over laughing at wordplay that you didn’t expect. You smile, get into the groove, listen more carefully, and later you remember how much you enjoyed it. The communication was effective.

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I read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* in my senior year of high school, but I didn’t really get it. The author kept talking about *rhetoric*, and even after I looked up the definition, it didn’t make any sense to me.

Looking back, I think that’s ironic: the beating, blood-pumping heart of rhetoric is a consideration of audience. Speaking or writing or composing something that *works the way you want it to* for the audience you want it to work for.

But I don’t think senior-year me was the intended audience of *Zen*. If I had been, the author was pretty lousy at being rhetorical, because he didn’t explain well enough what *rhetoric* even means. The concepts he wanted his audience to be convinced of after reading his book didn’t leave me convinced and riveted; instead, I was glassy-eyed and dreaming about angsty 90s rock.

He was thoroughly un-rhetorical in his discussion of rhetoric.

I read the book now and I’m moved and touched. He shared his views effectively with me. Without the text changing at all, I became his audience. I get it now.

So he was being rhetorical after all. It’s both.

***

Why study rhetoric? It’s the same as if you asked, “Why study freestyle rap?” Both are a set of skills and techniques that often come naturally, but which people can learn to do better by studying the methods that have proven effective in the past.

“Why study painting?” Because by studying how other people paint, you learn new techniques that make you a more effective painter.

“Why study business?” Because by studying how other people do business, you learn new techniques that make you a more effective businessperson.

Why study ship-building, or basket-weaving, or trickery, or anything else that you might be able to muddle through but which you’d be better at with some training and practice? Isn’t it obvious?

It’s the same with rhetoric, but in realm of communication. Why not learn some techniques that will increase the chance that your audience will think/feel/believe the way you want them to after hearing/reading/experiencing whatever it is that you’re throwing at them?

And that’s only thinking about you in the composer’s role. What about when you’re in the receiving end, hearing/reading/experiencing things that have been carefully crafted so that you’ll buy into them? A scary list of rhetorically effective people: politicians, advertisers, super-villains. (You want rhetoric? Just listen to the slimy words of the Emperor in *Return of the Jedi* or the words Voldemort beams into everyone’s brain in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part Two*.) Studying rhetoric has the uncanny effect of opening your eyes to when people are trying to be all rhetorical on you, wielding their communication skills like an evil weapon.

***

My friend said to me, the other day: “Ugh. Carrie just wrote something inappropriate on her fiancée’s Facebook wall again.”

Me: “What’d she say?”
My friend: “I don’t even remember. It was something all gushy and uncomfortable. I skimmed back a bit and saw she’s been doing that a lot. Doesn’t she know that she can write messages that go just to him and not the rest of us? She doesn’t have to post that stuff on his wall!”

As I thought about this conversation, I realized that Carrie (not her real name) was in some ways being a rhetorical failure. Yes, her fiancée (one person), who was certainly the primary intended recipient of her message, probably found the wall post very rhetorically effective. That is, he surely felt the gushy emotions that she meant for him to feel. Her message worked. How rhetorical!

But because a Facebook wall is to some extent public, there are others who will read her post too (hundreds of people). What is the intended message for them? If we trust and like Carrie (and if she’s lucky), then we may think, “Oh, it’s sweet when people are public about their love for each other!” If we’re kind of sick of Carrie, we might think, “She just plain doesn’t get that we don’t care about her digital smooches and hugs.” And if we’re mad at her, we might think, “She’s publicly declaring her love to him because she wants us to feel bad that we don’t have the kind of true love that she has!” In short, the message to most of us is either A) that’s nice, B) oh, gross, or C) that hussy.

Why study rhetoric? Because so many people so often seem to have no idea about how to communicate well.

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We’re still beating around the bush when it comes to what rhetorical skills actually look like. Up to this point, you could say, “You keep talking about all these different collections of skills, but besides freestyling, I barely have any idea how to go about being effective at this stuff.” Fine—pass the mic.

Mic passed. Among lots of other things, some of the skills practiced by rhetors (and composition students) include:

- Basics that effective communicators keep in mind (like discovering the best time and place to communicate, clarifying what the communication is about, and learning about your audience)

- Techniques for deciding the best kinds of ideas and evidence to use for a given audience (like freewriting, open-minded research, and other forms of what we call “invention”)

- Techniques for deciding on the best way to organize material for a given audience (like models for organizing information into a business report, or a classical six-part speech, or a thesis-driven research essay)

- Suggestions for how to shape your style in ways that will be both understandable and exciting for your audience (like using rhetorical figures to liven up your sentences or varying sentence length and type)

- Considerations on the best way to get your communication to your audience (like a speech, an essay, a video, a recording, a painting, a sticky note, a letter made from words cut out of a magazine)

Yes, I keep writing the word audience over and over. That’s because it’s the core of any rhetorical endeavor. Remember? All those bullets can be summed up in one sentence: thinking rhetorically means thinking about your audience.

And that means communicating in a way that doesn’t make you look stupid, mean, or confusing. And that means you should communicate in a way that makes you look smart, nice, and clear. It sounds obvious, right? I think so too. But then, why are people so bad at it?

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The failures of a failed rhetor are those of a failed freestyle rapper, too. He gets up to start a rap battle and seems impressive at first (i.e., he has a strong ethos—a word we use a lot when analyzing communication from a rhetorical angle), but then things go badly when he gets the mic.

He starts out blundering around, looking like he’s never done this before. (He should have followed eHow’s advice to “Write down some good rhymes ahead of time.”)

In desperation, he lashes out at the other guy with attacks that seem like low blows, even for a rap battle. The audience groans; he broke an unspoken rule about how mean to be. Rhetorical failure.

He can tell that he’s losing the audience, so he changes his tactics and starts blending together all kinds of words that rhyme. But he fails at this too, since nothing he says makes any sense.

Eventually, he’s booed off the stage.

Why study rhetoric? So you can succeed in rap battles. I thought that was obvious.

[1] Thanks to Dr. Debra Jacobs for pointing out this to me.

Works Cited


Section Three: Visual Analysis

Visual Literacy
by Joseph M. Moxley, Writing Commons

Why is it that when you’re flipping through the pages of a magazine, walking through an art gallery, or browsing on the Internet, some images capture your attention more than others? Why are you drawn to particular photographs, advertisements, political cartoons, or protest posters?

You might think that an image you’re drawn to just “works.” But if pressed for more particulars, you might answer that your eye is drawn to a specific element in a photograph, that the images and text in an advertisement speak to each other in interesting ways, or that a protest image conveys a sense of motion and mood. What may be less obvious, however, is that your reading of an image or visual message is greatly influenced by the artist’s or designer’s compositional choices.

It’s important to consider, then, how certain compositional choices enable an artist to effectively reach his or her target audience. The unifying elements of an image include balance, perspective, proportion, emphasis, color, texture, motion, tone, shape, visual weight, and typography. Visual analysis asks us to
consider both the architecture of a visual message (i.e., its ethos, logos, and pathos appeals), as well as 
the effectiveness of the artist’s compositional choices.

**Breaking Down an Image**

by Jenna Pack, *Writing Commons*

We come across many images on a daily basis, but we rarely stop to think about what those images 
mean or about how they persuade us. Yet, images have power, which is why we need to understand 
how to analyze them. When you’re analyzing an image to understand the message it portrays, this is 
called **visual rhetoric.** Visual rhetoric is a means of communication that uses images to create meaning or 
to make an argument.

The first thing to consider when breaking down, or analyzing, an image is the **rhetorical situation:** the 
audience, context, and purpose. Each of these elements is essential in order to understand the message 
an image portrays. It is important to remember that you can analyze all different types of images, 
including advertisements, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), websites, paintings, photographs, and 
more. Here, we will look at an advertisement:

Belviso, Luciano, "Day 34" June 11, 2011 via Flickr. Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 2.0)

**Audience**

The **audience** consists of who is being targeted by the author, designer, or creator. In the above image, it 
appears that the audience is men. How do we know this? Not only is the person running in the 
background a man, but the color of the watch and the size of the watch face indicate that the watch is 
likely a man’s watch. Of course, women could indirectly be an audience, too, since they might want to 
buy this watch for someone or wear it themselves. In addition, the audience might be male **athletes or 
outdoor enthusiasts.** If you pay close attention to the watch features, it includes North, South, East, and 
West orientations; it is digital with various modes that likely include a stopwatch, and it has a light for 
when it is dark. All of these features are likely to appeal to outdoors types, athletes, or both.

**Context**

The **context** includes any background information that will help you understand and analyze an image. In
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the above image, the most important context is that the watch is a Pro Trek watch. If you did some research, you would find out that Pro Trek watches are part of Casio, an electronics manufacturing company. Knowing that Casio is an electronics company, we might assume that they value functionality over aesthetics; therefore, this might be the reason why the above watch is not very decorative or complex, but is still the focal point of the image. This is because Casio wants to feature the watch’s functionality.

**Purpose**

*Purpose* refers to the overall goal for creating an image. With advertisements, that goal is fairly easy to understand. Advertisements are almost always made to sell items. In our example image, the purpose is to sell the Pro Trek watch.

There are many other strategies to consider when breaking down an image. It’s always important to consider the rhetorical situation first, since that will help you interpret the purpose of the other strategies the designer uses. Then, you can begin to interpret the other persuasive techniques that influence the overall message of the image, including the tone, arrangement, text, typography, and color.

**Tone**

In literature, *tone* refers to the author’s attitude toward the subject. So, with regard to images, tone can also refer to the photographer/artist’s/designer’s perspective on the issue. In our image above, the tone is a bit hard to interpret. However, the fact that the watch is focused and up close while the background image of a person is blurred gives us a clue: it seems that the designer is portraying that the wearer of the watch is not that important. The watch is what’s significant. Perhaps the message is that anyone can wear these watches. Whether or not this is an effective approach to selling the watch is up for debate!

**Arrangement**

*Arrangement* refers to the placement of images, graphics, and text in an image. There are two key elements of arrangement—location and scale. *Location* refers to where a text or image is placed, whereas *scale* refers to the relative size of the visual components.

**Location**

Typically, our eyes scan an image, text, and/or webpage from left to right and from top to bottom. The designer of this advertisement has placed the Pro Trek logo and the image of the watch to the right side of the page—top and bottom, respectively. If the designer wanted our eyes to go to the logo first, he or she probably should have placed the logo at the top left corner so our eyes would catch that logo first. However, because the size of the watch is so large, it is obvious that the focus is the watch. This brings us to the term scale.

**Scale**

As discussed, image of the watch is both large and focused (compared to the blurred image of the man). Thus, the scale of the watch (its size in relation to everything else on the page), along with the sharp focus, indicates that the designer wants to viewer to focus on the watch, ensuring that viewers can see all the neat features this watch has to offer, while not getting distracted by other text or images.

**Text**

Text is another important element to analyze, assuming an image includes text. If it does, the text is obviously there for a purpose. Now, the only text on this advertisement is the company logo. This is obviously there for the purpose of showing viewers what type of watch it is so they can find it online or in a store. However, it is possible that this image could have been more effective if it included a catch phrase like those we often see in print ads or in commercials (think of Skittles’ “Taste the Rainbow” or
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Subway’s “Eat Fresh” slogans). If you see an image with text, consider the connotations of the words, the possible underlying assumptions of the phrase, and the effect the words are meant to have on the audience.

**Typography**

Typography refers to the *font size* and *font type* choices that are made in a visual composition.

**Font Size**

Notice that the font size of Pro Trek is actually smaller than the time indicated on the watch! This seems to actually reduce the importance of the company as compared to the importance of the watch itself. Do you think this is an effective visual strategy to persuade the audience to buy a Pro Trek watch?

**Font Type**

The font type we see with the words Pro Trek is strong, bolded, and in ALL CAPS. Since this advertisement is for a men’s athletic watch, the **STRONG, SERIOUS FONT TYPE** is probably more effective than a silly or playful font type.

**Color**

choices can really affect your audience, too. Colors can have different meanings (*connotations*) that implicitly portray a message. Colors can also enhance or detract from an image’s readability depending on the level of contrast used.

**Connotation**

Notice that this advertisement has red hues in the background and orange/yellow hues in the background and on the watch. The orange/yellow hues from the background tie in nicely with this same color in the watch, creating a sense of coherence that makes the design feel professional and therefore convincing. The red hues *could* connote warmth, raising the heart beat, getting the blood pumping, which all symbolize that the watch is effective for athletes.

**Readability**

You also should think about practical concerns with color, such as whether or not the text color is contrasted well enough with the background so that it is readable. For instance, **THIS** is more effective than **THIS**.

The white/black contrast of the Pro Trek logo makes it easy to read.

Ultimately, the image we have just broken down has both effective and ineffective rhetorical effects (persuasive effects). For instance, the absence of a catchy phrase might detract from its persuasiveness, or the blurred image of the man might indirectly signal that the company cares more about the watch than who its users are. On the other hand, though, the absence of text might send the message that the watch is so amazing it speaks for itself. The blurred image might simply reflect the movement of a man running, further emphasizing that this man is using the watch for athletic purposes. These decisions about the effectiveness of each strategy really depend on your individual analysis of the image. This is how you will make an argument about its effectiveness. While the above terminology will be helpful for analysis, regardless of the terminology, the most important thing to remember is this: visuals portray meaning, just as language does. If you take the time to understand the strategies used in images to create meaning, then you will become a stronger critical thinker, understanding how images are persuading you on a daily basis.
Section Four: Literary Analysis

Introduction
by Jamey Dunham, Sinclair Community College

Literature, by definition, simply refers to any and all writings comprised of words. In etymological terms it is derived from the Latin litaritura/litteratura which means "writing formed with letters." However, the more common use of the word literature, as we are used to hearing it, usually refers to a genre or category of writings that concern themselves with artistic considerations. Art is abstract, fickle and subjective by nature; it places the importance of beauty, imagination, emotion and expression on equal footing with logic, clarity and factuality. Indeed, in many instances it places them far above.

It is understandable then why many students approach literature with a hint of trepidation. The seemingly ambiguous rules of the genres, not to mention the subjective nature with which they are realized, can sometimes overwhelm even a seasoned reader, not to mention a reader new to pursuits of academic writing. A math student frustrated by a particularly abstract poem might reasonably argue it is futile to even attempt to solve such a problem when multiple outcomes are possible, or worse, no conclusive answer is even possible at all. It is important to understand, however, that this analogy does not fit. For a poem is not a problem to be solved, it is a thought to be considered, explored and appreciated. Besides, one needs only to look back on the discussion of analysis in the previous chapter to see the problem with such logic. As with rhetorical analysis, the persuasive objective at play in literary analysis is not to “win” but instead to form a thesis and support the claim in hopes of making this new perspective available and viable to the reader.

Let us look at it another way. Take food for example. Like literature, food is a wondrous and endlessly diverse commodity that generally improves the lives of all those who consume it. Food can invigorate us, comfort us, and even help define us by becoming part of our cultural or personal identity. Yet food, like literature, can also be approached in equally diverse and inventive ways. For example, like rhetoric, food may be approached from a somewhat more technical or objective perspective. It is easy to draw a comparison between regarding writing strictly in terms of the considerations of grammar, clarity and credibility in the same way one might regard food in terms of the more concrete and quantifiable characteristics of caloric intake or nutritional value. Yet both subjects can likewise be viewed from a more artistic and, therefore, subjective perspective. A food critic may look at a meal and choose to approach it from a consideration of form, presentation, originality, or even taste. So it is with much of literature. A poem might, for example, completely disregard whole aspects of basic grammar for the purpose of artistic expression or the stylistic requirements of form. The key in both cases then is to regard not only what has been done but to what end, and ultimately, to what degree of success.

To extend the metaphor a bit further, just as one generally develops a taste or appreciation for the complexities of new dishes over time, so too does a reader’s understanding and appetite for literature evolve gradually. As with food, we often tend to turn early on toward the dishes we are accustomed to, finding comfort in the known. My daughter, for example, subsisted solely on a diet of cucumbers, chicken and apple juice nearly the entirety of her first five years of life. However, if exposed to new cuisine, many of us are eventually able to make room for an appreciation of Pad Thai or fajitas in
addition to the more familiar fare of hamburgers and pizza. In our reading lives we likewise tend to orbit the same set of authors, genres or styles until, by chance or circumstance, we are knocked of course and new worlds are suddenly thrust upon us.

The key then is to approach literature, whether for the first time or as an avid reader, not with a sense of apprehension but a sense that literature is an opportunity to explore new possibilities and grow. Besides, there has yet to be a single recorded case of anyone becoming ill or done-in by exposure to bad literature.

**Beginning the Literary Analysis**

by Caroline Reynolds and Vicki Stalbird, Sinclair Community College

When you analyze a work of fiction, you provide an interpretation of the work and you support your interpretation with evidence from the text. Your evidence can be direct quotations from the text or paraphrases from the text.

A literary analysis of fiction is basically an argument. Your analysis will include a thesis that makes a claim about the literary work; in other words, the thesis provides your opinion about the text. You will support your claim or opinion with support—evidence from the text—in order to persuade your readers that your point is valid.

**Literary Elements and Devices**

Approach your literary analysis by reading the work and the reading it again. Make notes as you read. After you read and reread, examine one or more of the following literary elements or devices and answer some or all of the questions that follow their definitions:

**Character:** A person represented in the story.

**Protagonist:** The main character in the story.

**Antagonist:** The character who opposes the protagonist. Note that the antagonist does not have to be a character, but can be a force (like death, a natural disaster, or an internal conflict). The antagonist helps to create the **Conflict** in the story (see below).

Types of Characters:

**Static Characters:** These characters do not change as the story progress; there is no new knowledge to be gained from the character (or his/her actions as the story progresses).

**Dynamic Characters:** These characters change as the story unfolds.

**Round Characters:** Characters who are fully developed and complex, experiencing internal conflicts and inconsistencies, like real human beings.

**Flat Characters:** These individuals are not fully developed, and act in ways that are typical to their character traits. These are also known as **Stock Characters** (examples include police officers and wicked stepmothers).

Who is the protagonist? The antagonist? Are the characters round or flat? Are the characters sympathetic? Why do the characters act and think the way they do? What causes the
character to act or think the way they do? Are they reliable sources? Can we trust their interpretations of the events in the piece?

**Theme**: Theme is the central idea or foremost meaning of the story. What does the author want the reader to do, think, or feel? Values are also identified in theme: what is desired, treasured, or precious? By studying the other elements of fiction (Characters, Plot, Setting, etc.) we can identify the theme the author wants to convey.

Don’t confuse theme with **subject**. The subject is what the story is about; the theme is the author’s reason for creating the story (ex. to teach a lesson).

What **themes** are evident in the text? What messages do you think the author is trying to convey through this piece of writing? What insights do you get from reading the text? Why do you think the author chose to communicate a particular theme?

**Plot**: Plot refers to the development of events in the story. In other words, what happens in the story? The events are controlled by cause and effect: the result or consequence of an event that occurs in the text. Plot is also determined by the **Conflict** (the struggle between two opposing forces) in the piece.

Features of Plot:

**Rising Action**: The beginning of the story: the conflict is presented.

**Climax**: The second part of the story: the highest point of action or tension.

**Falling Action**: The third part of the story: the reader sees the resolution of the conflict of the story (also called dénouement).

**In medias Res**: “Into the midst of things:” the story begins in the middle of the action.

What are the events in the story? What parts of the text point to rising action, climax and falling action? Why do you think the events are ordered in the way they are? What effect does this order have on the piece? Examine the story as a whole: which part of the plot seems to be the most important?

**Setting**: Setting refers to the time and physical location of the story, but can also include the social and political environment, as well.

Types of Setting:

Outdoor places

Private homes, personal effects, and public places

Historical and cultural circumstances

What is the setting of the text? How does the setting influence the characters and plot? How does the setting influence themes? Does the setting create a certain mood? Is there something symbolic about the setting?

**Point of View**: Point of view (POV) is the narrator/speaker, persona, or voice the author uses to tell the story. POV is not limited to just the narrator in the story, but is a reflection of how the narration and the setting work together to form the piece as a whole.

Types of Point of View:

**First Person**: uses “I” voice and is witnessing (or has witnessed) the events first hand. Can be named or un-named.
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**Second Person**: This perspective is rare and not usually employed because of the ungainly construction that employs “you” voice. This perspective places the reader directly into the story: “You are walking down the street when you are approached by an old friend.”

**Third Person**: “He/She/It/They” voice is utilized, and does not take part in the action. Can be confused for the author due to the use of “I” voice.

Three Types of Third Person POV:

- **Objective/Dramatic**: An unidentified speaker who acts like a camera or a fly on the wall. His/her objective is to only tell what happens, but does not comment on it. This POV allows readers to form their own opinions.

- **Omniscient**: Means “all-knowing.” Reports what happens and what is said, and can also know what characters are thinking.

- **Limited-Omniscient**: Limited to thoughts and actions of a major character.

Does the narrator speak in first, second, or third person? Is there a single point of view, such as first person “I” narration, or is the point of view from multiple characters? How active is the narrator in the story? How does the point of view shape the text? Does the narrative voice change in the story, or does it remain consistent?

**Symbols**: Symbolism is a direct connection between an object.scene.character.action and an idea/value/person/way of life. In other words, a symbol adds an additional layer of meaning (whether it is an idea, an emotion, or a philosophical idea) to the object, character, or action in the story. For example, a dark path in a story could symbolize a character’s journey into madness. An incessantly ticking clock could symbolize the approaching death of the protagonist. What is important to remember is that symbols are varied, and there is no single “correct” interpretation to be found. An allegory is a type of work (usually religious) in which a succession of symbols includes the entire story. In an allegory tangible objects and intangible ideas are connected across the narrative to illustrate two levels of meaning. For example: Pilgrim’s Progress is about a character named Christian, and the journey he makes to reach the Celestial City (Heaven).

**Types of Symbols**:

- **Cultural/Universal**: These are symbols that are generally accepted by readers and writers who share the same history and traditions. For example: water symbolizes life.

- **Contextual/Private/Authorial**: These symbols are specific to an individual work of fiction. The symbol derives its meaning from the context and circumstances of the story.

**Figures of Speech**: Like symbols, figures of speech use language to provide an additional layer of significance to the literal meaning of a text. Figures of speech are also called tropes.

**Types of Figures of Speech**:

- **Allusion**: a brief reference to another text, event, or person outside of the text.

- **Irony**: a verbal or situational device in which contradictory statements or occurrences expose a reality that differs from what was originally thought to be true.

- **Metaphor**: A metaphor relates two dissimilar things without using the words “like” or “as” to make the comparison. For example, “he is as stubborn as a mule,” or “your voice is music to my ears.”
Personification: Also called anthropomorphism, personification gives human qualities to objects or animals. For example, “the candle flame danced in the dark window frame.”

Simile: A simile is a metaphor or comparison that uses “like” or “as” to show the similarity. For example, “life is like a song,” or “the two girls are like two peas in a pod.”

What images occur and then recur in the text? What could the images mean? What symbols appear in the text? Why do you think these are significant? Can you identify any of the images or symbols as coming from mythology, religion, art, or some other work of literature? If you think it might, but aren’t sure, look it up.

Structure, Tone, and Style:

Structure refers to the way that a piece of writing is organized, or the order of events in the story.

Tone is the way that the author reveals his or her attitude towards the reader or the work itself (and the people, places, and ideas therein). Tone can vary between happy, sad, serious, angry, or any other feeling that human beings experience.

Style, simply put, is the unique manner in which the author writes. It is the arrangement of words that produce a particular effect. Style includes such feature as word choice, and length and structure of sentences, the most important is word choice or diction.

Types of Diction:

Formal: Word choice is elevated and sophisticated, correct word order is used, and there is an absence of contractions (can’t, won’t, don’t, for example).

Neutral: Less elevated than formal diction, but correct usage is in effect, and contractions are present. Reflects a polished tone.

Informal: Everyday, ordinary vocabulary is used and includes informal language (slang and colloquial expressions).

How does the organization of the text impact the meaning of the text? Consider the author’s choice of words, sentence structure, sentence rhythm, grammar and diction. Can you identify which type of diction is being used? How does this affect the meaning of the text?

Literary Criticism

by Joseph Moxley, Writing Commons

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

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

**Why Write Literary Criticism?**

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

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

**Diverse Rhetorical Situations**

The genre of literary interpretation is more specialized than most of the other genres addressed in this section. People may discuss their reactions to literary works informally (at coffee houses, book clubs, or the gym) but the lion's share of literary criticism takes place more formally: in college classrooms, professional journals, academic magazines, and Web sites.

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

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

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

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

**Schools of Literary Criticism**

**New Criticism:** Focuses on "objectively" evaluating the text, identifying its underlying form. May study, for example, a text's use of imagery, metaphor, or symbolism. Isn't concerned with matters outside the text, such as biographical or contextual information. Online Examples: A Formalist Reading of Sandra Cisneros's "Woman Hollering Creek", Sound in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by Skylar Hamilton Burris
Reader-Response: Criticism focuses on each reader's personal reactions to a text, assuming meaning is created by a reader's or interpretive community's personal interaction with a text. Assumes no single, correct, universal meaning exists because meaning resides in the minds of readers. Online Examples: Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz": A Reader’s Response (PDF).

Feminism: Criticism focuses on understanding ways gender roles are reflected or contradicted by texts, how dominance and submission play out in texts, and how gender roles evolve in texts. Online Example: "The Yellow Wall-Paper": A Twist on Conventional Symbols, Subverting the French Androcentric Influence by Jane Le Marquand.

New Historicism: Focuses on understanding texts by viewing texts in the context of other texts. Seeks to understand economic, social, and political influences on texts. Tend to broadly define the term "text," so, for example, the Catholic Church could be defined as a "text." May adopt the perspectives of other interpretive communities--particularly reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and Marxist approaches--to interpret texts. Online Example: Monstrous Acts by Jonathan Lethem.

Media Criticism: Focuses on writers' use of multimedia and hypertexts. Online Examples The Electronic Labyrinth by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin, and Robin Parmar.


Marxist Criticism: Focuses on ways texts reflect, reinforce, or challenge the effects of class, power relations, and social roles. Online Example: A Reading of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" by Peter Kosenko.

Archetypal Criticism: Focuses on identifying the underlying myths in stories and archetypes, which reflect what the psychologist Carl Jung called the "collective unconsciousness." Online Example: A Catalogue of Symbols in The Awakening by Kate Chopin by Skylar Hamilton Burris.

Postcolonial Criticism: Focuses on how Western culture's (mis)representation of third-world countries and peoples in stories, myths, and stereotypical images encourages repression and domination. Online Example: Other Voices.

Structuralism/Semiotics: Focuses on literature as a system of signs where meaning is constructed in a context, where words are inscribed with meaning by being compared to other words and structures. Online Example: Applied Semiotics [Online journal with many samples].

Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction: Focuses, along with Structuralism, on viewing literature as a system of signs, yet rejects the Structuralist view that a critic can identify the inherent meaning of a text, suggesting, instead that literature has no center, no single interpretation, that literary language is inherently ambiguous.

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

In addition, literary theories have unique ways to develop and substantiate arguments. Some theories draw extensively on the work of other critics, while others concentrate on the reader's thoughts and feelings. Some theories analyze a work from an historical perspective, while others focus solely on a close reading of a text.
Accordingly, as with other genres, the following **key features** need to be read as points of departure as opposed to a comprehensive blueprint:

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

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

Below are some of the questions invoked by popular literary theories. Consider these questions as you read a work, perhaps taking notes on your thoughts as you reread. You may focus on using one theory to "read and interpret" text or, more commonly, you may compare the critical concerns of different theories.

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

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

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

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

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

**Organization**
The format for literary critiques is fairly standard:

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

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

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

- "In "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the protagonist is oppressed and represents the effect of the oppression of women in society. This effect is created by the use of complex symbols such as the house, the window, and the wall-paper which facilitate her oppression as well as her self-expression. ["'The Yellow Wall-Paper': A Twist on Conventional Symbols" by Liselle Sant]

- "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman is a sad story of the repression that women face in the days of the late 1800's as well as being representative of the turmoil that women face today. [Critique of "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Brandi Mahon]

- "The Yellow Wallpaper," written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story of a woman, her psychological difficulties and her husband's so called therapeutic treatment of her ailments during the late 1800s . . . Gilman does well throughout the story to show with descriptive phrases just how easily and effectively the man "seemingly" wields his "maleness" to control the woman. But, with further interpretation and insight I believe Gilman succeeds in nothing more than showing the weakness of women, of the day, as active persons in their own as well as society's decision making processes instead of the strength of men as women dominating machines. "The View from the Inside" by Timothy J. Decker

- In Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain creates a strong opposition between the freedom of Huck and Jim's life on the raft drifting down the Mississippi River, which represents
"nature," and the confining and restrictive life on the shore, which represents "society." ["'All I wanted was a change': Positive Images of Nature and Society in Chapter 19 of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from Professor Matthew Hurt's "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction"]

Essay Structure

Introduction
State the author's full name and full title of the literary work. If it is a short story, the title should be in "quotations." If it is a longer work like a novel or a play, the title should be in italics. The introduction is also a good place to provide a few sentences summarizing the text to provide context. Be careful not to provide too much summary. Conclude your introduction with a clear and focused thesis statement.

Body
Support the thesis with evidence from the text. Ensure that each paragraph has clear topic sentences that relate to your thesis statement. Use direct quotations or paraphrase. Explain what the quotations or paraphrases mean.

Using quotations and paraphrasing
Select a quotation. Next to the quote write: This shows________, or This suggests________ Fill in the blank with your explanation of the quote. Confirm that the quotations and paraphrases that you have selected are clearly linked to the specific points that you are making in your thesis statement.

Remember: always provide some sort of commentary or reflection on the evidence you have provided. Expand on the evidence by adding your own ideas.

Conclusion
Summarize your interpretation. If you instructor chooses, you might provide some reflection on your relationship to the text and/or or process of analyzing the text.

Reading
“The Cask of Amontillado”
by Edgar Allen Poe, 1846
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The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely, settled— but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my in to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point --this Fortunato --although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For
the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmery, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; - -I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him --"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado, A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If anyone has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me --"

"Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi--"

"I have no engagement; --come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a roquelaire closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting
him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," he said.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi --"

"Enough," he said; "the cough's a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True --true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily --but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps.

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"Nemo me impune lacessit."

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost
recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough --"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement -- a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said, "a sign."

"It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi --"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In niche, and finding an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links
about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said--

"Ha! ha! ha! --he! he! he! --a very good joke, indeed --an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo --he! he! he! --over our wine --he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he! --he! he! he! --yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"For the love of God, Montresor!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud --

"Fortunato!"
Chapter Eight: Analysis

No answer. I called again --

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. In pace requiescat!

Reading

“A Jury of Her Peers”
by Susan Glaspell
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When Martha Hale opened the storm-door and got a cut of the north wind, she ran back for her big woolen scarf. As she hurriedly wound that round her head her eye made a scandalized sweep of her kitchen. It was no ordinary thing that called her away--it was probably further from ordinary than anything that had ever happened in Dickson County. But what her eye took in was that her kitchen was in no shape for leaving: her bread all ready for mixing, half the flour sifted and half unsifted.

She hated to see things half done; but she had been at that when the team from town stopped to get Mr. Hale, and then the sheriff came running in to say his wife wished Mrs. Hale would come too--adding, with a grin, that he guessed she was getting scary and wanted another woman along. So she had dropped everything right where it was.

"Martha!" now came her husband's impatient voice. "Don't keep folks waiting out here in the cold."

She again opened the storm-door, and this time joined the three men and the one woman waiting for her in the big two-seated buggy.

After she had the robes tucked around her she took another look at the woman who sat beside her on the back seat. She had met Mrs. Peters the year before at the county fair, and the thing she remembered about her was that she didn't seem like a sheriff's wife. She was small and thin and didn't have a strong voice. Mrs. Gorman, sheriff's wife before Gorman went out and Peters came in, had a voice that somehow seemed to be backing up the law with every word. But if Mrs. Peters didn't look like a sheriff's wife, Peters made it up in looking like a sheriff. He was to a dot the kind of man who could get himself elected sheriff--a heavy man with a big voice, who was particularly genial with the law-abiding, as if to make it plain that he knew the difference between criminals and non-criminals. And right there it came into Mrs. Hale's mind, with a stab, that this man who was so pleasant and lively with all of them was going to the Wrights' now as a sheriff.

"The country's not very pleasant this time of year," Mrs. Peters at last ventured, as if she felt they ought to be talking as well as the men.

Mrs. Hale scarcely finished her reply, for they had gone up a little hill and could see the Wright place now, and seeing it did not make her feel like talking. It looked very lonesome this cold March morning. It had always been a lonesome-looking place. It was down in a hollow, and the poplar trees around it were lonesome-looking trees. The men were looking at it and talking about what had happened. The county attorney was bending to one side of the buggy, and kept looking steadily at the place as they drew up to it.
"I'm glad you came with me," Mrs. Peters said nervously, as the two women were about to follow the men in through the kitchen door.

Even after she had her foot on the door-step, her hand on the knob, Martha Hale had a moment of feeling she could not cross that threshold. And the reason it seemed she couldn't cross it now was simply because she hadn't crossed it before. Time and time again it had been in her mind, "I ought to go over and see Minnie Foster"--she still thought of her as Minnie Foster, though for twenty years she had been Mrs. Wright. And then there was always something to do and Minnie Foster would go from her mind. But now she could come.

The men went over to the stove. The women stood close together by the door. Young Henderson, the county attorney, turned around and said, "Come up to the fire, ladies."

Mrs. Peters took a step forward, then stopped. "I'm not--cold," she said.

And so the two women stood by the door, at first not even so much as looking around the kitchen. The men talked for a minute about what a good thing it was the sheriff had sent his deputy out that morning to make a fire for them, and then Sheriff Peters stepped back from the stove, unbuttoned his outer coat, and leaned his hands on the kitchen table in a way that seemed to mark the beginning of official business. "Now, Mr. Hale," he said in a sort of semi-official voice, "before we move things about, you tell Mr. Henderson just what it was you saw when you came here yesterday morning."

The county attorney was looking around the kitchen.

"By the way," he said, "has anything been moved?" He turned to the sheriff. "Are things just as you left them yesterday?"

Peters looked from cupboard to sink; from that to a small worn rocker a little to one side of the kitchen table.

"It's just the same."

"Somebody should have been left here yesterday," said the county attorney.

"Oh--yesterday," returned the sheriff, with a little gesture as of yesterday having been more than he could bear to think of. "When I had to send Frank to Morris Center for that man who went crazy--let me tell you. I had my hands full yesterday. I knew you could get back from Omaha by today, George, and as long as I went over everything here myself--"

"Well, Mr. Hale," said the county attorney, in a way of letting what was past and gone go, "tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning."

Mrs. Hale, still leaning against the door, had that sinking feeling of the mother whose child is about to speak a piece. Lewis often wandered along and got things mixed up in a story. She hoped he would tell this straight and plain, and not say unnecessary things that would just make things harder for Minnie Foster. He didn't begin at once, and she noticed that he looked queer--as if standing in that kitchen and having to tell what he had seen there yesterday morning made him almost sick.

"Yes, Mr. Hale?" the county attorney reminded.

"Harry and I had started to town with a load of potatoes," Mrs. Hale's husband began.

Harry was Mrs. Hale's oldest boy. He wasn't with them now, for the very good reason that those potatoes never got to town yesterday and he was taking them this morning, so he hadn't been home when the sheriff stopped to say he wanted Mr. Hale to come over to the Wright place and tell the
county attorney his story there, where he could point it all out. With all Mrs. Hale's other emotions came the fear now that maybe Harry wasn't dressed warm enough--they hadn't any of them realized how that north wind did bite.

"We come along this road," Hale was going on, with a motion of his hand to the road over which they had just come, "and as we got in sight of the house I says to Harry, 'I'm goin' to see if I can't get John Wright to take a telephone.' You see," he explained to Henderson, "unless I can get somebody to go in with me they won't come out this branch road except for a price I can't pay. I'd spoke to Wright about it once before; but he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet--guess you know about how much he talked himself. But I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, and said all the women-folks liked the telephones, and that in this lonesome stretch of road it would be a good thing--well, I said to Harry that that was what I was going to say--though I said at the same time that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John--"

Now there he was!--saying things he didn't need to say. Mrs. Hale tried to catch her husband's eye, but fortunately the county attorney interrupted with:

"Let's talk about that a little later, Mr. Hale. I do want to talk about that but, I'm anxious now to get along to just what happened when you got here."

When he began this time, it was very deliberately and carefully:

"I didn't see or hear anything. I knocked at the door. And still it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up--it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, louder, and I thought I heard somebody say, 'Come in.' I wasn't sure--I'm not sure yet. But I opened the door--this door," jerking a hand toward the door by which the two women stood. "And there, in that rocker"--pointing to it--"sat Mrs. Wright."

Everyone in the kitchen looked at the rocker. It came into Mrs. Hale's mind that that rocker didn't look in the least like Minnie Foster--the Minnie Foster of twenty years before. It was a dingy red, with wooden rungs up the back, and the middle rung was gone, and the chair sagged to one side.

"How did she--look?" the county attorney was inquiring.

"Well," said Hale, "she looked--queer."

"How do you mean--queer?"

As he asked it he took out a note-book and pencil. Mrs. Hale did not like the sight of that pencil. She kept her eye fixed on her husband, as if to keep him from saying unnecessary things that would go into that note-book and make trouble.

Hale did speak guardedly, as if the pencil had affected him too.

"Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of--done up."

"How did she seem to feel about your coming?"

"Why, I don't think she minded--one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, 'Ho' do, Mrs. Wright? It's cold, ain't it?' And she said, 'Is it?'--and went on pleatin' at her apron.

"Well, I was surprised. She didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to sit down, but just set there, not even lookin' at me. And so I said: 'I want to see John.'"

"And then she--laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh."
"I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said, a little sharp, 'Can I see John?' 'No,' says she--kind of dull like. 'Ain't he home?' says I. Then she looked at me. 'Yes,' says she, 'he's home.' 'Then why can't I see him?' I asked her, out of patience with her now. 'Cause he's dead' says she, just as quiet and dull--and fell to pleatin' her apron. 'Dead?' says, I, like you do when you can't take in what you've heard.

"She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rockin' back and forth.

"'Why--where is he?' says I, not knowing what to say.

"She just pointed upstairs--like this"--pointing to the room above.

"I got up, with the idea of going up there myself. By this time I--didn't know what to do. I walked from there to here; then I says: 'Why, what did he die of?'

"'He died of a rope around his neck,' says she; and just went on pleatin' at her apron."

Hale stopped speaking, and stood staring at the rocker, as if he were still seeing the woman who had sat there the morning before. Nobody spoke; it was as if everyone were seeing the woman who had sat there the morning before.

"And what did you do then?" the county attorney at last broke the silence.

"I went out and called Harry. I thought I might--need help. I got Harry in, and we went upstairs." His voice fell almost to a whisper. "There he was--lying over the--"

"I think I'd rather have you go into that upstairs," the county attorney interrupted, "where you can point it all out. Just go on now with the rest of the story."

"Well, my first thought was to get that rope off. It looked--"

He stopped, his face twitching.

"But Harry, he went up to him, and he said. 'No, he's dead all right, and we'd better not touch anything.' So we went downstairs.

"She was still sitting that same way. 'Has anybody been notified?' I asked. 'No, says she, unconcerned.

"'Who did this, Mrs. Wright?' said Harry. He said it businesslike, and she stopped pleatin' at her apron. 'I don't know,' she says. 'You don't know?' says Harry. 'Weren't you sleepin' in the bed with him?' 'Yes,' says she, 'but I was on the inside. Somebody slipped a rope round his neck and strangled him, and you didn't wake up?' says Harry. 'I didn't wake up,' she said after him.

"We may have looked as if we didn't see how that could be, for after a minute she said, 'I sleep sound."

"Harry was going to ask her more questions, but I said maybe that weren't our business; maybe we ought to let her tell her story first to the coroner or the sheriff. So Harry went fast as he could over to High Road--the Rivers' place, where there's a telephone."

"And what did she do when she knew you had gone for the coroner?" The attorney got his pencil in his hand all ready for writing.

"She moved from that chair to this one over here"--Hale pointed to a small chair in the corner--"and just sat there with her hands held together and lookin down. I got a feeling that I ought to make some conversation, so I said I had come in to see if John wanted to put in a telephone; and at that she started to laugh, and then she stopped and looked at me--scared."

At the sound of a moving pencil the man who was telling the story looked up.
Chapter Eight: Analysis

"I dunno--maybe it wasn't scared," he hastened: "I wouldn't like to say it was. Soon Harry got back, and then Dr. Lloyd came, and you, Mr. Peters, and so I guess that's all I know that you don't."

He said that last with relief, and moved a little, as if relaxing. Everyone moved a little. The county attorney walked toward the stair door.

"I guess we'll go upstairs first--then out to the barn and around there."

He paused and looked around the kitchen.

"You're convinced there was nothing important here?" he asked the sheriff. "Nothing that would--point to any motive?"

The sheriff too looked all around, as if to re-convince himself.

"Nothing here but kitchen things," he said, with a little laugh for the insignificance of kitchen things.

The county attorney was looking at the cupboard--a peculiar, ungainly structure, half closet and half cupboard, the upper part of it being built in the wall, and the lower part just the old-fashioned kitchen cupboard. As if its queerness attracted him, he got a chair and opened the upper part and looked in. After a moment he drew his hand away sticky.

"Here's a nice mess," he said resentfully.

The two women had drawn nearer, and now the sheriff's wife spoke.

"Oh--her fruit," she said, looking to Mrs. Hale for sympathetic understanding.

She turned back to the county attorney and explained: "She worried about that when it turned so cold last night. She said the fire would go out and her jars might burst."

Mrs. Peters' husband broke into a laugh.

"Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder, and worrying about her preserves!"

The young attorney set his lips.

"I guess before we're through with her she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Hale's husband, with good-natured superiority, "women are used to worrying over trifles."

The two women moved a little closer together. Neither of them spoke. The county attorney seemed suddenly to remember his manners--and think of his future.

"And yet," said he, with the gallantry of a young politician. "For all their worries, what would we do without the ladies?"

The women did not speak, did not unbend. He went to the sink and began washing his hands. He turned to wipe them on the roller towel--whirled it for a cleaner place.

"Dirty towels! Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?"

He kicked his foot against some dirty pans under the sink.

"There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm," said Mrs. Hale stiffly.

"To be sure. And yet"--with a little bow to her--"I know there are some Dickson County farm-houses that do not have such roller towels." He gave it a pull to expose its full length again.
"Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be."

"Ah, loyal to your sex, I see," he laughed. He stopped and gave her a keen look, "But you and Mrs. Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too."

Martha Hale shook her head.

"I've seen little enough of her of late years. I've not been in this house--it's more than a year."

"And why was that? You didn't like her?"

"I liked her well enough," she replied with spirit. "Farmers' wives have their hands full, Mr. Henderson. And then--" She looked around the kitchen.

"Yes?" he encouraged.

"It never seemed a very cheerful place," said she, more to herself than to him.

"No," he agreed; "I don't think anyone would call it cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the home-making instinct."

"Well, I don't know as Wright had, either," she muttered.

"You mean they didn't get on very well?" he was quick to ask.

"No; I don't mean anything," she answered, with decision. As she turned a little away from him, she added: "But I don't think a place would be any the cheerfuller for John Wright's bein' in it."

"I'd like to talk to you about that a little later, Mrs. Hale," he said. "I'm anxious to get the lay of things upstairs now."

He moved toward the stair door, followed by the two men.

"I suppose anything Mrs. Peters does'll be all right?" the sheriff inquired. "She was to take in some clothes for her, you know--and a few little things. We left in such a hurry yesterday."

The county attorney looked at the two women they were leaving alone there among the kitchen things.

"Yes--Mrs. Peters," he said, his glance resting on the woman who was not Mrs. Peters, the big farmer woman who stood behind the sheriff's wife. "Of course Mrs. Peters is one of us," he said, in a manner of entrusting responsibility. "And keep your eye out, Mrs. Peters, for anything that might be of use. No telling; you women might come upon a clue to the motive--and that's the thing we need."

Mr. Hale rubbed his face after the fashion of a showman getting ready for a pleasantry.

"But would the women know a clue if they did come upon it?" he said; and, having delivered himself of this, he followed the others through the stair door.

The women stood motionless and silent, listening to the footsteps, first upon the stairs, then in the room above them.

Then, as if releasing herself from something strange. Mrs. Hale began to arrange the dirty pans under the sink, which the county attorney's disdainful push of the foot had deranged.

"I'd hate to have men comin' into my kitchen," she said testily--"snooping round and criticizin'."

"Of course it's no more than their duty," said the sheriff's wife, in her manner of timid acquiescence.

"Duty's all right," replied Mrs. Hale bluffly; "but I guess that deputy sheriff that come out to make the fire might have got a little of this on." She gave the roller towel a pull. 'Wish I'd thought of that sooner!
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Seems mean to talk about her for not having things slicked up, when she had to come away in such a hurry."

She looked around the kitchen. Certainly it was not "slicked up." Her eye was held by a bucket of sugar on a low shelf. The cover was off the wooden bucket, and beside it was a paper bag--half full.

Mrs. Hale moved toward it.

"She was putting this in there," she said to herself--slowly.

She thought of the flour in her kitchen at home--half sifted, half not sifted. She had been interrupted, and had left things half done. What had interrupted Minnie Foster? Why had that work been left half done? She made a move as if to finish it,--unfinished things always bothered her,--and then she glanced around and saw that Mrs. Peters was watching her--and she didn't want Mrs. Peters to get that feeling she had got of work begun and then--for some reason--not finished.

"It's a shame about her fruit," she said, and walked toward the cupboard that the county attorney had opened, and got on the chair, murmuring: "I wonder if it's all gone."

It was a sorry enough looking sight, but "Here's one that's all right," she said at last. She held it toward the light. "This is cherries, too." She looked again. "I declare I believe that's the only one."

With a sigh, she got down from the chair, went to the sink, and wiped off the bottle.

"She'll feel awful bad, after all her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries last summer.

She set the bottle on the table, and, with another sigh, started to sit down in the rocker. But she did not sit down. Something kept her from sitting down in that chair. She straightened--stepped back, and, half turned away, stood looking at it, seeing the woman who had sat there "pleatin' at her apron."

The thin voice of the sheriff's wife broke in upon her: "I must be getting those things from the front-room closet." She opened the door into the other room, started in, stepped back. "You coming with me, Mrs. Hale?" she asked nervously. "You--you could help me get them."

They were soon back--the stark coldness of that shut-up room was not a thing to linger in.

"My!" said Mrs. Peters, dropping the things on the table and hurrying to the stove.

Mrs. Hale stood examining the clothes the woman who was being detained in town had said she wanted.

"Wright was close!" she exclaimed, holding up a shabby black skirt that bore the marks of much making over. "I think maybe that's why she kept so much to herself. I s'pose she felt she couldn't do her part; and then, you don't enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively--when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls, singing in the choir. But that--oh, that was twenty years ago."

With a carefulness in which there was something tender, she folded the shabby clothes and piled them at one corner of the table. She looked up at Mrs. Peters, and there was something in the other woman's look that irritated her.

"She don't care," she said to herself. "Much difference it makes to her whether Minnie Foster had pretty clothes when she was a girl."
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Then she looked again, and she wasn't so sure; in fact, she hadn't at any time been perfectly sure about Mrs. Peters. She had that shrinking manner, and yet her eyes looked as if they could see a long way into things.

"This all you was to take in?" asked Mrs. Hale.

"No," said the sheriff's wife; "she said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want," she ventured in her nervous little way, "for there's not much to get you dirty in jail, goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel more natural. If you're used to wearing an apron--. She said they were in the bottom drawer of this cupboard. Yes--here they are. And then her little shawl that always hung on the stair door."

She took the small gray shawl from behind the door leading upstairs, and stood a minute looking at it. Suddenly Mrs. Hale took a quick step toward the other woman, "Mrs. Peters!"

"Yes, Mrs. Hale?"

"Do you think she--did it?"

A frightened look blurred the other thing in Mrs. Peters' eyes.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, in a voice that seemed to shrink away from the subject.

"Well, I don't think she did," affirmed Mrs. Hale stoutly. "Asking for an apron, and her little shawl. Worryin' about her fruit."

"Mr. Peters says--." Footsteps were heard in the room above; she stopped, looked up, then went on in a lowered voice: "Mr. Peters says--it looks bad for her. Mr. Henderson is awful sarcastic in a speech, and he's going to make fun of her saying she didn't--wake up."

For a moment Mrs. Hale had no answer. Then, "Well, I guess John Wright didn't wake up--when they was slippin' that rope under his neck," she muttered.

"No, it's strange," breathed Mrs. Peters. "They think it was such a--funny way to kill a man."

She began to laugh; at sound of the laugh, abruptly stopped.

"That's just what Mr. Hale said," said Mrs. Hale, in a resolutely natural voice. "There was a gun in the house. He says that's what he can't understand."

"Mr. Henderson said, coming out, that what was needed for the case was a motive. Something to show anger--or sudden feeling."

'Well, I don't see any signs of anger around here," said Mrs. Hale, "I don't--" She stopped. It was as if her mind tripped on something. Her eye was caught by a dish-towel in the middle of the kitchen table. Slowly she moved toward the table. One half of it was wiped clean, the other half messy. Her eyes made a slow, almost unwilling turn to the bucket of sugar and the half empty bag beside it. Things begun--and not finished.

After a moment she stepped back, and said, in that manner of releasing herself:

"Wonder how they're finding things upstairs? I hope she had it a little more red up there. You know,"--she paused, and feeling gathered,--"it seems kind of sneaking: locking her up in town and coming out here to get her own house to turn against her!"

"But, Mrs. Hale," said the sheriff's wife, "the law is the law."

"I s'pose 'tis," answered Mrs. Hale shortly.

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She turned to the stove, saying something about that fire not being much to brag of. She worked with it a minute, and when she straightened up she said aggressively:

"The law is the law—and a bad stove is a bad stove. How'd you like to cook on this?"—pointing with the poker to the broken lining. She opened the oven door and started to express her opinion of the oven; but she was swept into her own thoughts, thinking of what it would mean, year after year, to have that stove to wrestle with. The thought of Minnie Foster trying to bake in that oven—and the thought of her never going over to see Minnie Foster—.

She was startled by hearing Mrs. Peters say: "A person gets discouraged—and loses heart."

The sheriff's wife had looked from the stove to the sink—to the pail of water which had been carried in from outside. The two women stood there silent, above them the footsteps of the men who were looking for evidence against the woman who had worked in that kitchen. That look of seeing into things, of seeing through a thing to something else, was in the eyes of the sheriff's wife now. When Mrs. Hale next spoke to her, it was gently:

"Better loosen up your things, Mrs. Peters. We'll not feel them when we go out."

Mrs. Peters went to the back of the room to hang up the fur tippet she was wearing. A moment later she exclaimed, "Why, she was piecing a quilt," and held up a large sewing basket piled high with quilt pieces.

Mrs. Hale spread some of the blocks on the table.

"It's log-cabin pattern," she said, putting several of them together, "Pretty, isn't it?"

They were so engaged with the quilt that they did not hear the footsteps on the stairs. Just as the stair door opened Mrs. Hale was saying:

"Do you suppose she was going to quilt it or just knot it?"

The sheriff threw up his hands.

"They wonder whether she was going to quilt it or just knot it!"

There was a laugh for the ways of women, a warming of hands over the stove, and then the county attorney said briskly:

"Well, let's go right out to the barn and get that cleared up."

"I don't see as there's anything so strange," Mrs. Hale said resentfully, after the outside door had closed on the three men—"our taking up our time with little things while we're waiting for them to get the evidence. I don't see as it's anything to laugh about."

"Of course they've got awful important things on their minds," said the sheriff's wife apologetically.

They returned to an inspection of the block for the quilt. Mrs. Hale was looking at the fine, even sewing, and preoccupied with thoughts of the woman who had done that sewing, when she heard the sheriff's wife say, in a queer tone:

"Why, look at this one."

She turned to take the block held out to her.

"The sewing," said Mrs. Peters, in a troubled way, "All the rest of them have been so nice and even--but--this one. Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!"
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Their eyes met--something flashed to life, passed between them; then, as if with an effort, they seemed to pull away from each other. A moment Mrs. Hale sat there, her hands folded over that sewing which was so unlike all the rest of the sewing. Then she had pulled a knot and drawn the threads.

"Oh, what are you doing, Mrs. Hale?" asked the sheriff's wife, startled.

"Just pulling out a stitch or two that's not sewed very good," said Mrs. Hale mildly.

"I don't think we ought to touch things," Mrs. Peters said, a little helplessly.

"I'll just finish up this end," answered Mrs. Hale, still in that mild, matter-of-fact fashion.

She threaded a needle and started to replace bad sewing with good. For a little while she sewed in silence. Then, in that thin, timid voice, she heard:

"Mrs. Hale!"

"Yes, Mrs. Peters?"

'What do you suppose she was so--nervous about?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Mrs. Hale, as if dismissing a thing not important enough to spend much time on. "I don't know as she was--nervous. I sew awful queer sometimes when I'm just tired."

She cut a thread, and out of the corner of her eye looked up at Mrs. Peters. The small, lean face of the sheriff's wife seemed to have tightened up. Her eyes had that look of peering into something. But next moment she moved, and said in her thin, indecisive way:

'Well, I must get those clothes wrapped. They may be through sooner than we think. I wonder where I could find a piece of paper--and string."

"In that cupboard, maybe," suggested to Mrs. Hale, after a glance around.

One piece of the crazy sewing remained unripped. Mrs. Peter's back turned, Martha Hale now scrutinized that piece, compared it with the dainty, accurate sewing of the other blocks. The difference was startling. Holding this block made her feel queer, as if the distracted thoughts of the woman who had perhaps turned to it to try and quiet herself were communicating themselves to her.

Mrs. Peters' voice roused her.

"Here's a bird-cage," she said. "Did she have a bird, Mrs. Hale?"

'Why, I don't know whether she did or not." She turned to look at the cage Mrs. Peters was holding up. "I've not been here in so long." She sighed. "There was a man round last year selling canaries cheap--but I don't know as she took one. Maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself."

Mrs. Peters looked around the kitchen.

"Seems kind of funny to think of a bird here." She half laughed--an attempt to put up a barrier. "But she must have had one--or why would she have a cage? I wonder what happened to it."

"I suppose maybe the cat got it," suggested Mrs. Hale, resuming her sewing.

"No; she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling some people have about cats--being afraid of them. When they brought her to our house yesterday, my cat got in the room, and she was real upset and asked me to take it out."

"My sister Bessie was like that," laughed Mrs. Hale.
Chapter Eight: Analysis

The sheriff's wife did not reply. The silence made Mrs. Hale turn round. Mrs. Peters was examining the bird-cage.

"Look at this door," she said slowly. "It's broke. One hinge has been pulled apart."

Mrs. Hale came nearer.

"Looks as if someone must have been--rough with it."

Again their eyes met--startled, questioning, apprehensive. For a moment neither spoke nor stirred. Then Mrs. Hale, turning away, said brusquely:

"If they're going to find any evidence, I wish they'd be about it. I don't like this place."

"But I'm awful glad you came with me, Mrs. Hale." Mrs. Peters put the bird-cage on the table and sat down. "It would be lonesome for me--sitting here alone."

"Yes, it would, wouldn't it?" agreed Mrs. Hale, a certain determined naturalness in her voice. She had picked up the sewing, but now it dropped in her lap, and she murmured in a different voice: "But I tell you what I do wish, Mrs. Peters. I wish I had come over sometimes when she was here. I wish--I had."

"But of course you were awful busy, Mrs. Hale. Your house--and your children."

"I could've come," retorted Mrs. Hale shortly. "I stayed away because it weren't cheerful--and that's why I ought to have come. I"--she looked around--"I've never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I don't know what it is, but it's a lonesome place, and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now--" She did not put it into words.

"Well, you mustn't reproach yourself," counseled Mrs. Peters. "Somehow, we just don't see how it is with other folks till--something comes up."

"Not having children makes less work," mused Mrs. Hale, after a silence, "but it makes a quiet house--and Wright out to work all day--and no company when he did come in. Did you know John Wright, Mrs. Peters?"

"Not to know him. I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man."

"Yes--good," conceded John Wright's neighbor grimly. "He didn't drink, and kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him--." She stopped, shivered a little. "Like a raw wind that gets to the bone." Her eye fell upon the cage on the table before her, and she added, almost bitterly: "I should think she would've wanted a bird!"

Suddenly she leaned forward, looking intently at the cage. "But what do you s'pose went wrong with it?"

"I don't know," returned Mrs. Peters; "unless it got sick and died."

But after she said it she reached over and swung the broken door. Both women watched it as if somehow held by it.

"You didn't know--her?" Mrs. Hale asked, a gentler note in her voice.

"Not till they brought her yesterday," said the sheriff's wife.

"She--come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself. Real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and--fluttery. How--she--did--change."

That held her for a long time. Finally, as if struck with a happy thought and relieved to get back to everyday things, she exclaimed:
"Tell you what, Mrs. Peters, why don't you take the quilt in with you? It might take up her mind."

"Why, I think that's a real nice idea, Mrs. Hale," agreed the sheriff's wife, as if she too were glad to come into the atmosphere of a simple kindness. "There couldn't possibly be any objection to that, could there? Now, just what will I take? I wonder if her patches are in here--and her things?"

They turned to the sewing basket.

"Here's some red," said Mrs. Hale, bringing out a roll of cloth. Underneath that was a box. "Here, maybe her scissors are in here--and her things." She held it up. "What a pretty box! I'll warrant that was something she had a long time ago--when she was a girl."

She held it in her hand a moment; then, with a little sigh, opened it.

Instantly her hand went to her nose.

"Why--!"

Mrs. Peters drew nearer--then turned away.

"There's something wrapped up in this piece of silk," faltered Mrs. Hale.

"This isn't her scissors," said Mrs. Peters, in a shrinking voice.

Her hand not steady, Mrs. Hale raised the piece of silk. "Oh, Mrs. Peters!" she cried. "It's--"

Mrs. Peters bent closer.

"It's the bird," she whispered.

"But, Mrs. Peters!" cried Mrs. Hale. "Look at it! Its neck--look at its neck! It's all--other side to."

She held the box away from her.

The sheriff's wife again bent closer.

"Somebody wrung its neck," said she, in a voice that was slow and deep.

And then again the eyes of the two women met--this time clung together in a look of dawning comprehension, of growing horror. Mrs. Peters looked from the dead bird to the broken door of the cage. Again their eyes met. And just then there was a sound at the outside door. Mrs. Hale slipped the box under the quilt pieces in the basket, and sank into the chair before it. Mrs. Peters stood holding to the table. The county attorney and the sheriff came in from outside.

"Well, ladies," said the county attorney, as one turning from serious things to little pleasantry, "have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?"

"We think," began the sheriff's wife in a flurried voice, "that she was going to--knot it."

He was too preoccupied to notice the change that came in her voice on that last.

"Well, that's very interesting, I'm sure," he said tolerantly. He caught sight of the bird-cage.

"Has the bird flown?"

"We think the cat got it," said Mrs. Hale in a voice curiously even.

He was walking up and down, as if thinking something out.

"Is there a cat?" he asked absently.

Mrs. Hale shot a look up at the sheriff's wife.
Chapter Eight: Analysis

"Well, not now," said Mrs. Peters. "They're superstitious, you know; they leave."

She sank into her chair.

The county attorney did not heed her. "No sign at all of anyone having come in from the outside," he said to Peters, in the manner of continuing an interrupted conversation. "Their own rope. Now let's go upstairs again and go over it, piece by piece. It would have to have been someone who knew just the--"

The stair door closed behind them and their voices were lost.

The two women sat motionless, not looking at each other, but as if peering into something and at the same time holding back. When they spoke now it was as if they were afraid of what they were saying, but as if they could not help saying it.

"She liked the bird," said Martha Hale, low and slowly. "She was going to bury it in that pretty box."

When I was a girl," said Mrs. Peters, under her breath, "my kitten--there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes--before I could get there--" She covered her face an instant. "If they hadn't held me back I would have"--she caught herself, looked upstairs where footsteps were heard, and finished weakly--"hurt him."

Then they sat without speaking or moving.

"I wonder how it would seem," Mrs. Hale at last began, as if feeling her way over strange ground--"never to have had any children around?" Her eyes made a slow sweep of the kitchen, as if seeing what that kitchen had meant through all the years "No, Wright wouldn't like the bird," she said after that--"a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that too." Her voice tightened.

Mrs. Peters moved uneasily.

"Of course we don't know who killed the bird."

"I knew John Wright," was Mrs. Hale's answer.

"It was an awful thing was done in this house that night, Mrs. Hale," said the sheriff's wife. "Killing a man while he slept--slipping a thing round his neck that choked the life out of him."

Mrs. Hale's hand went out to the bird cage.

"We don't know who killed him," whispered Mrs. Peters wildly. "We don't know."

Mrs. Hale had not moved. "If there had been years and years of--nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful--still--after the bird was still."

It was as if something within her not herself had spoken, and it found in Mrs. Peters something she did not know as herself.

"I know what stillness is," she said, in a queer, monotonous voice. "When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died--after he was two years old--and me with no other then--"

Mrs. Hale stirred.

"How soon do you suppose they'll be through looking for the evidence?"

"I know what stillness is," repeated Mrs. Peters, in just that same way. Then she too pulled back. "The law has got to punish crime, Mrs. Hale," she said in her tight little way.

"I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster," was the answer, "when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons, and stood up there in the choir and sang."
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The picture of that girl, the fact that she had lived neighbor to that girl for twenty years, and had let her die for lack of life, was suddenly more than she could bear.

"Oh, I wish I'd come over here once in a while!" she cried. "That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?"

"We mustn't take on," said Mrs. Peters, with a frightened look toward the stairs.

"I might 'a' known she needed help! I tell you, it's queer, Mrs. Peters. We live close together, and we live far apart. We all go through the same things--it's all just a different kind of the same thing! If it weren't--why do you and I understand? Why do we know--what we know this minute?"

She dashed her hand across her eyes. Then, seeing the jar of fruit on the table she reached for it and choked out:

"If I was you I wouldn't tell her her fruit was gone! Tell her it ain't. Tell her it's all right--all of it. Here--take this in to prove it to her! She--she may never know whether it was broke or not."

She turned away.

Mrs. Peters reached out for the bottle of fruit as if she were glad to take it--as if touching a familiar thing, having something to do, could keep her from something else. She got up, looked about for something to wrap the fruit in, took a petticoat from the pile of clothes she had brought from the front room, and nervously started winding that round the bottle.

"My!" she began, in a high, false voice, "it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a--dead canary." She hurried over that. "As if that could have anything to do with--with--My, wouldn't they laugh?"

Footsteps were heard on the stairs.

"Maybe they would," muttered Mrs. Hale--"maybe they wouldn't."

"No, Peters," said the county attorney incisively; "it's all perfectly clear, except the reason for doing it. But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing--something to show. Something to make a story about. A thing that would connect up with this clumsy way of doing it."

In a covert way Mrs. Hale looked at Mrs. Peters. Mrs. Peters was looking at her. Quickly they looked away from each other. The outer door opened and Mr. Hale came in.

"I've got the team round now," he said. "Pretty cold out there."

"I'm going to stay here awhile by myself," the county attorney suddenly announced. "You can send Frank out for me, can't you?" he asked the sheriff. "I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied we can't do better."

Again, for one brief moment, the two women's eyes found one another.

The sheriff came up to the table.

"Did you want to see what Mrs. Peters was going to take in?"

The county attorney picked up the apron. He laughed.

"Oh, I guess they're not very dangerous things the ladies have picked out."

Mrs. Hale's hand was on the sewing basket in which the box was concealed. She felt that she ought to take her hand off the basket. She did not seem able to. He picked up one of the quilt blocks which she
had piled on to cover the box. Her eyes felt like fire. She had a feeling that if he took up the basket she would snatch it from him.

But he did not take it up. With another little laugh, he turned away, saying:

"No; Mrs. Peters doesn't need supervising. For that matter, a sheriff's wife is married to the law. Ever think of it that way, Mrs. Peters?"

Mrs. Peters was standing beside the table. Mrs. Hale shot a look up at her; but she could not see her face. Mrs. Peters had turned away. When she spoke, her voice was muffled.

"Not--just that way," she said.

"Married to the law!" chuckled Mrs. Peters' husband. He moved toward the door into the front room, and said to the county attorney:

"I just want you to come in here a minute, George. We ought to take a look at these windows."

"Oh--windows," said the county attorney scoffingly.

"We'll be right out, Mr. Hale," said the sheriff to the farmer, who was still waiting by the door.

Hale went to look after the horses. The sheriff followed the county attorney into the other room. Again--for one final moment--the two women were alone in that kitchen.

Martha Hale sprang up, her hands tight together, looking at that other woman, with whom it rested. At first she could not see her eyes, for the sheriff's wife had not turned back since she turned away at that suggestion of being married to the law. But now Mrs. Hale made her turn back. Her eyes made her turn back. Slowly, unwillingly, Mrs. Peters turned her head until her eyes met the eyes of the other woman. There was a moment when they held each other in a steady, burning look in which there was no evasion or flinching. Then Martha Hale's eyes pointed the way to the basket in which was hidden the thin thing that would make certain the conviction of the other woman--that woman who was not there and yet who had been there with them all through that hour.

For a moment Mrs. Peters did not move. And then she did it. With a rush forward, she threw back the quilt pieces, got the box, tried to put it in her handbag. It was too big. Desperately she opened it, started to take the bird out. But there she broke--she could not touch the bird. She stood there helpless, foolish.

There was the sound of a knob turning in the inner door. Martha Hale snatched the box from the sheriff's wife, and got it in the pocket of her big coat just as the sheriff and the county attorney came back into the kitchen.

"Well, Henry," said the county attorney facetiously, "at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to--what is it you call it, ladies?"

Mrs. Hale's hand was against the pocket of her coat.

"We call it--knot it, Mr. Henderson."
Chapter 9: Argument
Chapter Contributors: Dair Arnold and Lisa Mahle-Grisez

Introduction
by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

What’s the last argument you had with someone? Did you “win” that argument, or did you walk away dissatisfied or even frustrated? While we think of arguments as contentious most of the time, in English composition, we challenge you to think about argument in terms of a negotiation of meaning with your reader (audience). The beauty of a written argument is that you can be as convincing as possible because you are presenting well-chosen pieces of evidence to support your position.

Earlier in this text, you read about ethos, logos, and pathos as means of analyzing an argument. In what follows you will learn how to employ those elements and persuade your reader to agree with your point of view. The subject you choose to write about must be worthy of such attention—make sure you have a debatable topic and then use your pre-writing strategies to define the content of your paper and how you will approach writing. You may be able to consult evidence and experts for supporting ideas. You might need to rely on your own reasoning for developing supports. Follow your instructor’s guidelines to determine how many sources you should use to support your argument.

Why Write An Argument?
by Joseph Moxley, Writing Commons

Why Write an Argument?
On a daily basis, we all deal with family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers who try to persuade or even manipulate us. Buy me, trust me, believe in me—such is the chatter of routine life. According to some psychologists, we experiment with persuasion from the moment we realize as babies that people respond to us when we cry.

As a student, citizen, and professional, you'll need to be adept at creating and critiquing arguments. Throughout your life, you will respond to persuasive arguments on a range of topics—from child-raising practices to more abstract arguments regarding our nation’s foreign and social policies. Politicians will try to convince you of the need for tougher immigration restrictions, for more money for education, for improved roads. Much of what you read in newspapers, magazines, textbooks, research reports, procedural manuals, and sales catalogs was produced to influence you to do something or believe something. You will have to evaluate all these uses of persuasion.

Diverse Rhetorical Situations
Arguments are exceedingly common. People write arguments for many different reasons, addressing varied audiences, and employing diverse media. People argue in informal writing spaces (bumper
stickers, post-it notes, junk mail, email, Instant Messages) and formal writing spaces (letters, speeches, business proposals).

In order to be convincing, a writer needs evidence for her claims. Evidence includes traditional sources such as books and journal articles but may also include anecdotes, photographs, web sources and videos. The kinds of evidence that are appropriate in a particular context depend on the writer’s purpose. Academic culture is an evidence-based culture. Good scholarship requires claims supported by facts, theories, and research. Finding the evidence is not enough, though, as it needs to be successfully integrated into texts.

When composers call on the ideas or authority of a book, article, web site, primary source, or other outside information, they should be practiced in choosing the best possible information and integrating it effectively into their own prose. Research in composition and rhetoric reminds us that students struggling to understand new material often use sources in immature ways—perhaps by overquoting, failing to introduce outside sources with skill, or patchwriting. Evidence can make or break a paper, depending on how it is used. In order to score highly on this section of the rubric, students will need to develop an understanding of the purpose of research, including credible and appropriate evidence in their papers so as to further their arguments.

**What is An Argument?**

adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

Defending a certain point of view through writing or speech is central to writing an argument. Usually called a "claim" or a "thesis," this point of view is concerned with an issue that doesn't have a clear right or wrong answer (e.g., four and two make six). Also, argument should not only be concerned with personal opinion (e.g., I really like carrots). Instead, an argument might tackle issues like stem cell research or gun control. What distinguishes an argument from a descriptive essay or "report" is that the argument must take a stance; if you're merely summarizing "both sides" of an issue or pointing out the "pros and cons," you're not really writing an argument. "Stricter gun control laws will likely result in a decrease in gun-related violence" is an argument. Note that people can and will disagree with this argument, which is precisely why so many instructors find this type of assignment so useful -- it makes you think!

Academic arguments usually "articulate an opinion." This opinion is always carefully defended with good reasoning and supported by plenty of research. Research? Yes, research! Indeed, part of learning to write effective arguments is finding reliable sources (or other documents) that lend credibility to your position. It's not enough to say "capital punishment is wrong because that's the way I feel."

Instead, you need to adequately support your claim by finding:

- facts
- statistics
- quotations from recognized authorities, and
- other types of evidence
You won't always win, and that's fine. The goal of an argument is simply to:

- make a claim
- support your claim with the most credible reasoning and evidence you can muster
- hope that the reader will at least understand your position
- hope that your claim is taken seriously

In what follows, you will learn about structuring an argument, including a **general written argument** structure, and the **position** and **proposal** variations on that basic form. If you want to make a claim about a particular (usually controversial) issue, you can use the position argument form. Alternately, if you would like to offer a solution to a particular situation that you see as problematic, such as the rising cost of education, you can get your idea across using a proposal argument form. By adapting one of these three methods (basic, position, or proposal), you will be well on the way to making your point. As a college-level writer, the great thing about the argument structure is its amazing versatility. Once you become familiar with the basic structure of the argumentative essay, you will be able to clearly argue in all of your classes!

**Writing Strategies for Arguments**

**Introduction**

The first paragraph of your argument should **introduce your topic** and the issues surrounding it. This introduction needs to be in clear, easily understandable language. Your readers need to know what you're writing about before they can decide if they believe you or not. Once you determine who your audience is and why they might care about your topic, you can appeal to them by describing their stake in the issue. If readers recognize themselves as part of your intended audience, they are more likely to pay attention to your argument and evaluate your claims. If you're writing to an audience of grade school teachers, for instance, they are likely to be interested in the merits and drawbacks of all-day Kindergarten. You should clarify your intended audience in your introduction—no later. While it isn't necessary to name the audience directly, you should outline the costs and benefits of your position in order to give the audience incentive to keep reading. What common ground do you share with your audience? The most effective persuasive writing shows how the stakes are important for everyone involved.

After you establish the importance of your topic, provide context to show how your argument fits into the larger discussion at hand. Give readers the information they will need to understand your claims. Signify what level of expertise readers should have in order to understand your argument; this step is crucial if you are writing for a specialist audience. Specialist readers like to know what degree of familiarity with the material is expected so they can gauge whether a paper is "too hard" (dependent on unfamiliar contexts, methods and language), or "too easy" (pertinent to general issues that are obvious to experts in the field).

Once you have introduced your general subject and appealed to your audience, it’s time to **state your claim**. Your claim will serve as the thesis for your essay. Make sure that you use clear and precise language. Your reader needs to understand exactly where you stand on the issue. The clarity of your claim affects your readers' understanding of your views. Also, it's a good idea to highlight what you plan to cover. Highlights allow your reader to know what direction you will be taking with your argument. (For more tips on writing claims, see the section on argumentative thesis statements in Chapter 5.)

**Body**

**Background Information**
Once your position is stated, you should establish your credibility. There are two sides to every argument. Not everyone will agree with your viewpoint, so try to form a common ground with the audience. Think about who may be undecided or opposed to your viewpoint. Take the audience's age, education, values, gender, culture, ethnicity, and all other variables into consideration as you introduce your topic. These variables will affect your word choice, and your audience may be more likely to listen to your argument with an open mind if you do.

**Developing Your Argument**
Back up your thesis with logical and persuasive arguments. During your pre-writing phase, outline the main points you might use to support your claim, and decide which are the strongest and most logical. Eliminate those which are based on emotion rather than fact. Your corroborating evidence should be well-researched, such as statistics, examples, and expert opinions. You can also reference personal experience. It's a good idea to have a mixture. However, you should avoid leaning too heavily on personal experience, as you want to present an argument that appears objective enough to persuade your reader.

**Dealing With the Opposition**
When conducting your research, make sure to review the opposing side of the argument that you are presenting. You need to be prepared to counter those ideas. Remember, in order for people to give up their position, they must see how your position is more reasonable than their own. When you address the opposing point of view in your essay and demonstrate how your own claim is stronger, you neutralize their argument. By failing to address an opposing view, you leave a reason for your reader to disagree with you, and therefore weaken your persuasive power. Methods of addressing the opposing side of the argument vary. You may choose to state your main points, then address and refute the opposition, and then conclude. Conversely, you might summarize the opposition's views early in your argument, and then revisit them after you've presented your side or the argument. This will show how your information is more reasonable than their own.

**Conclusion**
You have introduced your topic, stated your claim, supported that claim with logical and reasonable evidence, and refuted your opposition’s viewpoint. The hard work is done. Now it’s time to wrap things up. By the time readers get to the end of your paper, they should have learned something. You should have learned something, too. Give readers an idea to take away with them. Conclude = to come together or to end (not restate what has already been said in your paper). One word of caution: avoid introducing any new information in your conclusion. If you find that there's another point that you wanted to include, revise your essay. Include this new information into the body of your essay. The conclusion should only review what the rest of your essay has offered.

Two variations of the basic argument structure outlined above are the position method and the proposal method.

**Position Method**
The position method is used to try to convince your audience that your claim is true.

- **Introduce and define your topic.** Never assume that your reader is familiar with the issues surrounding your topic. This is your chance to set up the premise (point of view) you want to use. This is also a good time to present your claim.

- **Background information.** Do your research! The more knowledgeable you are, the more concise an argument you will be able to give. You will now be able to provide your reader with the best
information possible. This will allow your audience to read your paper with the same knowledge you possess on the topic. Information is the backbone to a solid argument.

**Development.** You have your argument, and you may have even stated your thesis. Now, start developing your ideas. Provide evidence and reasoning from your sources and appeal to logos, ethos, and pathos to convince your reader. (For more information logos, ethos, and pathos, see the first reading in this chapter. For more information researching and using sources, see Chapters 7.5 and 8.)

**Be prepared to deal with the "other side."** There will be those who oppose your argument. Be prepared to answer those opinions or points of view with knowledgeable responses. If you have done your homework and know your material, you will be able to address any opposing arguments with ease and authority.

**In conclusion...** Now is the time to drive home your point. Re-emphasize your main arguments and thesis statement.

**Proposal Method**
The **proposal method** of argument is useful when there is a problematic situation, and you would like to offer a solution to the situation. The structure of the proposal method is very similar to the above position method, but there are slight differences.

**Introduce and define the nature of the problematic situation.** Make sure to focus on the actual problem and what is causing the problem. This may seem simple, but many people focus solely on the effects of a problematic situation. By focusing on the actual problem, your readers will see your proposal as a solution to the problem. If you don't, your readers might see your solution as a mere complaint.

**Problem statements**, or statements that introduce and give an approach to a given problem or issue, while explaining why that issue matters, should always give readers a clear answer to the question, "So what?" Without an explicit statement of why we should care, we cannot get down to the issue of what we should do about the problem.

A problem statement introduces and gives an approach to a given problem. For example:

The properties of water at the nanoscale are crucial in many areas of biology, but the confinement of water molecules in sub-nanometre channels in biological systems has received relatively little attention. Advances in nanotechnology make it possible to explore the role played by water molecules in living systems, potentially leading to the development of ultrasensitive biosensors (Mertens, J., et al., 2008).

It is your responsibility to make your readers understand why they should care. Establish common ground to show them that, ultimately, you all want the same thing. Do not make your readers guess why your argument is important, or they may conclude that it is not important at all. As you revise your paper, ask yourself again: What is significant about this argument? How does the argument align with the concerns of my intended audience? And, finally, “so what?” Why should the reader care?

Sometimes, you may find that your argument is too large for the size and scope of the assignment. If it is impossible to make a convincing case within the given page limit, narrow the focus of your argument. You can do this by choosing a more specific audience, focusing on specific costs or benefits, or imposing limitations such as restrictive time frames, geographic ranges, or types of evidence for your project.

**Propose a solution, or a number of solutions, to the problem.** Be specific about these solutions. If you have one solution, you may choose to break it into parts and spend a paragraph or so describing each
part. If you have several solutions, you may instead choose to spend a paragraph on each scenario. Each additional solution will add both depth and length to your argument. But remember to stay focused. Added length does not always equal a better argument.

**Describe the workability of the various solutions.** There are a variety of ways that this could be done. With a single-solution paper you could break the feasibility down into short and long term goals and plans. With a multiple-solution essay, you may instead highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the individual solutions, and establish which would be the most successful, based on your original statement of the problem and its causes.

**Summarize and conclude your paper.** Summarize your solutions, re-state how the solution or solutions would work to remedy the problematic situation, and you’re done.

**Strengthening Your Argument**

**Phrasing**

It is important to clearly state and support your position. However, it is just as important to present all of the information that you’ve gathered in an objective manner. Using language that is demeaning or non-objective will undermine the strength of your argument. This destroys your credibility and will reduce your audience on the spot.

For example, a student writing an argument about why a particular football team has a good chance of "going all the way" is making a strategic error by stating that "anyone who doesn't think that the Minnesota Vikings deserve to win the Super Bowl is a total idiot." Not only has the writer risked alienating any number of her readers, she has also made her argument seem shallow and poorly researched. In addition, she has committed a third mistake: making a sweeping generalization that cannot be supported.

Use phrasing that does not:

- Alienate any part of your audience
- Make an argument that is poorly researched or shallow
- Make an unsupported generalization

**Using Sources in your Argument** (See Appendix 1 for more information citing sources and Chapter 10 for more information on researching sources.)

Within the pages of your paper, it is important to differentiate your work from that of others. While referring to other sources is important in a research or persuasive paper, it is equally important to signal to your reader who is saying what in your writing. One method of distinguishing your sources from your own ideas is quotation marks. Placing these around the exact words from a source tells your reader, "These are not my words, but what someone else said."

Distinguishing your own ideas from those of your sources also helps you to avoid plagiarism. In order to avoid plagiarism, clearly differentiate your own ideas from information derived from other sources. When summarizing or paraphrasing a source, put quotation marks around any unique words or phrases that you cannot or do not want to change. When writing direct quotations, keep the source author’s name in the same sentence as the quote.

Instead of quoting a source, you could also cite it. In this instance, it is equally important to distinguish what the author or work says from your own thoughts. To assist in doing so, refer to the source of the
ideas, either by the title of the source or by the author's name, when you provide the ideas that you feel are relevant to your paper. For example: "In The New Old World, Anderson claims..." By referring to the specific work, along with the author's last name, the example signals to its readers that the following claim is not the position of the paper's author but that of the source author. You can also cite a source by placing the last name of the author in parentheses at the end of a sentence that contains the author's idea. This also tells your reader that the claim in the sentence is not your own but came from another source.

Whether you cite or quote another source, identify who is saying what through the guidelines provided above, and distinguish your thoughts by providing an elaboration that specifically engages with the source's claims. While the use of quotation marks tells your reader that these are not your own words, you should follow the quote with a description, in your own terms, of what the quote says and why it is relevant to the purpose of your paper.

In addition, avoid using quotations or citations in a manner that implies that their importance should be self-evident to a reader. Even if it seems obvious to you, a reader will be precluded from all the thinking that you did that led you to believe that this quote succinctly captures something. It is useful to provide a reader some access to that thought process and elaborate on the importance of this quote in the context of your paper. For instance, you might use a source to support a claim, or to introduce a counter-argument. Doing so will help your reader understand why the source was referenced, while also demonstrating how your specific position is different from the source that has been cited or quoted.

### Introduction to Rhetorical Appeals

#### Rhetorical Appeals

*from* Writing Commons

http://collegewriting.org/open-text/information-literacy/rhetorical-analysis/rhetorical-appeals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Appeal</th>
<th>Abbreviated Definition</th>
<th>Reflective Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Ethos**         | appeal to credibility  | • Why should I (the reader) read what the writer has written?  
                   | You may want to think of ethos as related to "ethics," or the moral principles of the writer: ethos is the author's way of establishing trust with his or her reader. | • How does the author cite that he or she has something valid and important for me to read?  
<pre><code>               |                                                    | • Does the author mention his or her education or |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pathos</strong></th>
<th>appeal to emotion</th>
<th>professional experience, or convince me that he or she is a valid, educated, and experienced source?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|  | You may want to think of pathos as "empathy," which pertains to the experience of or sensitivity toward emotion. | • How is the writer trying to make me feel, or what has he or she written that makes me want to do something?  
• What specific parts of the author's writing make me feel happy, sad, inspired, dejected, and so on? |
| **Logos** | appeal to logic | • What evidence does the writer provide that convinces me that his or her argument is logical—that it makes sense?  
• What proof is the author offering me? |
|  | You may want to think of logos as "logic," because something that is logical "makes sense"—it is reasonable. |  |
| **Kairos** | appeal to timeliness | • Does the writer make claims that are particularly important given what is happening right now?  
• How is the author "making the most of the moment" or attempting to speak to the concern of his or her audience? |
|  | You may want to think of kairos as the type of persuasion that pertains to "the right place and the right time." |  |

**Pathos**

by Kendra Gayle Lee, Jessica McKee, and Megan McIntyre, *Writing Commons*
Chapter Nine: Argument

"Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives, and we obey them without realizing it."
– Vincent Van Gogh

Remember those after-school specials that aired on TV when you were a kid? They always had some obvious moral (like "don't drink and drive"). And they were often really emotionally driven.

At the end of the show, the camera would pan out, showing the protagonist alone and suffering for the poor decisions that he or she had made. When you were a child, that sort of heavy-handed emotionalism was effective in getting a point across. Now that you're an adult, it becomes easier to feel frustrated, and even manipulated, by an overload of emotion. Emotion, or "pathos," is a rhetorical device that can be used in an argument to draw the audience in and to help it connect with the argument. Relying too much on pathos, though, can make your writing sound like an after-school special.

Pathos works in conjunction with logos (logic) and ethos (credibility) to help form a solid argument. However, not every argument employs all three rhetorical devices. Each writer must choose which combination of rhetorical devices will work well for his or her writing and will suit the chosen topic. Used correctly, pathos can make a bland argument come alive for the audience. Pathos offers a way for the audience to relate to the subject through commonly held emotions. However, it is important to determine when pathos will be useful and when it will only serve to muddy the argumentative waters.

Take, for instance, a student who is writing an essay on human trafficking. Human trafficking—abducting or entrapping people (usually women and children) and subjecting them to horrific working situations—should be a subject that is already fraught with emotion. However, once the student starts working on the paper, he notices that he has a collection of facts and figures from which the audience will easily be able to disconnect. What the needs is to make the topic come alive for the reader. He needs to make the reader feel sympathy and horror. Then he comes upon a first-person account of a teenager who was trafficked into the United States. By incorporating her account into his essay (with proper citation, of course), he allows the reader to experience the teenager's disbelief and fear. And by experiencing this emotion, the reader begins to develop his or her own emotional response: sympathy, horror, and anger. The student has helped the reader connect to his argument through the effective use of pathos.

Pathos becomes a liability in an argument when it is inappropriate for the subject matter or genre of writing being used. For instance, if you are writing a letter to Publix supermarket to express your displeasure with its corporate response to migrant farmers' call for a living wage, then a narrative encouraging sympathy for the plight of the migrant worker might not be as effective as a straightforward statement of purpose: if Publix doesn't change its policies, you will take your business to a supermarket that is more interested in supporting social justice.

An audience can also find an overload of pathos to be off-putting. For instance, after September 11, 2001, the majority of people in the United States experienced an overwhelming sense of anger and fear. However, when references to 9/11 were used extensively in some of the 2004 presidential campaigns, many people were outraged. Why? Because they felt as though their intense feelings about the tragedy of 9/11 were being exploited and cheapened by the candidates, and they were intentionally being made to feel fearful. They felt as though their emotions were being manipulated to obtain votes. In this case, an overload of pathos backfired on the candidates.

Understanding pathos is important for readers and for writers. As a reader, you want to be in tune with the author's use of pathos, consciously evaluating the emotions the author tries to elicit. Then you can make informed decisions about the author's motives and writing methods. As a writer, you want to be
aware of proper uses of pathos, paying close attention to both your subject matter and your audience. There is no need to sound like an after-school special, unless, of course, you are writing for one.

It's probably clear by now what pathos does: it evokes an emotional response from a reader by appealing to empathy, fear, humor, or some other emotion. Now let's look at a few examples of pathos that you may find in written, spoken, or visual texts:

**Anecdotes or other narratives.** When a writer employs a narrative or anecdote, he or she is usually attempting to connect with the reader emotionally. For example, beginning an essay about human trafficking by relaying the personal story of a victim captures the attention of the audience because it humanizes the problem and draws on readers' empathy.

**Images or other forms of media.** When a writer uses images, songs, and other types of nontextual media, he or she is often attempting to engage a reader's emotions. Songs and pictures produce emotional responses. For example, Toby Keith's post-9/11 anthem, "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue," seems to embody the nation's anger after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. While you may not agree with the song's sense of justice, the lyrics recall a painful time in our nation's history. For many, that recollection prompts an emotional response.

**Direct quotations.** Though quotations are used for a myriad of reasons, direct quoting from an individual who has been personally affected by an issue is usually an appeal to the emotions of a reader. For example, if I were writing an essay about breast cancer and I quoted a cancer patient, that quotation would be an attempt to humanize the topic and appeal to the sympathy of my readers.

**Humor.** When a writer uses humor in order to illustrate a point, he or she is employing pathos. Though there is logic to satirical humor (as used on *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report*), the main appeal of such television shows is that they make viewers laugh.

**Logos**

by Emily Lane, Jessica McKee, and Megan McIntyre, *Writing Commons*

"Logic is the anatomy of thought."

– John Locke

"Logos" is the appeal to logic. Logos isn't logic like the formal logic in math, philosophy, or even computer science; it is the consistency and clarity of an argument as well as the logic of evidence and reasons.

In formal logic, in abstraction, the following is the case: if A is true and B is true and A is an instance of B, then the repercussions of B will always be true. The problem, however, is that this kind of logic doesn't work for real-life situations. This is where argument comes into play. Formal logic would say that speeding, for example, is a violation of traffic laws. A repercussion of violating a traffic law is a ticket; therefore, every person who speeds gets a ticket. However, in real life, not in abstract theory, things aren't that cut and dried. Most people would not agree that all speeders, in every circumstance, should receive a ticket. In an argument about a real-life situation, the audience needs particulars to make their decisions. Sometimes there's an exception. Why was that person speeding? Well, if an eighteen-year-old is speeding to show off for his friends, then yes, most people would agree that he deserves a ticket.
Chapter Nine: Argument

However, if a man is driving his pregnant wife to the hospital, then maybe he does not deserve the ticket. One could, and probably would, make the argument that he should not get a ticket.

Let's examine how the appeal to logic would work in an argument for the speeding father-to-be.

Because arguments are based on values and beliefs as well as facts and evidence, it is logical that the argument must coincide with accepted values and beliefs. The enthymeme is the foundation of every argument. Enthymemes have three parts: the claim, the reason, and the unstated assumption that is provided by the audience. All three of these things must make sense to your audience in order for your argument to be considered logical. The claim of an argument for the father-to-be could be something like, "This man should not get a speeding ticket." That's it. The claim is pretty simple. It is your educated opinion on the matter. The reason would be something like "because his wife is in labor in the backseat." So the two stated parts of your enthymeme would be, "This man should not get a speeding ticket because his wife is in labor in the backseat." Now, this seems obviously logical to us; however, what is our underlying value, our unstated assumption about this argument? Most of us would probably agree that a hospital is a better place to give birth in than a backseat. That is the third part of the enthymeme. Your audience must agree that your assumption is true in order for your argument to be considered logical. If your readers don’t have the same assumption, they are not going to see your logic. You must find an enthymeme that works for your audience. The pregnant wife enthymeme is fairly easy to see. In more volatile claims and reasons, the unstated assumptions can be trickier to identify and work out with your audience.

Reasons like "because his wife is in labor" are motivations for the driver's actions, not evidence. Most audiences need facts. Evidence is the facts. Both reasons and evidence are used in an appeal to logic; however, reasons cannot be your only support. Evidence as to why the man should speed might include studies about the problems with births in difficult or dangerous circumstances, interviews with women who have given birth in automobiles, and infant mortality rates for births that do not occur in hospitals. As you can see, there are many different kinds of evidence you could provide for this argument.

Consistency means not changing the unstated or stated rules governing your argument. Consistency is essential to logic. Let us continue with the speeding example. If, for instance, you are arguing that the infant mortality rate is too high for babies born outside the hospital and that the father is required to speed for the safety of his unborn child, then you may not want to include evidence of the high infant mortality rate in car crashes. Although this information may be part of the infant mortality rate, it goes against the underlying assumption that speeding is acceptable because of the high risk of harming the baby if it is born in the backseat.

So why should you care about logos? In your own writing, logos is important because it appeals to your readers' intellects. It makes you readers feel smart. Logos is the part of the argument where you treat your audience like purely rational, "only the facts, ma'am" kind of people. Also, gaps, leaps, and inconsistencies in logic, no matter how well developed the other appeals may be, can tear apart an argument in short order. This is the same reason you cannot ignore logos in others' arguments either. All the appeals are linked together; for instance, if you use as evidence an article that has leaps in logic, or relies only on authority and emotions, this article could damage your own ethos as an author. It is important to remember that all three appeals must be well developed and work together to make a good argument.

As you now know, logos can be defined as a writer's or speaker's attempt to appeal to the logic or reason of her audience. Let's look at some examples of logos that you might commonly find when reading texts of various media:
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Statistics. When a writer employs data or statistics within a text, you can probably assume that he or she is attempting to appeal to the logic and reason of the reader. For example, an argument in favor of keeping abortion legal may cite the May 2011 Pew Research poll that found 54 percent of Americans in favor of legal abortion. This figure makes a logical argument: abortion should be legal because the majority of Americans support it, and in a democracy, the majority makes the decisions.

Causal statements. When you see an "if-then" statement, with credible supporting evidence, the writer is likely appealing to your reason. Consider an argument about lowering the drinking age from 21 to 18: A writer might suggest that, if the legal drinking age were 18, then people between 18 and 21 would be less likely to drive under the influence. If the writer offers evidence that the reason that some between the ages of 18 and 21 drive drunk is that they fear calling a friend or parent because they have illegally ingested alcohol, then this causal statement would be an appeal to a reader's sense of reason.

Relevant examples or other evidence. You might begin to think about logos as evidence that doesn't involve an appeal to your emotions. Even expert testimony, which would certainly be an example of ethos, also could be an example of logos, depending on its content. For example, in a discussion about recent cuts in education funding, a statement from the Hillsborough County, Florida, superintendent would be an appeal to authority. But if that statement contained a discussion of the number of teachers and classes that would have to be cut if the state were to reduce the district's funding, the statement from the superintendent could also be an appeal to logic.

Ethos

by Jessica McKee and Megan McIntyre, Writing Commons

I've always wondered why candidates have to "approve this message"; I mean, if President Obama is on camera talking about himself, then can't I assume he approves the message? Why does he have to state that he approves it at the end?

There's certainly a law that governs what must be said at the end of a political advertisement, or else President Obama wouldn't say exactly the same thing as every other politician at the end of an ad, but there's also an element of persuasion at work here. By appearing on camera saying that he approves the content, the President is giving the ad credibility. It's about him, his work, and his beliefs, and by saying he has approved the ad, President Obama is saying, "You can trust this information about me."

This appeal to credibility is known as "ethos." Ethos is a method of persuasion in which the speaker or writer (the "rhetor") attempts to persuade the audience by demonstrating his own credibility or authority.

By now, you've hopefully gotten an idea of what ethos is: an attempt to persuade by appealing to authority or credibility. You might be wondering, though, what ethos looks like in writing or in speaking. Here are a few examples:

References to work experience or life experience related to the topic. When an author writing about the stock market talks about his years working for an investment bank, that's an appeal to credibility.
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References to college degrees or awards related to the topic. When your biology instructor makes clear in the syllabus that he has a PhD in biology and that you'll be using the textbook he's written for the class, he's reminding you of his authority and credibility on the subject.

References to the character of the writer. When a politician writes in a campaign brochure about his years of public service and the contributions he's made to the community, he's letting you know he's trustworthy, a good person, and a credible source of information about the community and the issues that affect it.

The use of supporting sources written by authorities on the subject. When a student writes a paper about why school hours should be changed and uses quotations from principals, teachers, and school board members (all of whom know something about the topic), he's borrowing their credibility and authority to increase his own.

References to symbols that represent authority. When a candidate gives a speech in front of an American flag, he or she is associating him- or herself with the symbol and borrowing the authority it represents.

Induction and Deduction

from Utah State University, *Intermediate Writing: Research Writing in a Persuasive Mode*

Deduction

Deduction: In the process of deduction, you begin with some statements, called 'premises', that are assumed to be true, you then determine what else would have to be true if the premises are true. For example, you can begin by assuming that God exists, and is good, and then determine what would logically follow from such an assumption. You can begin by assuming that if you think, then you must exist, and work from there. In mathematics, you can also start will a premise and begin to prove other equations or other premises. With deduction you can provide absolute proof of your conclusions, given that your premises are correct. The premises themselves, however, remain unproven and unprovable, they must be accepted on face value, or by faith, or for the purpose of exploration.  

Examples of deductive logic:

- All men are mortal. Joe is a man. Therefore, Joe is mortal. If the first two statements are true, then the conclusion must be true. 

- Bachelors are unmarried men. Bill is unmarried. Therefore, Bill is a bachelor.

- To get a Bachelor's degree at Utah State University, a student must have 120 credits. Sally has more than 130 credits. Therefore, Sally has a bachelor's degree.

Induction

Induction: In the process of induction, you begin with some data, and then determine what general conclusion(s) can logically be derived from those data. In other words, you determine what theory or theories could explain the data. For example, you note that the probability of becoming schizophrenic is greatly increased if at least one parent is schizophrenic, and from that you conclude that schizophrenia may be inherited. That is certainly a reasonable hypothesis given the data. However, induction does not...
prove that the theory is correct. There are often alternative theories that are also supported by the data. For example, the behavior of the schizophrenic parent may cause the child to be schizophrenic, not the genes. What is important in induction is that the theory does indeed offer a logical explanation of the data. To conclude that the parents have no effect on the schizophrenia of the children is not supportable given the data, and would not be a logical conclusion.

**Examples of inductive logic:**

- This cat is black. That cat is black. A third cat is black. Therefore all cats are black.
- This marble from the bag is black. That marble from the bag is black. A third marble from the bag is black. Therefore all the marbles in the bag black.
- Two-thirds of my latino neighbors are illegal immigrants. Therefore, two-thirds of Latino immigrants come illegally.
- Most universities and colleges in Utah ban alcohol from campus. Therefore most universities and colleges in the U.S. ban alcohol from campus.

Deduction and induction by themselves are inadequate to make a compelling argument. While deduction gives absolute proof, it never makes contact with the real world, there is no place for observation or experimentation, no way to test the validity of the premises. And, while induction is driven by observation, it never approaches actual proof of a theory. Therefore, an effective paper will include both types of logic.

**Readings**

**Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother with Logic?**

by Rebecca Jones, *Writing Spaces*

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The word argument often means something negative.* In Nina Paley’s cartoon (see Figure 1), the argument is literally a cat fight. Rather than envisioning argument as something productive and useful, we imagine intractable sides and use descriptors such as “bad,” “heated,” and “violent.” We rarely say, “Great, argument. Thanks!” Even when we write an academic “argument paper,” we imagine our own ideas battling others.
Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain that the controlling metaphor we use for argument in western culture is war:

It is important to see that we don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war. We actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. (4)

If we follow the war metaphor along its path, we come across other notions such as, “all’s fair in love and war.” If all’s fair, then the rules, principles, or ethics of an argument are up for grabs. While many warrior metaphors are about honor, the “all’s fair” idea can lead us to arguments that result in propaganda, spin, and, dirty politics. The war metaphor offers many limiting assumptions: there are only two sides, someone must win decisively, and compromise means losing. The metaphor also creates a false opposition where argument (war) is action and its opposite is peace or inaction. Finding better arguments is not about finding peace—the opposite of antagonism. Quite frankly, getting mad can be productive. Ardent peace advocates, such as Jane Addams, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., offer some of the most compelling arguments of our time through concepts like civil disobedience that are hardly inactive. While “argument is war” may be the default mode for Americans, it is not the only way to argue. Lakoff and Johnson ask their readers to imagine something like “argument is dance” rather than “argument is war” (5). While we can imagine many alternatives to the war metaphor, concepts like argument as collaboration are more common even if they are not commonly used. Argument as collaboration would be more closely linked to words such as dialogue and deliberation, cornerstone concepts in the history of American democracy.

However, argument as collaboration is not the prevailing metaphor for public argumentation we see/hear in the mainstream media. One can hardly fault the average American for not being able to imagine argument beyond the war metaphor. Think back to the coverage of the last major election cycle in 2008. The opponents on either side (Democrat/Republican) dug in their heels and defended every position, even if it was unpopular or irrelevant to the conversation at hand. The political landscape divided into two sides with no alternatives. In addition to the entrenched positions, blogs and websites such as FactCheck.org flooded us with lists of inaccuracies, missteps, and plain old fallacies that riddled the debates. Unfortunately, the “debates” were more like speeches given to a camera than actual
arguments deliberated before the public. These important moments that fail to offer good models lower the standards for public argumentation.

On an average news day, there are entire websites and blogs dedicated to noting ethical, factual, and legal problems with public arguments, especially on the news and radio talk shows. This is not to say that all public arguments set out to mislead their audiences, rather that the discussions they offer masquerading as arguments are often merely opinions or a spin on a particular topic and not carefully considered, quality arguments. What is often missing from these discussions is research, consideration of multiple vantage points, and, quite often, basic logic.

On news shows, we encounter a version of argument that seems more like a circus than a public discussion. Here’s the visual we get of an “argument” between multiple sides on the average news show. In this example (see Figure 2), we have a four ring circus.

While all of the major networks use this visual format, multiple speakers in multiple windows like *The Brady Bunch* for the news, it is rarely used to promote ethical deliberation. These talking heads offer a simulation of an argument. The different windows and figures pictured in them are meant to represent different views on a topic, often “liberal” and “conservative.” This is a good start because it sets up the possibility for thinking through serious issues in need of solutions. Unfortunately, the people in the windows never actually engage in an argument (see Thinking Outside the Text). As we will discuss below, one of the rules of good argument is that participants in an argument agree on the primary standpoint and that individuals are willing to concede if a point of view is proven wrong. If you watch one of these “arguments,” you will see a spectacle where prepared speeches are hurled across the long distances that separate the participants.
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Rarely do the talking heads respond to the actual ideas/arguments given by the person pictured in the box next to them on the screen unless it is to contradict one statement with another of their own. Even more troubling is the fact that participants do not even seem to agree about the point of disagreement. For example, one person might be arguing about the congressional vote on health care while another is discussing the problems with Medicaid. While these are related, they are different issues with different premises. This is not a good model for argumentation despite being the predominant model we encounter.

Activity: Thinking Outside the Text

Watch the famous video of Jon Stewart on the show Crossfire: (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmj6JADOZ-8).

- What is Stewart’s argument?
- How do the hosts of Crossfire respond to the very particular argument that Stewart makes?
- Why exactly are they missing the point?

These shallow public models can influence argumentation in the classroom. One of the ways we learn about argument is to think in terms of pro and con arguments. This replicates the liberal/conservative dynamic we often see in the papers or on television (as if there are only two sides to health care, the economy, war, the deficit). This either/or fallacy of public argument is debilitating. You are either for or
against gun control, for or against abortion, for or against the environment, for or against everything. Put this way, the absurdity is more obvious. For example, we assume that someone who claims to be an “environmentalist” is pro every part of the green movement. However, it is quite possible to develop an environmentally sensitive argument that argues against a particular recycling program. While many pro and con arguments are valid, they can erase nuance, negate the local and particular, and shut down the very purpose of having an argument: the possibility that you might change your mind, learn something new, or solve a problem. This limited view of argument makes argumentation a shallow process. When all angles are not explored or fallacious or incorrect reasoning is used, we are left with ethically suspect public discussions that cannot possibly get at the roots of an issue or work toward solutions.

Activity: Finding Middle Ground
Outline the pro and con arguments for the following issues:
1. Gun Control
2. Cap and Trade
3. Free Universal Healthcare

In a group, develop an argument that finds a compromise or middle ground between two positions. Rather than an either/or proposition, argument is multiple and complex. An argument can be logical, rational, emotional, fruitful, useful, and even enjoyable. As a matter of fact, the idea that argument is necessary (and therefore not always about war or even about winning) is an important notion in a culture that values democracy and equity. In America, where nearly everyone you encounter has a different background and/or political or social view, skill in arguing seems to be paramount, whether you are inventing an argument or recognizing a good one when you see it.

The remainder of this chapter takes up this challenge—inventing and recognizing good arguments (and bad ones). From classical rhetoric, to Toulmin’s model, to contemporary pragma-dialectics, this chapter presents models of argumentation beyond pro and con. Paying more attention to the details of an argument can offer a strategy for developing sound, ethically aware arguments.

What Can We Learn from Models of Argumentation?
So far, I have listed some obstacles to good argument. I would like to discuss one other. Let’s call it the mystery factor. Many times I read an argument and it seems great on the surface, but I get a strange feeling that something is a bit off. Before studying argumentation, I did not have the vocabulary to name that strange feeling. Additionally, when an argument is solid, fair, and balanced, I could never quite put my finger on what distinguished it from other similar arguments. The models for argumentation below give us guidance in revealing the mystery factor and naming the qualities of a logical, ethical argument.

Classical Rhetoric
In James Murphy’s translation of Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, he explains that “Education for Quintilian begins in the cradle, and ends only when life itself ends” (xxi). The result of a life of learning, for Quintilian, is a perfect speech where “the student is given a statement of a problem and asked to prepare an appropriate speech giving his solution” (Murphy xxiii). In this version of the world, a good citizen is always a PUBLIC participant. This forces the good citizen to know the rigors of public argumentation: “Rhetoric, or the theory of effective communication, is for Quintilian merely the tool of the broadly educated citizen who is capable of analysis, reflection, and powerful action in public affairs” (Murphy xxvii). For Quintilian, learning to argue in public is a lifelong affair. He believed that the “perfect orator . . . cannot exist unless he is above all a good man” (6). Whether we agree with this or not, the hope for ethical behavior has been a part of public argumentation from the beginning.
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The ancient model of rhetoric (or public argumentation) is complex. As a matter of fact, there is no single model of ancient argumentation. Plato claimed that the Sophists, such as Gorgias, were spin doctors weaving opinion and untruth for the delight of an audience and to the detriment of their moral fiber. For Plato, at least in the Phaedrus, public conversation was only useful if one applied it to the search for truth. In the last decade, the work of the Sophists has been redeemed. Rather than spin doctors, Sophists like Isocrates and even Gorgias, to some degree, are viewed as arbiters of democracy because they believed that many people, not just male, property holding, Athenian citizens, could learn to use rhetoric effectively in public.

Aristotle gives us a slightly more systematic approach. He is very concerned with logic. For this reason, much of what I discuss below comes from his work. Aristotle explains that most men participate in public argument in some fashion. It is important to note that by “men,” Aristotle means citizens of Athens: adult males with the right to vote, not including women, foreigners, or slaves. Essentially this is a homogenous group by race, gender, and religious affiliation. We have to keep this in mind when adapting these strategies to our current heterogeneous culture. Aristotle explains,

...for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and every one will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art. (Honeycutt, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric” 1354a I i)

For Aristotle, inquiry into this field was artistic in nature. It required both skill and practice (some needed more of one than the other). Important here is the notion that public argument can be systematically learned.

Aristotle did not dwell on the ethics of an argument in Rhetoric (he leaves this to other texts). He argued that “things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites” and finally that “... things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in” (Honeycutt, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric” 1355a I i). As a culture, we are skeptical of this kind of position, though I think that we do often believe it on a personal level. Aristotle admits in the next line that there are people who will use their skills at rhetoric for harm. As his job in this section is to defend the use of rhetoric itself, he claims that everything good can be used for harm, so rhetoric is no different from other fields. If this is true, there is even more need to educate the citizenry so that they will not be fooled by unethical and untruthful arguments.

For many, logic simply means reasoning. To understand a person’s logic, we try to find the structure of their reasoning. Logic is not synonymous with fact or truth, though facts are part of evidence in logical argumentation. You can be logical without being truthful. This is why more logic is not the only answer to better public argument.
Our human brains are compelled to categorize the world as a survival mechanism. This survival mechanism allows for quicker thought. Two of the most basic logical strategies include inductive and deductive reasoning. **Deductive reasoning** (see Figure 3) starts from a premise that is a generalization about a large class of ideas, people, etc. and moves to a specific conclusion about a smaller category of ideas or things (All cats hate water; therefore, my neighbor’s cat will not jump in our pool). While the first premise is the most general, the second premise is a more particular observation. So the argument is created through common beliefs/observations that are compared to create an argument. For example:

- People who burn flags are unpatriotic. **Major Premise**  
- Sara burned a flag. **Minor Premise**  
- Sara is unpatriotic. **Conclusion**

The above is called a syllogism. As we can see in the example, the major premise offers a general belief held by some groups and the minor premise is a particular observation. The conclusion is drawn by comparing the premises and developing a conclusion. If you work hard enough, you can often take a complex argument and boil it down to a syllogism. This can reveal a great deal about the argument that is not apparent in the longer more complex version.

Stanley Fish, professor and *New York Times* columnist, offers the following syllogism in his July 22, 2007, blog entry titled “Democracy and Education”: “The syllogism underlying these comments is (1) America is a democracy (2) Schools and universities are situated within that democracy (3) Therefore schools and universities should be ordered and administrated according to democratic principles.”

Fish offered the syllogism as a way to summarize the responses to his argument that students do not, in fact, have the right to free speech in a university classroom. The responses to Fish’s standpoint were vehemently opposed to his understanding of free speech rights and democracy. The responses are varied and complex. However, boiling them down to a single syllogism helps to summarize the primary
rebuttal so that Fish could then offer his extended version of his standpoint (see link to argument in Question #1 at the end of the text).

**Inductive reasoning** moves in a different direction than deductive reasoning (see Figure 4). Inductive reasoning starts with a particular or local statement and moves to a more general conclusion. I think of inductive reasoning as a stacking of evidence. The more particular examples you give, the more it seems that your conclusion is correct.

Inductive reasoning is a common method for arguing, especially when the conclusion is an obvious probability. Inductive reasoning is the most common way that we move around in the world. If we experience something habitually, we reason that it will happen again. For example, if we walk down a city street and every person smiles, we might reason that this is a “nice town.” This seems logical. We have taken many similar, particular experiences (smiles) and used them to make a general conclusion (the people in the town are nice). Most of the time, this reasoning works. However, we know that it can also lead us in the wrong direction. Perhaps the people were smiling because we were wearing inappropriate clothing (country togs in a metropolitan city), or perhaps only the people living on that particular street are “nice” and the rest of the town is unfriendly. Research papers sometimes rely too heavily on this logical method. Writers assume that finding ten versions of the same argument somehow prove that the point is true.

Here is another example. In Ann Coulter’s most recent book, *Guilty: Liberal “Victims” and Their Assault on America*, she makes her (in)famous argument that single motherhood is the cause of many of America’s ills. She creates this argument through a piling of evidence. She lists statistics by sociologists, she lists all the single moms who killed their children, she lists stories of single mothers who say outrageous things about their life, children, or marriage in general, and she ends with a list of celebrity single moms that most would agree are not good examples of motherhood. Through this list, she concludes, “Look at almost any societal problem and you will find it is really a problem of single mothers” (36). While she could argue, from this evidence, that being a single mother is difficult, the generalization that single motherhood is the root of social ills in America takes the inductive reasoning too far. Despite this example, we need inductive reasoning because it is the key to analytical thought (see Activity: Applying Inductive and Deductive Reasoning). To write an “analysis paper” is to use inductive reasoning.
Figure 4. Inductive Reasoning

Activity: Applying Deductive and Inductive Reasoning
For each standpoint, create a deductive argument AND an inductive argument. When you are finished, share with your group members and decide which logical strategy offers a more successful, believable, and/or ethical argument for the particular standpoint. Feel free to modify the standpoint to find many possible arguments.

1. a. Affirmative Action should continue to be legal in the United States.
   b. Affirmative Action is no longer useful in the United States.

2. The arts should remain an essential part of public education.

3. Chose a very specific argument on your campus (parking, tuition, curriculum) and create deductive and inductive arguments to support the standpoint.

Most academic arguments in the humanities are inductive to some degree. When you study humanity, nothing is certain. When observing or making inductive arguments, it is important to get your evidence from many different areas, to judge it carefully, and acknowledge the flaws. Inductive arguments must be judged by the quality of the evidence since the conclusions are drawn directly from a body of compiled work.

The Appeals
“The appeals” offer a lesson in rhetoric that sticks with you long after the class has ended. Perhaps it is the rhythmic quality of the words (ethos, logos, pathos) or, simply, the usefulness of the concept. Aristotle imagined logos, ethos, and pathos as three kinds of artistic proof. Essentially, they highlight three ways to appeal to or persuade an audience: “(1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in its various forms, (3) to understand emotions” (Honeycutt, Rhetoric 1356a).
While Aristotle and others did not explicitly dismiss emotional and character appeals, they found the most value in logic. Contemporary rhetoricians and argumentation scholars, however, recognize the power of emotions to sway us. Even the most stoic individuals have some emotional threshold over which no logic can pass. For example, we can seldom be reasonable when faced with a crime against a loved one, a betrayal, or the face of an adorable baby.

The easiest way to differentiate the appeals is to imagine selling a product based on them. Until recently, car commercials offered a prolific source of logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.

**Logos:** Using logic as proof for an argument. For many students this takes the form of numerical evidence. But as we have discussed above, logical reasoning is a kind of argumentation.

*Car Commercial:* (Syllogism) Americans love adventure—Ford Escape allows for off road adventure—Americans should buy a Ford Escape.

**Ethos:** Calling on particular shared values (patriotism), respected figures of authority (MLK), or one’s own character as a method for appealing to an audience.

*Car Commercial:* Eco-conscious Americans drive a Ford Escape.

**Pathos:** Using emotionally driven images or language to sway your audience.

*Car Commercial:* Images of a pregnant woman being safely rushed to a hospital. Flash to two car seats in the back seat. Flash to family hopping out of their Ford Escape and witnessing the majesty of the Grand Canyon.

The appeals are part of everyday conversation, even if we do not use the Greek terminology (see Activity: Developing Audience Awareness). Understanding the appeals helps us to make better rhetorical choices in designing our arguments. If you think about the appeals as a choice, their value is clear.

**Activity: Developing Audience Awareness**

Imagine you have been commissioned by your school food service provider to create a presentation encouraging the consumption of healthier foods on campus.

1. How would you present this to your friends: consider the media you would use, how you present yourself, and how you would begin.

2. How would you present this same material to parents of incoming students?

3. Which appeal is most useful for each audience? Why?

**Toulmin: Dissecting the Everyday Argument**

Philosopher Stephen Toulmin studies the arguments we make in our everyday lives. He developed his method out of frustration with logicians (philosophers of argumentation) that studied argument in a vacuum or through mathematical formulations:

All A are B.

All B are C.
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Therefore, all A are C. (Eemeren, et al. 131)

Instead, Toulmin views argument as it appears in a conversation, in a letter, or some other context because real arguments are much more complex than the syllogisms that make up the bulk of Aristotle’s logical program. Toulmin offers the contemporary writer/reader a way to map an argument. The result is a visualization of the argument process. This map comes complete with vocabulary for describing the parts of an argument. The vocabulary allows us to see the contours of the landscape—the winding rivers and gaping caverns. One way to think about a “good” argument is that it is a discussion that hangs together, a landscape that is cohesive (we can’t have glaciers in our desert valley). Sometimes we miss the faults of an argument because it sounds good or appears to have clear connections between the statement and the evidence, when in truth the only thing holding the argument together is a lovely sentence or an artistic flourish.

For Toulmin, argumentation is an attempt to justify a statement or a set of statements. The better the demand is met, the higher the audience’s appreciation. Toulmin’s vocabulary for the study of argument offers labels for the parts of the argument to help us create our map.

Claim: The basic standpoint presented by a writer/speaker.

Data: The evidence which supports the claim.

Warrant: The justification for connecting particular data to a particular claim. The warrant also makes clear the assumptions underlying the argument.

Backing: Additional information required if the warrant is not clearly supported.

Rebuttal: Conditions or standpoints that point out flaws in the claim or alternative positions.

Qualifiers: Terminology that limits a standpoint. Examples include applying the following terms to any part of an argument: sometimes, seems, occasionally, none, always, never, etc.

The following paragraphs come from an article reprinted in UTNE magazine by Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith titled: “Not Everyone Is Out to Get You.” Charting this excerpt helps us to understand some of the underlying assumptions found in the article.

“Trust No One” That was the slogan of The X-Files, the TV drama that followed two FBI agents on a quest to uncover a vast government conspiracy. A defining cultural phenomenon during its run from 1993–2002, the show captured a mood of growing distrust in America.

Since then, our trust in one another has declined even further. In fact, it seems that “Trust no one” could easily have been America’s motto for the past 40 years—thanks to, among other things, Vietnam, Watergate, junk bonds, Monica Lewinsky, Enron, sex scandals in the Catholic Church, and the Iraq war.

The General Social Survey, a periodic assessment of Americans’ moods and values, shows an 11-point decline from 1976–2008 in the number of Americans who believe other people can generally be trusted. Institutions haven’t fared any better. Over the same period, trust has declined in the press (from 29 to 9 percent), education (38–29 percent), banks (41 percent to 20 percent), corporations (23–16 percent), and organized religion (33–20 percent). Gallup’s 2008 governance survey showed that trust in the government was as low as it was during the Watergate era.

The news isn’t all doom and gloom, however. A growing body of research hints that humans are hardwired to trust, which is why institutions, through reform and high performance, can still stoke feelings of loyalty, just as disasters and mismanagement can inhibit it. The catch is that while humans want, even need, to trust, they won’t trust blindly and foolishly.
Figure 5 demonstrates one way to chart the argument that Paxton and Smith make in “Trust No One.” The remainder of the article offers additional claims and data, including the final claim that there is hope for overcoming our collective trust issues. The chart helps us to see that some of the warrants, in a longer research project, might require additional support. For example, the warrant that TV mirrors real life is an argument and not a fact that would require evidence.

Figure 5. This chart demonstrates the utility of visualizing an argument.

Charting your own arguments and others helps you to visualize the meat of your discussion. All the flourishes are gone and the bones revealed. Even if you cannot fit an argument neatly into the boxes, the attempt forces you to ask important questions about your claim, your warrant, and possible rebuttals. By charting your argument you are forced to write your claim in a succinct manner and admit, for example, what you are using for evidence. Charted, you can see if your evidence is scanty, if it relies too much on one kind of evidence over another, and if it needs additional support. This charting might also reveal a disconnect between your claim and your warrant or cause you to reevaluate your claim altogether.

Pragma-Dialectics: A Fancy Word for a Close Look at Argumentation

The field of rhetoric has always been interdisciplinary and so it has no problem including argumentation theory. Developed in the Speech Communication Department at the University of Amsterdam, pragma-dialectics is a study of argumentation that focuses on the ethics of one’s logical choices in creating an argument. In Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments, Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst describe argumentation, simply, as “characterized by the use of language for resolving a difference of opinion” (275). While much of this work quite literally looks at actual speech situations, the work can easily be applied to the classroom and to broader political situations.
While this version of argumentation deals with everything from ethics to arrangement, what this field adds to rhetorical studies is a new approach to argument fallacies. Fallacies are often the cause of the mystery feeling we get when we come across faulty logic or missteps in an argument.

What follows is an adaptation of Frans van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francesca Snoeck Henkemans’ “violations of the rules for critical engagement” from their book *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (109). Rather than discuss rhetorical fallacies in a list (ad hominem, straw man, equivocation, etc.), they argue that there should be rules for proper argument to ensure fairness, logic, and a solution to the problem being addressed. Violating these rules causes a fallacious argument and can result in a standoff rather than a solution.

While fallacious arguments, if purposeful, pose real ethical problems, most people do not realize they are committing fallacies when they create an argument. To purposely attack someone’s character rather than their argument (ad hominem) is not only unethical, but demonstrates lazy argumentation. However, confusing cause and effect might simply be a misstep that needs fixing. It is important to admit that many fallacies, though making an argument somewhat unsound, can be rhetorically savvy.

While we know that appeals to pity (or going overboard on the emotional appeal) can often demonstrate a lack of knowledge or evidence, they often work. As such, these rules present argumentation as it would play out in a utopian world where everyone is calm and logical, where everyone cares about resolving the argument at hand, rather than winning the battle, and where everyone plays by the rules. Despite the utopian nature of the list, it offers valuable insight into argument flaws and offers hope for better methods of deliberation.

What follows is an adaptation of the approach to argumentation found in Chapters 7 and 8 of *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (Eemeren, et al. 109-54). The rule is listed first, followed by an example of how the rule is often violated.

**1. The Freedom Rule**
“Parties must not prevent each other from putting forward standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints” (110).

There are many ways to stop an individual from giving her own argument. This can come in the form of a physical threat but most often takes the form of a misplaced critique. Instead of focusing on the argument, the focus is shifted to the character of the writer or speaker (ad hominem) or to making the argument (or author) seem absurd (straw man) rather than addressing its actual components. In the past decade, “Bush is stupid” became a common ad hominem attack that allowed policy to go unaddressed. To steer clear of the real issues of global warming, someone might claim “Only a fool would believe global warming is real” or “Trying to suck all of the CO\textsubscript{2} out of the atmosphere with giant greenhouse gas machines is mere science fiction, so we should look at abandoning all this greenhouse gas nonsense.”

**2. The Burden-of-Proof Rule**
“A party who puts forward a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked to do so” (113). This is one of my favorites. It is clear and simple. If you make an argument, you have to provide evidence to back it up. During the 2008 Presidential debates, Americans watched as all the candidates fumbled over the following question about healthcare: “How will this plan actually work?” If you are presenting a written argument, this requirement can be accommodated through quality, researched evidence applied to your standpoint.

**3. The Standpoint Rule**
“A party’s attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the
other party” (116). Your standpoint is simply your claim, your basic argument in a nutshell. If you disagree with another person’s argument or they disagree with yours, the actual standpoint and not some related but more easily attacked issue must be addressed. For example, one person might argue that the rhetoric of global warming has created a multi-million dollar green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. This is an argument about the effects of global warming rhetoric, not global warming itself. It would break the standpoint rule to argue that the writer/speaker does not believe in global warming. This is not the issue at hand.

4. The Relevance Rule
“A party may defend his or her standpoint only by advancing argumentation related to that standpoint” (119). Similar to #3, this rule assures that the evidence you use must actually relate to your standpoint. Let’s stick with same argument: global warming has created a green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. Under this rule, your evidence would need to offer examples of the rhetoric and the resulting businesses that have developed since the introduction of green industries. It would break the rules to simply offer attacks on businesses who sell “eco-friendly” products.

5. The Unexpressed Premise Rule
“A party may not falsely present something as a premise that has been left unexpressed by the other party or deny a premise that he or she has left implicit” (121). This one sounds a bit complex, though it happens nearly every day. If you have been talking to another person and feel the need to say, “That’s NOT what I meant,” then you have experienced a violation of the unexpressed premise rule. Overall, the rule attempts to keep the argument on track and not let it stray into irrelevant territory. The first violation of the rule, to falsely present what has been left unexpressed, is to rephrase someone’s standpoint in a way that redirects the argument. One person might argue, “I love to go to the beach,” and another might respond by saying “So you don’t have any appreciation for mountain living.” The other aspect of this rule is to camouflage an unpopular idea and deny that it is part of your argument. For example, you might argue that “I have nothing against my neighbors. I just think that there should be a noise ordinance in this part of town to help cut down on crime.” This clearly shows that the writer does believe her neighbors to be criminals but won’t admit it.

6. The Starting Point Rule
“No party may falsely present a premise as an accepted starting point, or deny a premise representing an accepted starting point” (128). Part of quality argumentation is to agree on the opening standpoint. According to this theory, argument is pointless without this kind of agreement. It is well known that arguing about abortion is nearly pointless as long as one side is arguing about the rights of the unborn and the other about the rights of women. These are two different starting points.

7. The Argument Scheme Rule
“A standpoint may not be regarded as conclusively defended if the defense does not take place by means of an appropriate argument scheme that is correctly applied” (130). This rule is about argument strategy. Argument schemes could take up another paper altogether. Suffice it to say that schemes are ways of approaching an argument, your primary strategy. For example, you might choose emotional rather than logical appeals to present your position. This rule highlights the fact that some argument strategies are simply better than others. For example, if you choose to create an argument based largely on attacking the character of your opponent rather than the issues at hand, the argument is moot.

Argument by analogy is a popular and well-worn argument strategy (or scheme). Essentially, you compare your position to a more commonly known one and make your argument through the comparison. For example, in the “Trust No One” argument above, the author equates the Watergate and Monica Lewinsky scandals. Since it is common knowledge that Watergate was a serious scandal,
including Monica Lewinsky in the list offers a strong argument by analogy: the Lewinsky scandal did as much damage as Watergate. To break this rule, you might make an analogy that does not hold up, such as comparing a minor scandal involving a local school board to Watergate. This would be an exaggeration, in most cases.

8. The Validity Rule
“The reasoning in the argumentation must be logically valid or must be capable of being made valid by making explicit one or more unexpressed premises” (132). This rule is about traditional logics. Violating this rule means that the parts of your argument do not match up. For example, your cause and effect might be off: If you swim in the ocean today you will get stung by a jelly fish and need medical care. Joe went to the doctor today. He must have been stung by a jelly fish. While this example is obvious (we do not know that Joe went swimming), many argument problems are caused by violating this rule.

9. The Closure Rule
“A failed defense of a standpoint must result in the protagonist retracting the standpoint, and a successful defense of a standpoint must result in the antagonist retracting his or her doubts” (134). This seems the most obvious rule, yet it is one that most public arguments ignore. If your argument does not cut it, admit the faults and move on. If another writer/speaker offers a rebuttal and you clearly counter it, admit that the original argument is sound. Seems simple, but it’s not in our public culture. This would mean that George W. Bush would have to have a press conference and say, “My apologies, I was wrong about WMD,” or for someone who argued fervently that Americans want a single payer option for healthcare to instead argue something like, “The polls show that American’s want to change healthcare, but not through the single payer option. My argument was based on my opinion that single payer is the best way and not on public opinion.” Academics are more accustomed to retraction because our arguments are explicitly part of particular conversations. Rebuttals and renegotiations are the norm. That does not make them any easier to stomach in an “argument is war” culture.

10. The Usage Rule
“Parties must not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous, and they must interpret the formulations of the other party as carefully and accurately as possible” (136). While academics are perhaps the worst violators of this rule, it is an important one to discuss. Be clear. I notice in both student and professional academic writing that a confusing concept often means confusing prose, longer sentences, and more letters in a word. If you cannot say it/write it clearly, the concept might not yet be clear to you. Keep working. Ethical violations of this rule happen when someone is purposefully ambiguous so as to confuse the issue. We can see this on all the “law” shows on television or though deliberate propaganda.

Activity: Following the Rules
1. Choose a topic to discuss in class or as a group (ex. organic farming, campus parking, gun control).
   a. Choose one of the rules above and write a short argument (a sentence) that clearly violates the rule. Be prepared to explain WHY it violates the rule.
   b. Take the fallacious argument you just created in exercise a) and correct it. Write a solid argument that conforms to the rule.

Food for thought: The above rules offer one way to think about shaping an argument paper. Imagine that the argument for your next paper is a dialogue between those who disagree about your topic. After doing research, write out the primary standpoint for your paper. For example: organic farming is a sustainable practice that should be used more broadly. Next, write out a standpoint that might offer a refutation of the argument. For example: organic farming cannot supply all of the food needed by the
world’s population. Once you have a sense of your own argument and possible refutations, go through the rules and imagine how you might ethically and clearly provide arguments that support your point without ignoring the opposition.

Even though our current media and political climate do not call for good argumentation, the guidelines for finding and creating it abound. There are many organizations such as America Speaks (www.americaspeaks.org) that are attempting to revive quality, ethical deliberation. On the personal level, each writer can be more deliberate in their argumentation by choosing to follow some of these methodical approaches to ensure the soundness and general quality of their argument.

The above models offer the possibility that we can imagine modes of argumentation other than war. The final model, pragma-dialectics, especially, seems to consider argument as a conversation that requires constant vigilance and interaction by participants. Argument as conversation, as new metaphor for public deliberation, has possibilities.

**Additional Activities**

1. Read Stanley Fish’s blog entry titled “Democracy and Education” [here](http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/democracy-and-education/#more-57). Choose at least two of the responses to Fish’s argument that students are not entitled to free speech rights in the classroom and compare them using the different argumentation models listed above.

2. Following the pragma-dialectic rules, create a fair and balanced rebuttal to Fish’s argument in his “Democracy and Education” blog entry.

3. Use Toulmin’s vocabulary to build an argument. Start with a claim and then fill in the chart with your own research, warrants, qualifiers, and rebuttals.

**Note**

1. I would like to extend a special thanks to Nina Paley for giving permission to use this cartoon under Creative Commons licensing, free of charge. Please see Paley’s great work at www.ninapaley.com.

**Works Cited**


Chapter Nine: Argument

2009, pp. 44-45.

Introduction by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

English Composition 1101 and 1201 will require you to use research in varying degrees in your writing. As an introduction to academic writing, ENG 1101 will require you to use a few sources in different papers, while ENG 1201 will require primarily research-based essays. This chapter is designed as an overview to the research process and will provide a solid springboard into the more in-depth academic research required in your courses.

In this chapter, we outline the research process, which includes finding sources, evaluating sources, integrating sources, and composing your research writing. While the information in this chapter is designed as a basis for the research you will do in ENG 1101 and 1201; you will need to learn much more about researching and Sinclair’s library databases in order to compose a research project. Remember that your best resources in this endeavor are your teacher, the Library website, and the ENG 1101 and 1201 LibGuides which have an excellent tutorial on researching. Remember that Sinclair’s librarians are another resource for you as you embark on the research process.

Thinking about the research process as entering into a conversation with other students or experts in the field who have researched a similar topic before can help you to make researching less intimidating. You are simply entering into an ongoing conversation about a topic and adding to the conversation. How does the prior research inform your stance on the topic? How can you add something meaningful to the conversation?

Section One: Research Methods and Writing

Demystify[ing] Research Methods
by Joseph M. Moxley, Writing Commons

Critique research myths that may be impairing your ability to locate, evaluate, and use information. If you are like most people, you have some definite ideas about what research is. You may envision a pale figure in a white lab coat bent over a microscope or a beaker of bubbling liquid. Perhaps you imagine this isolated and humorless figure engaged in tedious procedures, carefully recorded on graph paper or reduced to inescrutable formulas scrawled in notebooks. Given a few moments, you might expand this vision of research to include a khaki-clad archaeologist digging for relics in the desert or a tweed-jacketed professor studying musty manuscripts in a dusty corner of the library.

These visions of imaginary researchers probably seem disconnected from your personal experience with research. Your first encounter with the term “research” may have been in the form of an English class assignment that required you to write a paper of a specified number of words in which you referenced a minimum number of sources using correct bibliographic citations. You may have spent a few
uncomfortable hours in the library searching for material that had some bearing on the topic of your paper, then tried to collect bits and pieces from these sources into a more-or-less coherent whole without committing an obvious act of plagiarism. As you struggled with the apparently contradictory requirements to base your paper on the work of others but say something new, you probably wondered what this assignment had to do with "research."

Five Misconceptions About Research
None of these visions accurately represent the research process. Most people have a distorted picture of what researchers do. They tend to view research as tedious, repetitious, dull, and irrelevant to most of our immediate practical concerns. In fact, research should be the opposite. In order to envision research as interesting, exciting, and fun, you may need to dispel some common misconceptions about where research is done, who does it, and what it entails.

- **Misconception #1:** Research is conducted in a laboratory.
- **Misconception #2:** Research is for eggheads.
- **Misconception #3:** Research has little to do with everyday life.
- **Misconception #4:** Researchers across disciplines agree about what constitutes effective research.
- **Misconception #5:** Researchers think, research, and then write.

**Misconception #1: Research Is Conducted In A Laboratory**
Whether we realize it or not, most of us have acquired our understanding of research from the images presented by popular culture. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, for example, has provided one of the most dramatic and enduring representations of laboratory research. Contemporary films like *Outbreak* suggest an updated version of the researcher, still white-coated but now isolated from normal social contact by the need for extraordinary anti-contamination precautions. Perhaps because it is unfamiliar and, therefore, potentially dangerous, the laboratory offers a more dramatic setting for fictional accounts than other, more accessible research environments.

Of course, some kinds of research require the controlled environments that laboratories provide. The medical research that developed the antibiotics and pain relievers your doctor prescribed that last time you had the flu was conducted in a laboratory. And most of the commercially produced consumer products you use every day—from paint to cereal to hand lotion—undergo testing and refining in some sort of laboratory. But laboratory research is only one particular kind of research.

In reality, research is conducted everywhere. You may have noticed an amiable young person with a clipboard stopping shoppers in the local mall to ask questions about their buying preferences. That person was conducting research. The best-selling account of Lewis and Clark's explorations is the result of research, as is the Thursday night line-up of your favorite TV shows, the design of your computer desk, the pattern of the traffic flow through your neighborhood, and the location of the nearest restaurant. None of the research that produced these results was conducted in a laboratory.

If, for example, you are interested in investigating how people behave in natural situations and under normal conditions, you cannot expect to gather information in a laboratory. In other words, the questions researchers are trying to answer and the methods they select for answering these questions will determine where the research is conducted. Research is carried out wherever researchers must go to collect the information they need.

**Misconception #2: Research Is for Eggheads**
Just as images from popular culture have influenced our ideas about where research is conducted, pop culture has also created some persistent stereotypes of researchers. In addition to the rather demonic
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Dr. Frankenstein, you may also think of friendlier, if slightly addled eggheads like the professor on Gilligan's Island, the Jerry Lewis or Eddie Murphy version of The Nutty Professor, or the laughable Disney character, Professor Ludwig von Drake. These images all reinforce the notion of researchers as absentminded eccentrics, engrossed in highly technical, specialized projects that most of us cannot understand.

However, just as research can be carried out almost anywhere, anyone can be a researcher. Asking questions about your friend's new romance, gathering evidence of who she was seen with, making deductions based on her new style of dress, and spreading the word about your conclusions is a form of research. These activities don't sound like research to most people because they have not been expressed in academic language. But what if the activities were organized into a research project titled "The Psychosocial Determinants of Gender Relations in Postmodern Dating Culture: A Psychoanalytic Approach"? The point, of course, is not to suggest that gossip qualifies as legitimate research but rather that everyone employs the investigative and exploitative elements of research to make sense of their lives. Research is not just for "eggheads."

Misconception #3: Research Has Little to Do with Everyday Life

While the first two misconceptions concern where research is done and who does it, the third misconception misrepresents the subject matter of research. Because some research focuses on very narrow questions and relies on highly technical knowledge, people often assume that all research must be hard to understand and unrelated to everyday concerns.

However, research need not be difficult to understand, and research is an activity that is defined by its method, not by its subject. In other words, it is true that some significant research is difficult for nonspecialists to understand. Yet all research is valuable to the extent that it affects everyday life.

Research takes many forms, but it always entails a search, conducted carefully and diligently, aimed at the discovery and interpretation of new knowledge. Thus, how you go about gathering information, analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and sharing results determines whether your activities qualify as research. Sometimes these activities will be informal, spontaneous, and intuitive, as when you infer that your friend has a new romance or when you read reviews in a computer magazine before purchasing new software. In school and in the workplace, where results are disseminated and evaluated by others, research is likely to be more formal. Regardless of its final form, however, whenever you systematically gather information for the purpose of generating new knowledge, you are conducting research.

Misconception #4: Researchers Across Disciplines Agree About What Constitutes Effective Research

Academic disciplines—for example, mathematics, psychology, physics, engineering, or business—have different ways of conducting and evaluating research. An anthropologist's account of kinship patterns in a tribe of Native Americans bears almost no resemblance to a cognitive psychologist's investigation of sensory responses to light stimuli. Even within a particular academic discipline, researchers may disagree over what makes good research.

Not only do people disagree about appropriate methods of research, but their ideas may change over time. Conceptions about knowledge, available technologies, and research practices influence each other and change constantly. For example, capturing gorillas and studying them in cages might have been considered good research in the 1920s. The work of later researchers like Dian Fossey, however, demonstrated how animals might be better understood in their natural environment. Today, research based on observations of wild animals in captivity would gain little support or interest.

Because no one way of doing research is equally acceptable to all researchers in all academic disciplines, researchers must select the methodology that will be most persuasive to their readers.
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**Misconception #5: Researchers Think, Research, and Then Write**

When you first begin a research project, you are wise to integrate writing activities with research activities. Unfortunately, many people wrongly separate the research process from the writing process. They naively assume they should first think about a topic, identify a research question, research it, and then—after all of the excitement is drained from the project—write it up. Rather than using the generative power of writing (that is, our ability to generate new ideas by writing) to help define and energize a research project, some people delay writing until after they have completed the research. Waiting to write about a research project until you're done researching may waste your time and can result in dull, listless prose.

You can save time and ensure that your research is focused by writing summaries of others' research, by writing drafts of your research goals, and by writing about the results you hope to find before you find them. In the process, you will eliminate vague or contradictory ideas you may have about your project.

Incorporating writing into your research activities helps you identify your rhetorical situation and define your readers' priorities. Writing about your project in its early stages gives you time to develop ways of describing your research that are comprehensible and interesting to your audience. As you redraft and revise, your writing—and your thinking—will become clearer, more precise, and thus more credible.

We can all take a lesson in the importance of making your research your own from Gary Starkweather, who built a laser printer that made billions of dollars for Xerox and helped change the way business is done all over the world. The experience taught him several things:

- It's better to try and fail than to decide something can't be done and not try at all. Research is a place where failure should be, if not encouraged, at least viewed as a sign that something's happening. Uncertainty is bad for manufacturing, but essential for research.

- Believe in your own ideas and don't trim your sails just to be popular with your colleagues. Howard Aiken, inventor of the first digital computer, said: "If it's truly a good idea, you'll have to jam it down their throats."

- Be open to suggestion. Often someone who hasn't stared at a problem until they went cross-eyed has the fresh view that can solve it. The best way to a breakthrough is constant small improvement — those waiting for the big break are just lazy; they're waiting to be teleported to the top of the hill instead of walking.

Source: Gary Starkweather Profile

**You might want to try the following:**

In a couple of paragraphs describe a research project or a paper you have written in the past that you felt was interesting, fun, or successful. Try to identify what made the project appealing. Why did it spark your interest? Did you develop the idea yourself, did someone help you, or was it assigned? How did your readers respond to your work? Why do you think they acted that way? Do you feel it might be worthwhile to build on the work you completed earlier by digging deeper into the subject? In what ways did your attitude influence the way you conducted and wrote your research? How can you take advantage of your experience in order to enjoy future projects? What additional misconceptions about research can you identify?
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To develop a better understanding of the research process, maintain a journal of your activities and thoughts while you conduct a research project.

**So, What Is “Research Writing”?**
by Steven Krause, *The Process of Research Writing*

Research writing is writing that uses evidence (from journals, books, magazines, the Internet, experts, etc.) to persuade or inform an audience about a particular point.

Research writing exists in a variety of different forms. Academics, journalists, or other researchers write articles for journals or magazines; academics, professional writers and almost anyone create web pages that use research to make some sort of point and that show readers how to find more research on a particular topic. All of these types of writing projects can be done by a single writer who seeks advice from others, or by a number of writers who collaborate on the project.

**Academic research writing**

How is academic research writing different from other kinds of writing that involve research? Academic research projects come in a variety of shapes and forms. (In fact, you may have noticed that this text purposefully avoids the term “research paper” since this is only one of the many ways in which it is possible to present academic research). But in brief, academic research writing projects are a bit different from other kinds of research writing projects in three significant ways:

- **Thesis:** Academic research projects are organized around a point or a “thesis” that members of the intended audience would not accept as “common sense.” What an audience accepts as “common sense” depends a great deal on the audience, which is one of the many reasons why what “counts” as academic research varies from field to field. But audiences want to learn something new either by being informed about something they knew nothing about before or by reading a unique interpretation on the issue or the evidence.

- **Evidence:** Academic research projects rely almost exclusively on evidence in order to support this point. Academic research writers use evidence in order to convince their audiences that the point they are making is right. Of course, all writing uses other means of persuasion—appeals to emotion, to logic, to the credibility of the author, and so forth. But the readers of academic research writing projects are likely to be more persuaded by good evidence than by anything else.

“Evidence,” the information you use to support your point, includes readings you find in the library (journal and magazine articles, books, newspapers, and many other kinds of documents); materials from the Internet (web pages, information from databases, other Internet-based forums); and information you might be able to gather in other ways (interviews, field research, experiments, and so forth).

- **Citation:** Academic research projects use a detailed citation process in order to demonstrate to their readers where the evidence that supports the writer’s point came from. Unlike most types of “non-academic” research writing, academic research writers provide their readers with a great deal of detail about where they found the evidence they are using to support their point.
This process is called *citation*, or “citing” of evidence. It can sometimes seem intimidating and confusing to writers new to the process of academic research writing, but it is really nothing more than explaining to your reader where your evidence came from.

**Developing a Research Question and Working Thesis Statement**

**Formulating a Research Question**

Scott McLean, *Writing for Success*

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, 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 that an ENG 1101 student, 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.
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.

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.

Finding and Evaluating Research Sources
by Pavel Zemliansky, from Methods of Discovery: A Guide to Research Writing

Introduction
In order to create rhetorically effective and engaging pieces, research writers must be able to find appropriate and diverse sources and to evaluate those sources for usefulness and credibility. This chapter discusses how to locate such sources and how to evaluate them. On the one hand, this is a chapter about the nuts and bolts of research. If you have written research papers before, searching for sources and citing them in your paper may, at times, have appeared to you as purely mechanical processes, chores necessary to produce a paper. On the other hand, when writers work with research sources, first finding and then evaluating them, they do rhetorical work. Finding good sources and using them effectively helps you to create a message and a persona which your readers are more likely to accept, believe, and be interested in than if unsuitable and unreliable sources are used. This chapter covers the various kinds of research sources available to writers. It discusses how to find, evaluate, and use primary and secondary sources, printed and online ones.

Types of Research Sources
It is a well-known cliché: we live in an information age. Information has become a tangible commodity capable of creating and destroying wealth, influencing public opinion and government policies and effecting social change. As writers and citizens, we have unprecedented access to different kinds of information from different sources. Writers who hope to influence their audiences needs to know what research sources are available, where to find them, and how to use them.

Primary and Secondary Sources
Definition of Primary Sources
Let us begin with the definition of primary and secondary sources. A primary research source is one that allows you to learn about your subject “first-hand.” Primary sources provide direct evidence about the topic under investigation. They offer us “direct access” to the events or phenomena we are studying. For example, if you are researching the history of World War II and decide to study soldiers’ letters home or maps of battlefields, you are working with primary sources. Similarly, if you are studying the history of your home town in a local archive that contains documents pertaining to that history, you are engaging in primary research. Among other primary sources and methods are interviews, surveys, polls, observations, and other similar “first-hand” investigative techniques.

The fact that primary sources allow us “direct access” to the topic does not mean that they offer an objective and unbiased view of it. It is therefore important to consider primary sources critically and, if possible, gather multiple perspectives on the same event, time period, or questions, from multiple primary sources.

Definition of Secondary Sources
Secondary sources describe, discuss, and analyze research obtained from primary sources or from other secondary sources. Using the previous example about World War II, if you read other historians’ accounts of it, government documents, maps and other written documents, you are engaging in secondary research. Some types of secondary sources with which you are likely to work include books, academic journals, popular magazines and newspapers, websites and other electronic sources.

The same source can be both primary and secondary, depending on the nature and purpose of the project. For example, if you study a culture or group of people by examining texts they produce, you are engaging in primary research. On the other hand, if that same group published a text analyzing some external event, person, or issue and if your focus is not on the text’s authors but on their analysis, you would be doing secondary research.
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Secondary sources often contain descriptions and analyses of primary sources. Therefore, accounts, descriptions, and interpretations of research subjects found in secondary sources are at least one step further removed from what can be found in primary sources about the same subject. And while primary sources do not give us a completely objective view of reality, secondary sources, inevitably add an extra layer of opinion and interpretation to the views and ideas found in primary sources. As we have mentioned many times throughout this book, all texts are rhetorical creations, and writers make choices about what to include and what to omit. As researchers, we need to understand that and not to rely on either primary or secondary sources blindly.

Writing Activity: Examining the Same Topic through Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary and secondary sources can offer writers different views of the same topic. This activity invites you to explore the different perspectives that you may get after investigating the same subject through primary and secondary sources. It should help us see how our views of different topics depend on the kinds of sources we use.

Find several primary sources on a topic that interests you. Include archival documents, first-hand accounts, lab experiment results, interviews, surveys, and so on. Depending on how much time you have for this project, you may or may not be able to consult all of the above source types. In either case, try to consult sources of three or four different kinds.

Next, write a summary of what you learned about your subject as a result of your primary source investigation. Mention facts, dates, important people, opinions, theories, and anything that seems important or interesting.

Now, conduct a brief secondary source search on the same subject. Use books, journals, popular magazines and newspapers, Internet sites, and so on. Write a summary of your findings.

Finally, compare the two summaries. What differences do you see? What new ideas, perspectives, ideas, or opinions did your secondary source search yield? As a result of these two searches, have you obtained different accounts of the same research subject? Pay special attention to the differences in descriptions, accounts, or interpretations of the same subject. Notice what secondary sources add to the treatment of the subject and what they take away, compared to the primary sources.

Print and Electronic Sources

Researchers have at their disposal both printed and electronic sources. Before the advent of the Internet, most research papers were written based with the use of printed sources only. Until fairly recently, one of the main stated goals of research writing instruction was to give students practice in the use of the library. Libraries are venerable institutions, and therefore printed sources have traditionally been seen (with good reason, usually) as more solid and reliable than those found on the Internet.

With the popularity of the Internet and other electronic means of storing and communicating information, traditional libraries faced serious competition for clients. It has become impractical if not impossible for researchers to ignore the massive amount of information available to them on the Internet or from other online sources. As a result, it is not uncommon for many writers beginning a
research project to begin searching online rather than at a library or a local archive. For example, several times in the process of writing this book, when I found myself in need of information, fast, I opened my web browser and researched online. Due to increased access to the internet, it has become common practice for many student writers to limit themselves to online research and to ignore the library. While there are some cases when a modified version of such an approach to searching may be justifiable (more about that later), it is clear that by using only online research sources, a writer severely limits his or her options.

**Know your Library**

It is likely that your college or university library consists of two parts. One is the brick and mortar building, often at a central location on campus, where you can go to look for books, magazines, newspapers, and other publications. The other part is online. Most good libraries keep a collection of online research databases which are supported, at least in part, by your tuition and fees, and to which only people who are affiliated with the college or the university that subscribes to these databases have access.

Your brick and mortar campus library is likely to house the following types of materials:

- Books (these include encyclopedias, dictionaries, indexes, and so on)
- Academic journals
- Popular magazines
- Newspapers
- Government documents
- A music and film collection (on CDs, VHS tapes, and DVDs)
- A CD-Rom collection
- A microfilm and microfiche collection
- Special collections, such as ancient manuscripts or documents related to local history and culture.

According to librarian Linda M. Miller, researchers need to “gather relevant information about a topic or research question thoroughly and efficiently. To be thorough, it helps to be familiar with the kinds of resources that the library holds, and the services it provides to enable access to the holdings of other libraries.” (2001, 61). Miller’s idea is a simple one, yet it is amazing how many inexperienced writers prefer to use the first book or journal they come across in the library in their writing and do not take the time to learn what the library has to offer.

**Activity: Conducting a Library Search for a Writing Project**

If you have a research and writing topic in mind for your next project, head for your brick-and-mortar campus library. As soon as you enter the building, go straight to the reference desk and talk to a reference librarian. Be aware that some of the people behind the reference desk may be student assistants working there. As a former librarian assistant myself and as a current library user, I know that most student assistants know their job rather well, but sometimes they need help from the professionals. So, don’t be surprised if the first person behind reference desk that you speak to will ask someone else to help him or her help you.

Describe your research interests to the librarian. Be pro-active. The worst disservice you can do yourself
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at this point is to be, sound, and look disinterested. Remember that the librarian can help you if you, yourself, are passionate about the subject of your research and if, and this is very important, the paper you are writing is not due the next day. So, before you go to the library, try to formulate some concrete research questions. For example, instead of saying that you are interested in, say, dolphins, you may be able to ask a questions about the attempts by people to train dolphins as rescue animals or some other similar topic.

If the librarian senses that you have a rather vague idea about what to research and writing about, he or she may point you to general reference sources such as indexes, encyclopedias, and research guides. While those may prove to be excellent thought-triggering publications, use them sparingly and do not succumb to the temptation to choose the first research topic just because your library has a lot of resources on it. After all, your research and writing will be successfully only when you are deeply interested in and passionate about the subject of your investigation.

If you have a more concrete idea about what you would like to research and write about, the reference librarian will be likely to point you to the library’s online catalog. I have often seen, in campus libraries across the country, librarians doing searches together with the students, helping them to come up with or refine a writing topic.

Find several different types of materials pertaining to your topic. Include books and academic articles. Don’t forget popular magazines and newspapers. Popular press covers just about any subject, event, or phenomenon, but does it differently from academic publications. Also, don’t neglect to look in the government documents section to see if there has been any legislation or government regulation relevant to your research subject. Remember that at this stage of the research process, your goal is to learn as much as you can about your topic by casting your research next as far and wide as you can. So, do not limit yourself to the first few sources you will find. Keep looking.

Remember that your goal is to find the best information available. Therefore, you have to look in a variety of sources, if time is a concern, however, you may not be able to study the books dedicated to your topic in detail. In this case, you may decide to focus your research entirely on shorter texts, such as journal and magazine articles, websites, government documents, and so on. It is, however, a good idea to at least browse through the books on your topic to see whether they contain any information or leads worth investigating further.

Cyber-library: Online Resources
Besides the brick and mortar buildings, virtually all college and university libraries have a web space which is a gateway to more documents, resources, and information than any library building can house.

From that website, you can not only to conduct a search of the library collection, but also access millions of articles, electronic books, and other resources available on the Internet. I hasten to add that, usually, when trying to access most of those materials, it is a good idea to conduct a search from your campus library page rather than from your favorite search engine. There are three reasons for that. Firstly, most of the materials which you will find through your library site are accessible to paying subscribers only, and cannot be found via any search engine. Secondly, online library searches return organized and categorized results, complete with the date of publication and source—something that cannot be said about popular search engines. Finally, by searching online databases, we can be reasonably sure that the information we retrieve is reliable.
An average-size college or university subscribes to hundreds, if not thousands of online databases on just about every subject. These databases contain, at a minimum, information about titles, authors, and sources of relevant newspaper and journal articles, government documents, online archive materials, and other research sources. Most databases provide readers with abstracts (short summaries) of those materials, and a growing number of online databases offer full texts of articles. From the research database homepage, it is possible to search for a specific database or according to subject.

Research guide websites are similar to the database homepages, except that, in addition to database links, they often offer direct connections to academic journals and other relevant online resources on the research subject.

Searching online is a skill that can only be learned through frequent practice and critical reflection. Therefore, in order to become a proficient user of your library’s electronic resources, you will need to visit the library’s website often and conduct many searches. Although the web sites of most libraries are organized according to similar principles and offer similar types of resources, it will be up to you as a researcher and learner to find out what your school library has to offer and to learn to use those resources.

**Determining the Suitability and Reliability of Research Sources**

Much of the discussion about the relative value of printed and electronic, especially Internet, sources revolves around the issue of reliability. When it comes to libraries, the issue is more or less clear. Libraries keep books, journals, and other publications that usually undergo a rigorous pre and post-publication review process. It is a fairly safe bet that your campus library contains very few or no materials which are blatantly unreliable or false, unless those materials are kept there precisely to demonstrate their unreliability and falsehood. As a faculty member, I am sometimes asked by my university librarians to recommend titles in my academic field which, I feel, our university library should have. Of course, my opinion, as well as the opinions of my colleagues, do not provide a one-hundred-percent guarantee against errors and inaccurate facts, we use our experience and knowledge in the field to recommend certain titles and omit certain others. These faculty recommendations are the last stage in the long process before a publication gets to a campus library. Before that, every book, journal article, or other material undergoes a stringent review from the publisher’s editors and other readers.

And while researchers still need to use sound judgment in deciding which library sources to use in their project, the issue is usually one of relevance and suitability for a specific research project and specific research questions rather than one of whether the information presented in the source is truthful or not.

The same is true of some electronic sources. Databases and other research sources, as well as various online research websites which accompany many of contemporary writing textbooks, for example, are subject to the same strict review process as their printed counterparts. Information contained in specialized academic and professional databases is also screened for reliability and correctness.

If, as we have established, most of the materials which you are likely to come across in your campus library are generally trustworthy, then your task as a researcher is to determine the appropriateness of the information which these books, journals, and other materials contain, for your particular research project. It is a simple question, really: will my research sources help me answer the research questions that I am posing in my project? Will they help me learn as much as I can about my topic and create a rhetorically effective and interesting text for my readers?
Consider the following example. Recently, the topic of the connection between certain anti-depressant drugs and suicidal tendencies among teenagers that take those drugs has received a lot of coverage in the media. Suppose that you are interested in researching this topic further. Suppose also that you want not only to give statistical information about the problem in your paper, but also to study first-hand accounts of the people, who have been negatively affected by the anti-depressants. When you come to your campus library, you have no trouble locating the latest reports and studies that give you a general overview of your topic, including rates of suicidal behavior in teenagers who took the drugs, tabulated data on the exact relationships between the dosage of the drugs and the changes in the patients’ moods, and so on. All this may be useful information, and there is a good chance that, as a writer, you will still find a way to use it in your paper. You could, for example, provide the summary of the statistics in order to introduce the topic to your readers.

However, this information does not fulfill your research purpose completely. You set out to find out, first-hand, what it is like to be a teenager whose body and mind are affected by the anti-depressants, yet the printed materials that you have found so far offer no such insight. They fulfill your goal only partially. To find such first-hand accounts, then, you will either have to keep looking in the library or to conduct interviews with the people who have affected by these drugs, if you can locate such people.

More on evaluating sources can be found in the next section.

Section Three: Evaluating Sources
Evaluating Sources

adapted by Lisa Mahle-Grisez, Sinclair Community College

Now that you have found your sources, you must evaluate them. Evaluating sources becomes a major component of researching because the materials chosen will reflect upon your reputation. Aside from being able to find informative sources, a good researcher is also able to quickly assess the credibility of information. Through practice, this skill will come.

When setting out to write a research paper, there is a vast pool of information available, including books, newspapers, periodicals, reference works, and government documents. Included in this can be your own empirical data, obtained in interviews and surveys, but you will probably not need to use it all. As important as it is to be able to find sources specific to your topic, it is equally vital to be able to correctly assess each source’s credibility -- that is, how trustworthy, accurate, and verifiable the sources are. Due to the vast amount of information available on the Internet, it presents an especially interesting challenge in determining the credibility of sources. However, even when evaluating print sources, the same criticism should be maintained.

You must also be aware of the author’s possible bias. Even the most credible sources may exhibit forms of bias, as most authors’ past experiences will come into play. Bias is most likely to occur in controversial topics such as politics or religion, but is still likely to be present whenever an opinion is voiced. The author’s beliefs and experiences can thus affect the objectivity of the text. Another case may be when
the author or publisher has ties to a special interest group that may allow him or her to see only one side of the issue. Lastly, make sure to evaluate how fairly the author treats the opposing viewpoints. Complete objectivity is very difficult to attain in writing, but try to find sources that are not incredibly subjective. Nonetheless, the most important thing is simply to be aware of possible biases so that you are not misled.

Consider Your Project

How you evaluate a source will differ depending on the project you’re working on. When determining whether a source is credible, biased, or relevant, it is equally important to consider how the source will be used.

For example, Phillip Morris has a web site that touts the company's programs to curb smoking among young people. Obviously, information from a tobacco company and cigarette marketing giant can be considered biased. You must ask yourself whether their program is effective and whether the content of the site can be trusted and in what context.

Should you never use that source? You might want to if you were writing a paper that examined the smoking rates of 10-13 year olds. What role might the Phillip Morris site play in your paper? Does the site display information that contradicts the company's advertising campaigns? Would the campaign website be effective in your argument? It all depends on what side of the argument is going to be supported in your research project.

Audience. Purpose. Argument. These intents should be considered since they affect how sources should be evaluated.

Evaluating Print Sources

The fact that it's in print doesn't automatically make it a reliable source. When evaluating print sources ask yourself these questions:

Book

- **How old is it?** Research projects will have different requirements as to how old your sources can be. For example, when dealing with contemporary issues or a current controversy, using outdated sources will likely provide inaccurate information. For example, a book on euthanasia published in 1978 probably isn't the best choice. While the book may contain useful information for other projects, it does not make sense to use it when there are more current materials available.

- **Who is the publisher?** Books published by a university press undergo significant editing and review to increase their validity and accuracy. When assessing a book published by a commercial publisher, be aware of vanity presses (companies that authors pay to publish their works, rather than vice versa). Also be cautious about using books labeled as "self-published" or books that are published by specific organizations (such as a corporation or a nonprofit group).

- **Is the author objective?** Check biographical information included in the book, as well as other sources, to gather information about the author's background as a way of determining his or her stance on a particular issue. In addition, find out about his or her previous works, past professional experience, affiliations with groups or movements, current employment, and degrees or other credentials.

Periodical
• **Is it a scholarly journal or a magazine?** Scholarly journals are almost always characterized by no advertisements, longer articles, and the requirement that authors cite the sources they use in writing their articles. Articles submitted to scholarly journals undergo substantial scrutiny by other professionals as a way to increase the clarity and accuracy of the information contained in them. Most scholarly journals are not sold on news-stands, but rather are circulated primarily among the academic community. In contrast, magazines are available for purchase; they tend to contain shorter articles, generally don't require writers to cite their sources, and contain advertising. Therefore, while magazines may contain relevant information, the content may not always be entirely accurate.

• **How old is it?** As noted above, dated material can sometimes be inaccurate. Always ask your instructor if you're uncertain about how old is too old.

• **Newspaper article: What do you know about the paper that publishes it?** Some newspapers have a discernible political slant, which can often be found by skimming through the headlines or by seeing how others regard the newspaper. For example, *The Los Angeles Times* is considered a more progressive news source, while its neighbor *The Orange County Register* is considered to have a libertarian slant.

### Evaluating Web Sources

For most academic research, teachers will require that students use scholarly sources. For this there are a number of “academic databases” that will always provide credible sources. These sites generally require some form of a subscription in order to access them; however, many colleges provide complimentary access to students. Once logged into the site, users are able to search and sort the articles by criterion such as date, subject, author, and more importantly, whether or not they have been peer reviewed and are scholarly. Examples of these sites include, but are not limited to: EBSCO, JSTOR, and Proquest. Links to these “gated websites” can generally be found on your school’s web page. Nevertheless, always ask what databases are available to you as a student.

While the rest of the Internet has a wide range of easily accessible and useful information, discretion must be maintained. Because anyone can put information on the Internet, make it your first priority to know who is behind the sites you find. Individuals? Nonprofit groups? Corporations? Academics? Advocacy groups? Federal, state, or local government? Small businesses or single vendors? Depending on your topic, you may want to avoid dot-com web sites; for many, their primary purpose is commerce, and that can significantly affect what they publish. Of course, other websites can also have agendas. This can lead to false or misleading information. Therefore, it is best to consult a number of sources so that those with agendas will stand out.

Ask yourself:

• **By whom was the website created?** Be cautious if there is no author. Try looking for "about this site" or check the homepage. Does the website discuss the qualifications of the author(s)? Does it give contact information such as an email address or telephone number?

• **By whom is the website sponsored?** Determine whether the website is sponsored by a special interest group. By learning about the affiliated groups, much can be ascertained about the credibility of the author and web site. Also look at the domain name. This will
tell you by whom the site is sponsored. For example: educational (.edu), commercial (.com), nonprofit (.org), military (.mil), or network (.net).

- **Is the website relevant?** Decide whether the information is something that can actually be used in the paper or, at the very least, gives a helpful background. If what is found cannot be used, move on to something else.

- **Does the website contain any errors?** Can the definitions, figures, dates, and other facts presented on the website be verified in other sources? Look for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and content errors. If there appears to be more than one or two content errors, move on.

- **Is the website relatively unbiased?** As it is noted above, carefully examining the source behind the website can lead to clues as to what kind of bias and agenda the site may contain. Once the source has been deemed valid, continue to remain alert, especially if the topic is controversial. Look for websites that discuss multiple points of view. Take note of the language used, and avoid sites that seem to exhibit characteristics of bias and/or inaccurate information.

- **Are there advertisements on the Web page?** Do these particular advertisements reflect a possible bias toward the subject matter?

- **What appears to be the website’s purpose?** Think about why the site was created. Is its purpose to inform, persuade, or sell a product to the reader? For whom was the site created? Who is the intended audience? If you are not included in the intended audience, carefully consider whether or not the information is relevant to your research.

- **Is the website comprehensive.** A valuable website will cover a topic in-depth and lead to additional sources.

- **Does the website provide references?** Determine whether the references themselves are authoritative.

- **How old is the website?** A website that has remained on the Internet a long time may be better trusted than one that was added a month ago. Make sure that the information is not outdated. When was the site last updated? Credible websites will garner ongoing attention by their creators to make sure that the content is as up-to-date as possible.

- **Has the website received any awards?** Websites that have received awards may have better reputations.

- **Is the website user-friendly?** Does the website download quickly? Can you read all the text? Does any text appear too small, in strange characters, or in a font that is illegible? How easy is it to navigate through the website? Is the content accessible? The information presented should be clear, precise, and easy to understand. Avoid using sites that make use of overly scientific and/or technological terms that are difficult to understand. If it cannot be clearly understood, it may lead to misinterpretation and thus incorrect information in your work.

**ADAM**

When faced with assessing a large number of sources in a short period of time, the quickest way to cover the essential points is to remember this acronym:

- **Age.** How old is this source? For almost every topic, search for the most current sources that can be found.
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- **Depth.** Does the source go in-depth, or does it just skim over the surface? Does it feature the many details and long discussions that are expected from academic sources, or does it just seem to cover the main ideas? Always use substantive sources.

- **Author.** Who is the author? What is known about his/her qualifications? Is he/she really an expert? Can any bias be seen? What is his/her purpose?

- **Money.** Follow the money. Is the source coming from a place that's trying to “sell” something? Is there advertising where this source appears that might affect what will be printed?

Section Four: Integrating Sources

**Cite Sources to Avoid Plagiarism**


After using other sources to gain information for a report or paper, you might decide to use that information in your paper. If the ideas expressed in your paper are not your original thoughts, you must cite where you obtained that information. If you do not cite where you obtained your information, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarizing is an extreme offense. If you are caught plagiarizing in school you usually will receive a failing grade on the assignment, if not in the entire course. You could also risk being expelled from school. If you are caught plagiarizing in the workplace, it could likely end up costing you your job. If you are a researcher and plagiarize in a scientific paper, your university may lose funding. To avoid the risk of plagiarism, make sure that you cite copied information! The most common forms of citation are direct quotations and summarizing or paraphrasing. After a direct quote or at the end of a summarized or paraphrased thought, you should cite the author and page number of your source. Information on how to cite sources can be found in Chapter 7.5. If you are using other sources in your report and are unsure whether or not you need to use citations, it is better to be safe than sorry, so cite the information.

The two most common standards for citing are MLA (Modern Language Association) and APA (American Psychological Association). Each is specific to the field in which the research is done. For example, if you are researching for a psychology class, it is most likely going to be cited in APA format. On the other hand, MLA is used in the liberal arts and humanities fields. Nonetheless, check with the teacher, group, or organization for which the research is being done to find out which method you are expected to use.

Using and correctly citing outside sources is hugely important to the ethical portrayal of you as a writer. It shows you have done your homework, literally. It also shows you are a thoughtful writer who takes this work or subject seriously, who respects the hard work of others, and who truly contemplates the intricacies of research and discovering truth in writing.
Incorporating Evidence into a Research Paper
by Jennifer A. Yirinec, Writing Commons

When you think of the term “evidence,” what comes to mind? CSI? Law and Order? NCIS? Certainly, detectives and law enforcement officers use evidence to prove that a criminal is guilty. What’s more, they use different types of evidence to find and convict the offending person(s), such as eyewitness accounts, DNA, fingerprints, and material evidence.

Just as detectives use various types of evidence, writers incorporate evidence to prove their points—and they also use different types of evidence, depending upon which form is most useful and relevant to their points. These different types of evidence include—but are not limited to—quotes, paraphrases, summaries, anecdotes, and hypothetical examples.

Regardless of the type used, all evidence serves the same general function: it bolsters a writer’s argument. The trick is to determine, during the composition process, what type of evidence will most help your point. This section is designed to help you choose the best type of support to use in your writing; in addition, it will provide you with the tools necessary to successfully integrate evidence into your papers. By acquiring these skills, you will become a more convincing writer, as you will be able to back up your claims in a way that makes sense to your readers.

Students often confuse evidence with research; the two do not mean the same thing. Whereas “evidence” refers to something that supports a claim, “research” is something much more: it’s a conversation. Take a look at Kenneth Burke’s famous “Unending Conversation” metaphor:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally’s assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.[1]

Research begets evidence, but performing research should not just point you, as a writer, to useful quotes that you can use as support for claims in your writing; research should tell you about a conversation, one that began before you decided upon your project topic. When you incorporate research into a paper, you are integrating and responding to previous claims about your topic made by other writers. As such, it’s important to try to understand the main argument each source in a particular conversation is making, and these main arguments (and ensuing subclaims) can then be used as evidence—as support for your claims—in your paper.

Let’s say for a bibliographic essay you decide to write about the Indian Mutiny. Well, as the Indian Mutiny began around 1857, people have been writing about the Mutiny since that time. Thus, it’s important to realize that by writing about the Indian Mutiny now, you’re contributing to an ongoing conversation. By doing research, you can see what’s already been said about this topic, decide what
specific approach to the topic might be original and insightful, and determine what ideas from other writers provide an opening for you to assert your own claims.

The pieces in this section will focus on incorporating various types of evidence into your paper, but the main idea to keep in the back of your head is that research is much larger than your paper. Your writing is a part of a larger conversation. Do other authors justice: critically read their pieces so you understand their major claims and do not misrepresent them, choose ideas that work with yours—or that contrast with yours, so you have a jumping-off point for your argument. Doing so is critical to constructing arguments and to realizing your agency as a writer.

Work Cited


Analyzing Evidence

by Jennifer A. Yirinec, Writing Commons

How is this source relevant to your thesis and purpose?

Many emerging writers struggle with connecting sourced material to their claims and to their thesis. Oftentimes, this is because they’re too close to their work and think that the connection between claim and evidence is completely apparent to the reader. Even if the connection is readily visible, authors should still follow up a piece of sourced material with an explanation of its relevance to the author’s point, purpose, and/or thesis. Such connections (“analysis”) should be made directly following the sourced material.

Let’s say that I’m writing a research paper that suggests offshore drilling should be banned, and my thesis is as follows:

Though some may argue that offshore drilling provides economic advantages and would lessen our dependence on foreign oil, the environmental and economic consequences of an oil spill are so drastic that they far outweigh the advantages.

Following this thesis come body paragraphs relating my main points: (1) the known economic impact of past oil spills, (2) the known environmental impact of past oil spills, (3) the potential impact of oil spills on marine and human life, (4) a comparison between advantages and disadvantages of offshore drilling, and (5) a response to potential counterarguments. My conclusion would then include a proposal to ban offshore drilling.

So, for instance, in my fifth body paragraph I include the following claim (in my topic sentence) and also provide the following support:

Others argue that the US needs to end its dependence on foreign oil from unstable regions necessitates domestic oil production. During an April 2010 speech to the Southern Republican conference, Sarah Palin responded to the ongoing debate about offshore drilling and insists that
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“relying on foreign regimes to meet our energy needs makes us less secure and makes us more beholden to these countries” (Malcom). [1]

I can’t, as a writer, just stop there, because my reader would not necessarily know the connection between my point and the quote. As such, I must make the connection for my reader. Such a connection may take the form of explaining what the sourced material is saying (breaking down ideas):

Palin’s assertion implies that the majority of our oil comes from unstable regimes in antidemocratic regions. Although I understand her concerns about providing such regimes with a measure of economic power over the United States, I believe that offshore drilling poses a greater threat to the stability of our economy.

Or, a connection may point the reader back to the thesis:

Though Palin’s argument is representative of a group that views offshore drilling as a necessity, it fails to acknowledge that America’s largest petroleum trading partners are not countries with unstable regimes.

Or, a connection may point the reader back to the paragraph’s main point:

Palin’s argument is representative of a cohort that believes in the importance of domestic oil production.

Even still, a connection may point the reader to the author’s purpose:

Despite Palin’s (and Republicans’) protests, I argue that offshore drilling presents a more real threat to American security than do foreign regimes.

Thus, depending on where you want to go in the paragraph, you have many options for ways to make connections for your reader. Remember, your reader is not in your brain; and as smart as he or she may be, you still need to make connections that explain the relevance or purpose of included sourced material.

Synthesizing Your Research Findings
by Christine Photinos, Writing Commons

Synthesis is something you already do in your everyday life. For example, if you are shopping for a new car, the research question you are trying to answer is, "Which car should I buy"? You explore available models, prices, options, and consumer reviews, and you make comparisons. For example: Car X costs more than car Y but gets better mileage. Or: Reviewers A, B, and C all prefer Car X, but their praise is based primarily on design features that aren't important to you. It is this analysis across sources that moves you towards an answer to your question.

Early in an academic research project you are likely to find yourself making initial comparisons—for example, you may notice that Source A arrives at a conclusion very different from that of Source B—but the task of synthesis will become central to your work when you begin drafting your research paper or presentation.

Remember, when you synthesize, you are not just compiling information. You are organizing that information around a specific argument or question, and this work—your own intellectual work—is central to research writing.

Below are some questions that highlight ways in which the act of synthesizing brings together ideas and generates new knowledge.

How do the sources speak to your specific argument or research question?

Your argument or research question is the main unifying element in your project. Keep this in the forefront of your mind when you write about your sources. Explain how, specifically, each source supports your central claim/s or suggests possible answers to your question. For example: Does the source provide essential background information or a definitional foundation for your argument or inquiry? Does it present numerical data that supports one of your points or helps you answer a question you have posed? Does it present a theory that might be applied to some aspect of your project? Does it present a recognized expert’s insights on your topic?

How do the sources speak to each other?

Sometimes you will find explicit dialogue between sources (for example, Source A refutes Source B by name), and sometimes you will need to bring your sources into dialogue (for example, Source A does not mention Source B, but you observe that the two are advancing similar or dissimilar arguments). Attending to interrelationships among sources is at the heart of the task of synthesis.

Begin by asking: What are the points of agreement? Where are there disagreements?

But be aware that you are unlikely to find your sources in pure positions of “for” vs. “against.” You are more likely to find agreement in some areas and disagreement in other areas. You may also find agreement but for different reasons—such as different underlying values and priorities, or different methods of inquiry.

(See also Identifying a Conversation below.)

Where are there, or aren’t there, information gaps?
Where is the available information unreliable (for example, it might be difficult to trace back to primary sources), or limited, (for example, based on just a few case studies, or on just one geographical area), or difficult for non-specialists to access (for example, written in specialist language, or tucked away in a physical archive)?

Does your inquiry contain sub-questions that may not at present be answerable, or that may not be answerable without additional primary research—for example, laboratory studies, direct observation, interviews with witnesses or participants, etc.?

Or, alternatively, is there a great deal of reliable, accessible information that addresses your question or speaks to your argument or inquiry?

In considering these questions, you are engaged in synthesis: you are conducting an overview assessment of the field of available information and in this way generating composite knowledge.

Remember, synthesis is about pulling together information from a range of sources in order to answer a question or construct an argument. It is something you will be called upon to do in a wide variety of academic, professional, and personal contexts. Being able to dive into an ocean of information and surface with meaningful conclusions is an essential life skill.

Sticking Your Nose In: Positioning Yourself in Academic Writing
by Sean Barnette, Lander University, Writing Commons

When you synthesize your research, part of what you’re doing is deciding how much you accept, question, or reject the claims that your sources make—in other words, you’re finding your position in an ongoing conversation. When you start to write about that research, you need to figure out how to show that position, even as you quote, summarize, or paraphrase from your sources.

Writing about your sources in these ways often begins with what’s known as a signal phrase—that is, wording that lets your reader know that the ideas you’re about to discuss come from other sources. The most basic signal phrases, such as according to or she says, just identify words or ideas as coming from a source. But signal phrases can be more complex, conveying additional information about the source itself and about your position in relation to its claims. Two important elements of effective signal
phrases are attributive verbs and hedges. **Attributive Verbs**

The author Elmore Leonard argued that fiction writers should “[n]ever use a verb other than ‘said’ to carry dialogue. The line of dialogue belongs to the character; the verb is the writer sticking his [or her] nose in.” While Leonard wanted fiction writers to stay out of their characters’ way, in academic writing it’s your job to stick your nose in: As Jason Carabelli points out, an academic essay is your contribution to the ongoing conversation on your topic. So, when you introduce a source in your writing, it’s important to consider the verb you use to get that job done.

For instance, consider the difference between two sentences you might write about a source:

Freeman *shows* that icons are more than just pictures.

Freeman *suggests* that icons are more than just pictures.

Both of these sentences might very well be fair descriptions of the source’s claims, but notice that with the first example, the language implies that you find Freeman’s argument persuasive. To write that he *shows* something tells your reader that you think Freeman’s claim is correct and that Freeman offers convincing evidence to support it. But in the second example, you’ve left yourself some space to disagree with him. By writing that he *suggests* something, you imply that he might be wrong. You aren’t necessarily saying you think he *is* wrong; you’re simply leaving the matter open. To go even further in the direction of not agreeing with an author’s claim, consider what is implied if you write, Freeman *seems to think that icons are more than just pictures.*

Verbs like *say, show,* and *suggest* are sometimes called attributive verbs because they attribute a claim to another source. When you refer to another writer’s claims, be sure that you use an attributive verb that accurately conveys your stance in relation to those claims—whether you believe it, doubt it, disagree with it, or whatever. Here some more examples:

Freeman *asserts* that icons are more than just pictures. That is, he makes a forceful statement but may not offer evidence to support it (or at least you don’t find the evidence persuasive).

Freeman *concludes* that icons are more than just pictures. That is, his claim is based on clear evidence (though you may still disagree).

Freeman *points out* that icons are more than just pictures. That is, you think what he’s saying is correct and self-evident, and you expect your readers will agree.

There are dozens of attributive verbs and verb phrases you can use in a signal phrase; a quick search online will bring up several good lists.

**Hedges**

Another good way to show how you position yourself within a text is to use what are called hedges to show how fully you’re willing to commit to a claim. A hedge is a strategy for softening a claim, making it
less absolute. For instance, you might write *may* or *might* instead of *will*. Or you might write *some* instead of *all* (or instead of nothing). Think about the difference between these next two sentences—one without hedges and the other with them:

> A new report finds that students are not studying effectively for exams.
> A new report finds that *some* students may not be studying effectively for exams.

If you wrote the first sentence, you’d be committing yourself to a fairly strong interpretation of the report’s findings. If you wrote the second sentence, with the hedges, you’d be showing that you don’t mean to make such a sweeping claim. Either sentence may be appropriate, but the second one presents a more easily defended stance.

Notice that the attributive verb you choose can also be a way of hedging. Consider the difference in the relative certainty of these two sentences:

> A new report *proves* that some students may not be studying effectively for exams.
> A new report *hints* that some students may not be studying effectively for exams.

You can find lists of more words and phrases for hedging here and here.

Why pay attention to hedges? One reason is so that you can accurately report what other writers have to say. Hedges let you represent your sources fairly. For instance, imagine that the report mentioned in that last example came from an author who wrote this:

> My research suggests that some students may not be studying effectively for exams.

The claim here contains three hedges: *suggests*, *some*, and *may*. But if you were to paraphrase the claim in a way that removed the hedges, you’d have altered it significantly:

> Research shows that students don’t study well for tests.

The paraphrase actually misrepresents what you found in your source because it suggests the report in question tells us what students in general (or even all students) are or aren’t doing.

**Sticking Your Nose In**

Like attributive verbs, hedges are tools for sticking your nose in to your writing—showing where you stand in relation to your claims and the claims of others. Not surprisingly, writers from different disciplines use these sorts of strategies in different ways: Chemists tend to write like other chemists, philosophers like other philosophers, and so on (Hyland).

In college, you take courses in a wide variety of disciplines, and it’s certainly true that you won’t need to write professionally in each of them—or maybe any of them. But you should still pay attention to how writers in a discipline use tools like attributive verbs and hedges because, according to some research, professors may respond more favorably to student writing that follows the tacit conventions of writing in the discipline they teach (Lancaster). In other words, part of succeeding at writing in a discipline (even while
you’re in college) is adopting the writing conventions of that discipline, and so paying attention to when and how you stick your nose in is one way to make your academic writing more effective.

Works Cited


Readings

Identifying a Conversation

by Jason Carabelli, Writing Commons

An important part of research writing (and many other kinds of writing) is identifying when sources are “speaking” to each other. When researching a particular topic, you will likely collect many sources that seem to discuss the same thing. Sometimes the authors of these sources will explicitly know about each other and reference one another in their own texts. This is common in academic writing, where explicit conversations between different scholars are expected and valued. A long works cited page in an academic article might indicate that the author is having a long conversation with many other authors of other sources, some of whom might not still be publishing. For instance, there are many scholars over many generations who have conversed with each other in print about Hamlet, and each new author adds a unique perspective to the conversation, even though some of the speakers can no longer respond. However, not all conversations in which sources “speak” to each other can be identified so easily, and instead might be seen as “speaking” to each other indirectly. Sometimes it is up to a researcher who is reading all of these sources that seem to talk about the same thing to identify when that is happening and to explain it to an audience. This is one of the primary goals of academic research—to identify conversations between sources and to show how they might interact with each other.

Many Speakers and Conversations

When writers mention “conversations” and sources “speaking” to one another, they are referring to the ways that many voices shape how communities see a topic. For instance, there are many writers today who are having a conversation about the topic of global warming, even if they don’t actually know all the other writers who are part of the conversation. Climatologists, meteorologists, ecologists, sociologists, politicians, bloggers, priests, and corporate CEOs are all kinds of people involved in a written conversation on the topic of global warming. Of course, there are many smaller textual conversations within this larger one, as well as smaller groups or communities of speakers within this larger group. The climatologists, meteorologists, ecologists, and sociologists might be said to encompass part of an academic community conversing about global warming through scientific research, while the others might make up different groups. Even further, the climatologists, meteorologists, and ecologists
might be said to encompass a certain kind of scientific conversation group more interested in the natural processes of the Earth, while the sociologists might be part of a different kind of academic group that focuses on human activity. Because of this fracturing of conversation groups—called “discourse communities”—and the many mini-conversations going on, it is sometimes the goal of a researcher like yourself to bring them together in one written work that puts them “in conversation” with each other.

For example, if you were interested in writing a paper about workplace inequalities between men and women, you would have many different speakers and conversations to look at. For instance, you might find that newspaper reporters, lawyers, psychologists, and government researchers all published various documents (stories, court proceedings, research, reports, etc.) about this topic. And, since writing can be preserved over long periods (unlike a face-to-face conversation), you are also dealing with speakers from across time. You might, for instance, want to discuss the ways different scientific writers saw the role of women in America in the 1950’s and today. Scientific research on gender in the 1950’s, as we know, is not the same as it is today. As a researcher, you might imagine yourself putting an author of a source on gender from the 1950’s and an author of a source on gender from today in a room together. They would have different things to say about gender and the workplace, to be sure. The researcher from today might complicate the work of the researcher from the 1950’s, or build on it, or disregard it.

In addition to different speakers in the conversation, there would also be many different smaller conversations going on within the larger one of gender inequalities in the workplace. For example, some authors might write about salary inequalities in higher education, while others might focus more on cases of sexual harassment at work. Although both topics are related to the conversation of gender inequalities in the workplace, your paper might not need to address both subtopics (or mini-conversations).

**Putting It All Together**

Sometimes your role as a researcher is to figure out when and how sources seem to be dealing with the same thing, and decide how that changes what you know about the topic. When what you know about a topic changes because of how two sources talk about the same thing, writers might refer to that as a “conversation” between the two authors that you read. That change can be explained for your audience to show a “conversation”—an interaction—between two sources that might be separated by decades, miles, discourse communities, or even languages.

There are many ways to put sources together to make a conversation. You might think of it like a puzzle, except that you have some control over how the pieces are shaped. The above example of a research paper on gender inequalities only puts two sources in conversation, and they are both scientific puzzle pieces. However, there are many other voices in the conversation on gender that might fit into the puzzle. Deciding what kinds of sources are speaking to each other about a topic dictates the kind of puzzle you are building. Since it is probably impossible to identify all the conversations on a topic, you must make decisions about which ones are pieces in your puzzle, and which ones aren’t. As a rule of thumb, you’ll probably want to look for speakers whose topics are very closely related. However, you may also want to keep in mind that as a researcher you have the ability to build a puzzle that mobilizes science, art, history, and your aunt Jean into a new kind of conversation about a topic. As long as you can show your audience how each speaker changes what you know about a topic—as long as you can show the “conversation” between them—the puzzle is yours to design. Your audience, though, will determine its credibility, and so you will want to make sure you consider how they would build the puzzle themselves. If, for instance, you ignore in your research paper (your puzzle) a long conversation between many respected authorities on your topic, you should have a good reason for doing so, or your audience may find you lacking credibility.
Chapter Ten: Research Writing

It is important to remember that some authors have already put themselves into conversation with other sources, and some have not. When authors refer to other works, they are building a conversation puzzle in their own writing. Many times, this should act as a signpost to you as a researcher, directing you towards a conversation going on between sources. Other times, though, some sources will discuss the same topic and have never heard of each other. This happens often in large conversations where many different discourse communities with many different values all talk about the same thing. For instance, a scientific researcher might not be interested in responding to a blogger on the effects of global warming, since they might value different things or belong to communities that only want to talk to other members of that community. As a researcher, you might identify all of the conversations within one discourse community—for instance all of the scholarly discourse about Hamlet—or show how many communities all say something about a given topic—say, global warming. Identifying which sources are in conversation with each other is not enough though. As a researcher, you will also have to explain how they are in conversation. Do they challenge each other? Complicate? Extend? Ignore? Support? These are the kinds of questions you should seek to answer when putting your puzzle together. Deciding on these questions will require that you are familiar with many works on your given topic, and how they are all voices in a conversation that is taking place in your research.

Googlepedia: Turning Information Behaviors into Research Skills

by Randall McClure, Writing Spaces

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Introduction

The ways in which most writers find, evaluate, and use information have changed significantly over the past ten years.* A recent study, for example, has shown that as many as nine out of every ten students begin the process of searching for information on the Web, either using a search engine, particularly Google, or an online encyclopedia, notably Wikipedia (Nicholas, Rowlands and Huntington 7). I believe this finding is true of most writers, not just students like you; the Web is our research home.

To illustrate for you how the Web has changed the nature of research and, as a result, the shape of research-based writing, I trace in this chapter the early research decisions of two first year composition students, Susan and Edward, one who begins research in Google and another who starts in Wikipedia. Part narrative, part analysis, part reflection, and part instruction, this chapter blends the voices of the student researchers with me, in the process of seeking a new way to research.

Please understand that I do not plan to dismiss the use of what I call “Googlepedia” in seeking information. As James P. Purdy writes in his essay on Wikipedia in Volume 1 of Writing Spaces, “[Y]ou are going to use [Google and] Wikipedia as a source for writing assignments regardless of cautions against [them], so it is more helpful to address ways to use [them] than to ignore [them]” (205). Therefore, my goal in this chapter is to suggest a blended research process that begins with the initial tendency to use Google and Wikipedia and ends in the university library. While Susan and Edward find Googlepedia to be “good enough” for conducting research, this chapter shows you why that’s not true.
and why the resources provided by your school library are still much more effective for conducting research. In doing so, I include comments from Susan and Edward on developing their existing information behaviors into academic research skills, and I offer questions to help you consider your own information behaviors and research skills.

Understanding Information Literacy
Before I work with you to move your information behaviors inside the online academic library, you need to understand the concept of information literacy. The American Library Association (ALA) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) define information literacy “a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (American Library Association).

The ACRL further acknowledges that information literacy is “increasingly important in the contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferating information resources. Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices” (Association of College and Research Libraries). In short, information literacy is a set of skills you need to understand, find, and use information.

I am certain that you are already familiar with conducting research on the Web, and I admit that finding information quickly and effortlessly is certainly alluring. But what about the reliability of the information you find? Do you ever question if the information you find is really accurate or true? If you have, then please know that you are not alone in your questions. You might even find some comfort in my belief that conducting sound academic research is more challenging now than at any other time in the history of the modern university.

Writing in a Googlepedia World
Teachers Tiffany J. Hunt and Bud Hunt explain that the web-based encyclopedia Wikipedia is not just a collection of web pages built on wiki technology, it is a web-based community of readers and writers, and a trusted one at that. Whereas most student users of Wikipedia trust the community of writers that contribute to the development of its pages of information, many teachers still criticize or disregard Wikipedia because of its open participation in the writing process, possible unreliability, and at times shallow coverage (Purdy 209), since “anyone, at any time, can modify by simply clicking on an ‘edit this page’ button found at the top of every Web entry” (Hunt and Hunt 91). However, the disregard for Wikipedia appears to be on the decline, and more and more users each day believe the “information is trustworthy and useful because, over time, many, many people have contributed their ideas, thoughts, passions, and the facts they learned both in school and in the world” (91). Wikipedia and Google are so much a part of the research process for writers today that to ignore their role and refuse to work with these tools seems ludicrous.

Still, the accuracy and verifiability of information are not as clear and consistent in many sources identified through Wikipedia and Google as they are with sources found in most libraries. For this reason, I am sure you have been steered away at least once from information obtained from search engines like Yahoo and Google as well as online encyclopedias like Answers.com and Wikipedia. Despite the resistance that’s out there, Alison J. Head and Michael Eisenberg from Project Information Literacy report from their interviews with groups of students on six college campuses that “Wikipedia was a unique and indispensible research source for students . . . there was a strong consensus among students that their research process began with [it]” (11). The suggestion by Head and Eisenberg that many students go to Google and Wikipedia first, and that many of them go to these websites in order to get a sense of the big picture (11), is confirmed in the advice offered by Purdy when he writes that Wikipedia allows you to “get a sense of the multiple aspects or angles” on a topic (209).
Chapter Ten: Research Writing

Wikipedia brings ideas together on a single page as well as provides an accompanying narrative or summary that writers are often looking for during their research, particularly in the early stages of it. Head and Eisenberg term this Googlepedia-based information behavior “pre-search,” specifically pre-researching a topic before moving onto more focused, serious, and often library-based research.

The concept of presearch is an important one for this chapter; Edward’s reliance on Wikipedia and Susan’s reliance on Google are not research crutches, but useful presearch tools. However, Edward and Susan admit they would not have made the research move into the virtual library to conduct database-oriented research without my intervention in the research process. Both students originally viewed this move like many students do, as simply unnecessary for most writing situations.

Talkin’ Bout This Generation

Wikipedia might be the starting point for some writers; however, Google remains the starting point for most students I know. In fact, one group of researchers believes this information behavior—students’ affinity for all things “search engine”—is so prominent that it has dubbed the current generation of students “the Google Generation.”

Citing not only a 2006 article from EDUCAUSE Review but also, interestingly enough, the Wikipedia discussion of the term, a group of researchers from University College London (UCL) note the “first port of call for knowledge [for the Google Generation] is the [I]nternet and a search engine, Google being the most popular” (Nicholas, Rowlands and Huntington 7). In other words, the UCL researchers argue that “students have already developed an ingrained coping behavior: they have learned to ‘get by’ with Google” (23). I believe we all are immersed and comfortable in the information world created by Googlepedia, yet there is much more to research than this.

Despite the fact that it would be easy and understandable to dismiss your information behaviors or to just tell you never to use Google or Wikipedia, I agree with teacher and author Troy Swanson when he argues, “We [teachers] need to recognize that our students enter our [college] classrooms with their own experiences as users of information” (265). In my attempt though to show you that research is more than just a five-minute stroll through Googlepedia, I first acknowledge what you already do when conducting research. I then use these behaviors as part of a process that is still quick, but much more efficient.

By mirroring what writers do with Googlepedia and building on that process, this essay will significantly improve your research skills and assist you with writing projects in college and your professional career.

The Wikipedia Hoax

At this point in the chapter, let me pause to provide an example of why learning to be information literate and research savvy is so important. In his discussion of the “Wikipedia Hoax,” Associated Press writer Shawn Pogatchnik tells the story of University College Dublin student Shane Fitzgerald who “posted a poetic but phony” quote supposedly by French composer Maurice Jarre in order to test how the “Internet-dependent media was upholding accuracy and accountability.”

Fitzgerald posted his fake quote on Wikipedia within hours of the composer’s death, and later found that several newspaper outlets had picked up and published the quote, even though the administrators of Wikipedia recognized and removed the bogus post. The administrators removed it quickly, “but not quickly enough to keep some journalists from cutting and pasting it first.”

It can safely be assumed these journalists exhibited nearly all of the information behaviors that most teachers and librarians find disconcerting:

• searching in Wikipedia or Google
power browsing quickly through websites for ideas and quotes
• cutting-and-pasting information from the Web into one’s own writing without providing proper attribution for it
• viewing information as free, accurate, and trustworthy
• treating online information as equal to print information

Of course, it is impossible to actually prove the journalists used these behaviors without direct observation of their research processes, but it seems likely. In the end, their Googlepedia research hurt not only their writing, but also their credibility as journalists.

Edward, Susan, and Googlepedia
Edward and Susan are two students comfortable in the world of Googlepedia, beginning and, in most cases, ending their research with a search engine (both students claimed to use Google over any other search engine) or online encyclopedia (both were only aware of Wikipedia). Interestingly, Edward and Susan often move between Google and Wikipedia in the process of conducting their research, switching back and forth between the two sources of information when they believe the need exists.

For an upcoming research writing project on the topic of outsourcing American jobs, Susan chooses to begin her preliminary research with Google while Edward chooses to start with Wikipedia. The students engage in preliminary research, research at the beginning of the research writing process; yet, they work with a limited amount of information about the assignment, a situation still common in many college courses. The students know they have to write an argumentative essay of several pages and use at least five sources of information, sources they are required to find on their own. The students know the research-based essay is a major assignment for a college course, and they begin their searches in Googlepedia despite the sources available to them through the university library.

Edward
Edward begins his research in Wikipedia, spending less than one minute to find and skim the summary paragraph on the main page for “outsourcing.” After reading the summary paragraph to, in Edward’s words, “make sure I had a good understanding of the topic,” and scanning the rest of the main page (interestingly) from bottom to top, Edward focuses his reading on the page section titled “criticism.”

Edward explains his focus,

Since I am writing an argumentative paper, I first skimmed the whole page for ideas that stood out. I then looked at the references for a clearly opinionated essay to see what other people are talking about and to compare my ideas [on the subject] to theirs,’ preferably if they have an opposing view.

This search for public opinion leads Edward to examine polls as well as skim related web pages linked to the Wikipedia page on outsourcing, and Edward quickly settles on the “reasons for outsourcing” in the criticism section of the Wikipedia page. Edward explains, “I am examining the pros of outsourcing as I am against it, and it seems that companies do not want to take responsibility for [outsourcing].”

It is at this point, barely fifteen minutes into his research, that Edward returns to the top of the Wikipedia main page on outsourcing to re-read the opening summary on the topic, as I stop him to discuss the thesis he is developing on corporate responsibility for the outsourcing problem. We discuss what I make of Edward’s early research; Edward relies on Wikipedia for a broad overview, to verify his understanding on a subject.

Pre-search into Research
Analysis: Some teachers and librarians might argue against it, but I believe starting a search for
information in Wikipedia has its benefits. It is difficult enough to write a college-level argumentative essay on a topic you know well. For a topic you know little about, you need to first learn more about it. Getting a basic understanding of the topic or issue through an encyclopedia, even an online one, has been a recommended practice for decades. Some librarians and teachers question the reliability of online encyclopedias like Wikipedia, but this is not the point of the instruction I am offering to you. I want you to keep going, to not stop your search after consulting Wikipedia. To use it as a starting point, not a final destination.

Recommendation: Deepen your understanding. Formulate a working thesis. Reread the pages as Edward has done here. This is recursive preliminary research, a process that will strengthen your research and your writing. After our brief discussion to flush out his process in conducting research for an argumentative essay, I ask Edward to continue his research. Though he seems to identify a research focus, corporate responsibility, and working thesis—that American corporations should be held responsible for jobs they ship overseas—Edward still chooses to stay on the outsourcing page in Wikipedia to search for additional information.

He then searches the Wikipedia page for what he believes are links to expert opinions along with more specific sources that interest him and, in his approach to argumentative writing, contradict his opinion on the subject. Unlike Susan who later chooses to side with the majority opinion, Edward wants to turn his essay into a debate, regardless of where his ideas fall on the spectrum of public opinion.

Research and Critical/Creative Thinking
Analysis: Edward’s reliance on Wikipedia at this point is still not a concern. He is starting to link out to other resources, just as you should do. I, however, suggest that you spend more time at this point in your research to build your knowledge foundation. Your position on the issue should become clearer with the more you read, the more you talk to teachers and peers, and the more you explore the library and the open Web.

Recommendation: Keep exploring and branching out. Don’t focus your research at this point. Let your research help focus your thinking. Staying in Wikipedia leads Edward to texts such as “Outsourcing Bogeyman” and “Outsourcing Job Killer.” Edward explains that his choices are largely based on the titles of the texts (clearly evident from these examples), not the authors, their credentials, the websites or sources that contain the texts, the URLs, or perhaps their domain names (e.g. .org, .edu, .net, .com)—characteristics of Web-based sources that most academic researchers consider. Even though Edward acknowledges that the source of the “Bogeyman” text is the journal Business Week, for example, he admits selecting the text based on the title alone, claiming “I don’t read [Business Week], so I can’t judge the source’s quality.”

Research and Credibility
Analysis: Understanding the credentials of the author or source is particularly important in conducting sound academic research and especially during the age of the open Web. We live in a world where most anyone with an Internet connection can post ideas and information to the Web. Therefore, it is always a good idea to understand and verify the sources of the information you use in your writing. Would you want to use, even unintentionally, incorrect information for a report you were writing at your job? Of course not. Understanding the credibility of a source is a habit of mind that should be practiced in your first year composition course and has value way beyond it.

Recommendation: Take a few minutes to establish the credibility of your sources. Knowing who said or wrote it, what credentials he or she has, what respect the publication, website, or source has where you found the ideas and information, and discussing these concepts with your peers, librarian, and writing teacher should dramatically improve the essays and reports that result from your research.
What Edward trusts are the ideas contained in the text, believing the writer uses trustworthy information, thereby deferring source evaluation to the author of the text. For example, Edward comments of the “Job Killer” text, “After reading the first three paragraphs, I knew I was going to use this source.” Edward adds that the convincing factor is the author’s apparent reliance on two studies conducted at Duke University, each attempting to validate a different side of the outsourcing debate and the roles of corporations in it. From Edward’s statement, it is clear he needs help to better understand the criteria most scholars use for evaluating and selecting Web-based sources:

- Check the purpose of the website (the extension “.edu,” “.org,” “.gov,” “.com” can often indicate the orientation or purpose of the site).
- Locate and consider the author’s credentials to establish credibility.
- Look for recent updates to establish currency or relevancy.
- Examine the visual elements of the site such as links to establish relationships with other sources of information. (Clines and Cobb 2)

**A Text’s Credibility Is Your Credibility**

*Analysis:* Viewed one way, Edward is trying to establish the credibility of his source. However, he doesn’t dig deep enough or perhaps is too easily convinced. What if the studies at Duke, for instance, were conducted by undergraduate students and not faculty members? Would that influence the quality of the research projects and their findings?

*Recommendation:* Know as much as you can about your source and do your best to present his or her credentials in your writing. As I tell my own students, give “props” to your sources when and where you can in the text of your essays and reports that incorporate source material. Lead-ins such as “Joe Smith, Professor of Art at Syracuse University, writes that . . .” are especially helpful in giving props. Ask your teacher for more strategies to acknowledge your sources.

Edward’s next step in his research process reveals more understanding than you might think. Interested in the Duke University studies cited in the “Job Killer” text, Edward moves from Wikipedia to Google in an attempt to find, in his words, “the original source and all its facts.” This research move is not for the reason that I would have searched for the original text (I would be looking to verify the studies and validate their findings); still, Edward indicates that he always searches for and uses the original texts, what many teachers would agree is a wise decision. Finding the original studies in his initial Google query, Edward’s research move here also reminds us of a new research reality: many original sources previously, and often only, available through campus libraries are now available through search engines like Google and Google Scholar.

After only thirty minutes into his preliminary research, it’s the appropriate time for Edward to move his Googlepedia-based approach significantly into the academic world, specifically to the online library. Before working with Edward to bring his Googlepedia-based research process together with a more traditional academic one, I ask Edward about library-based sources, particularly online databases. His response is the following: “I am more familiar with the Internet, so there is no reason [to use the library databases]. It is not that the library and databases are a hassle or the library is an uncomfortable space, but I can get this research done in bed.” Edward’s response is interesting here as it conflicts with the many reports that students often find the college library to be an intimidating place. Edward doesn’t find the library to be overwhelming or intimidating; he finds the information in it unnecessary given the amount of information available via Googlepedia.

But what if researching in the online library could be a more reliable and more efficient way to do research?
Chapter Ten: Research Writing

Susan
Susan begins her research where most students do, on Google. Interestingly, Susan does not start with the general topic of outsourcing, opting instead to let the search engine recommend related search terms. As Susan types in the term “outsourcing,” Google as a search engine builds on character recognition software providing several “suggestions” or related search terms, terms that Susan expects to be provided for her, and one—“outsourcing pros and cons”—quickly catches her attention. Commenting on this choice instead of searching by the general concept of outsourcing, Susan notes, “I would have to sort through too much stuff [on Google] before deciding what to do.”

She selects “pros and cons” from the many related and limiting search terms suggested to her; Susan states, “I want both sides of the story because I don’t know much about it.” Susan next moves into examining the top ten returns provided on the first page of her Google search for outsourcing pros and cons. Doing what is now common practice for most Web users, Susan immediately selects the link for the first item returned in the query. I believe most search engine users are wired this way, even though they are likely familiar with the emphasis given to commercial sites on Google and other search engines. Quickly unsatisfied with this source, Susan jumps around on the first page of returns, stopping on the first visual she encounters on a linked page: a table illustrating pros and cons.

![Google Search Results](image)

Fig. 1. Outsourcing suggestions from Google.

Asked why she likes the visual, Susan responds that she is trying to find out how many arguments exist for and against outsourcing. On this page, Susan notes the author provides seven pros and four cons for outsourcing. This finding leads Susan to believe that more pros likely exist and that her essay should be in support of outsourcing.
“Visual” Research Analysis: There are at least two points worthy of your attention here. First, Susan’s information behavior shows how attracted we all are to visuals (maps, charts, tables, diagrams, photos, images, etc.), particularly when they appear on a printed page or screen. Second, she fails to acknowledge a basic fact of research—that visual information of most any kind can be misleading. In the above example, Susan quickly deduces that more (7 pros vs. 4 cons) means more important or more convincing. Couldn’t it be possible that all or even any one of the cons is more significant than all of the pros taken together?

Recommendation: Consider using visuals as both researching and writing aids. However, analyze them as closely as you would a printed source. Also, examine the data for more than just the numbers. It might be a truism that numbers don’t lie, but it is up to you, as a writer, to explain what the numbers really mean.

Like Edward, Susan is not (initially) concerned about the credibility of the text (author’s credentials, source, sponsoring/hosting website, URL or domain, etc.); she appears only concerned with the information itself. When prodded, Susan mentions the text appears to be some form of press release, the URL seems legitimate, and the site appears credible. She fails to mention that the author’s information is not included on the text, but Susan quickly dismisses this: “The lack of author doesn’t bother me. It would only be a name anyway.” Susan adds that her goal is to get the research done “the easiest and fastest way I can.” These attitudes—there is so much information available in the Googlepedia world that the information stands on its own and the research process itself doesn’t need to take much time—appear to be a common misconception among students today, and the behaviors that result from them could possibly lead to flimsy arguments based on the multiplicity rather than the quality of information.

Research and CRAAP Analysis: I have referenced criteria for evaluating sources throughout this chapter. If you do not fully understand them, you should consult the resources below and talk with your teacher or a reference librarian.

Recommendation: Learn to put your sources to the CRAAP test (easy to remember, huh?):

- “Currency: The timeliness of the information.”
- “Relevance: The importance of the information for your needs.”
- “Authority: The source of the information.”
- “Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the informational content.”
- “Purpose: The reason the information exists.” (Meriam Library)

For specific questions to pose of your sources to evaluate each of these, visit the website for the developers of the CRAAP test at http://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/evalsites.html.

Another useful site is http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/research/tips/webeval/index.dot.

Unlike Edward, Susan is not concerned with engaging in a debate on the subject of outsourcing, regardless of her opinions on it. Susan views the assignment as I think many students would, another “get it done” research paper. Further, she believes the majority opinion, at least as it is discussed in the initial source she locates, should be her opinion in her essay. Susan explains, “I tend to take the side that I think I can make the stronger argument for . . . If it was a personal issue or an issue I was really interested in, like abortion, I wouldn’t do this. This topic doesn’t affect me though.”

Good Search Terms=Good Research Options Analysis: Susan needs to understand why being overly reliant on sources uncovered early on in the research process is a problem (particularly here where the
search term pros comes before the search term cons likely leading to the results Susan has received). I hope you also share my concerns with the working thesis she appears to be constructing, though I recognize that many students approach research papers just this way.

**Recommendation:** Improve your research by attempting at least a handful of Web searches using different key terms. If necessary, work with the search phrases and terms provided by the search engine. Also, place your search terms inside quotes on occasion to help vary and focus your search returns. Looking at the subject from different perspectives should help you gain a better sense of the topic and should lead you to a thesis and the development of an essay that is more convincing to your readers.

To her credit, Susan understands the need to validate the information provided by her first source, and she examines the original ten search returns for another text that might indicate the number of advantages and disadvantages to outsourcing. This search behavior of relying on the first page of returns provided by a search engine query has been widely documented, if nowhere else but in the experience of nearly every computer user. When was the last time you went to say the fourth or fifth page of returns on Google? Such a research move contradicts the power browsing nature of most of today’s computer users, teachers and students alike. As Susan (perhaps, to some degree, rightly) explains, “The farther away from the first page, the less topic appropriate the articles become.” I would contend this might be true of the thirty-seventh page of returns; yet, please understand that you should explore beyond the first page of returns when seeking out information via a search engine. Google your own name (last name first as well) some day to see just how curiously search returns are prioritized.

Next, Susan identifies a subsequent source, www.outsource2india.com. This website provides the confirmation that Susan is looking for, noting sixteen pros and only twelve cons for outsourcing. At this point, Susan confirms her process for gathering source material for argumentative essays: she looks for two to three web-based articles that share similar views, particularly views that provide her with arguments, counterarguments, and rebuttals. Once she has an adequate list of points and has determined which side of a debate can be more effectively supported, Susan refines her Google search to focus only on that side of the debate.

**Don’t Rush to Argument Analysis:** There are two concerns with Susan’s research at this point: (1) her rush to research and (2) her rush to judgment.

**Recommendation:** In addition to reworking your research process with the help of the ideas presented in this chapter, consider building your understanding of writing academic arguments. In addition to your writing teacher and composition textbook, two sources to consult are http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/what.shtml#argument and http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/argument.html#2.

Similar to the way she began searching for information only fifteen minutes earlier, Susan uses Google’s “suggestions” to help her identify additional sources that support the side of the debate she has chosen to argue. As she types in “pros outsourcing,” Susan identifies and selects “pro outsourcing statistics” from the recommended list of searches provided by Google in a drop-down menu. Like Edward, Susan is interested in validating the points she wants to use in her essay with research studies and scientific findings. Susan comments, “Statistics. Data. Science. They all make an argument stronger and not just opinion.”

Susan again relies on the first page of search results and focuses on title and URL to make her selections. As she finds information, she copies and pastes it along with the URL to a Word document, noting once
she has her five sources with a blend of ideas and statistics together in a Word file that she will stop her research and start her writing.

*Track Your Research/Give Props Analysis:* Susan demonstrates here the common information behavior of cutting-and-pasting text or visuals from Web pages. She also demonstrates some understanding of the value of quantitative research and scientific proof. She also appears to use Word to create a working bibliography. These behaviors are far from perfect, but they can be of some help to you.

*Recommendation:* Learn to use an annotated bibliography. This type of research document will help you with both remembering and citing your sources. For more information on building an annotated bibliography, visit [http://www.ehow.com/how_4806881_construct-annotated-bibliography.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4806881_construct-annotated-bibliography.html). There are also many software and online applications such as Zotero and RefWorks that can help you collect and cite your sources.

Next, make sure to do more than just cut-and-paste the ideas of others and the information you find on the Web into an essay or report of yours. Learn to use paraphrases and summaries in addition to word-for-word passages and quotes. The Purdue OWL, a great resource for all things research and writing, explains options for incorporating research into your own writing: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/). Finally, realize the value and limitations of statistics/numerical data and scientific findings. This type of research can be quite convincing as support for an argument, but it takes your explanations of the numbers and findings to make it so. You need to explain how the ideas of others relate to your thesis (and don’t forget to give props).

*Edward and Susan: Remix*

As you know by now, I certainly have concerns with Susan’s and Edward’s research process; however, I recognize that the process used by each of these students is not uncommon for many student researchers. More importantly, each process includes strategies which could be easily reworked in the digital library.

Yes, I am concerned that Susan doesn’t recognize that you can find two or three sources on the Web that agree on just about anything, no matter how crazy that thing might be. Yes, I am concerned that Susan opts out of forming an argument that she truly believes in. Yes, I am concerned that both Susan and Edward trust information so quickly and fail to see a need to question their sources. Despite my concerns, and perhaps your own, their Googlepedia-based research process can provide the terms they need to complete the research in more sound and productive ways, and the process can be easily replicated in an online library.

Based on their Googlepedia research to this point, I suggest to Edward that he construct his essay as a rebuttal argument and that he use the search terms “outsourcing” and “corporate responsibility” to explore sources available to him from the library. For Susan, I suggest that she too construct a rebuttal argument and that she use the search string “outsourcing statistics” to explore sources in the university’s virtual library. (For more information on writing rebuttal arguments, visit [http://www.engl.niu.edu/wac/rebuttal.html](http://www.engl.niu.edu/wac/rebuttal.html).)

Given the influence and value of using search engines like Google and online encyclopedias like Wikipedia in the research process, I recommend the following eight step research process to move from relying on instinctive information behaviors to acquiring solid research skills:

1. Use Wikipedia to get a sense of the topic and identify additional search terms.
2. Use Google to get a broader sense of the topic as well as verify information and test out search terms you found in Wikipedia.
3. Search Google again using quotation marks around your “search terms” to manage the number of results and identify more useful search terms.

4. Search Google Scholar (scholar.google.com) to apply the search terms in an environment of mostly academic and professional resources.

5. Do a limited search of “recent results or “since 2000” on Google Scholar to manage the number of results and identify the most current resources.

6. Search your college’s library research databases using your college library’s web portal: to apply the search terms in an environment of the most trusted academic and professional resources.

7. Focus your search within at least one general academic database such as Academic Search Premier, Proquest Complete, Lexis/Nexis Academic Universe, or CQ Researcher to apply the search terms in a trusted environment and manage the number of results.

8. Do a limited search by year and “full text” returns using the same general academic database(s) you used in step 7 to reduce the number of results and identify the most current resources.

I admit that this process will certainly seem like a lot of work to you, but I want to emphasize that Edward and Susan completed this sequence in less than thirty minutes. After doing so, Edward even commented, “If someone had shown me this in high school, I wouldn’t be going to Wikipedia and Google like I do.” Susan added that even with her search terms, Google still presented challenges in terms of the number of potential sources: “Google had thousands of hits while Galileo might have less than 100.” For students who value speed and ease, this remixed process resonated with them, and I believe it will with you.

More importantly, the remixed process addresses some of the concerns that could have hindered the research and writing of both students if they only worked with Googlepedia. By remixing and sequencing research this way, they worked with issues of currency, credibility, accuracy and bias among others, criteria vital to conducting sound research. This is not to say that Susan and Edward failed to understand or could not apply these concepts, particularly given that our research time was limited to sixty minutes total (thirty minutes researching alone plus thirty minutes for cooperative research). However, any student who makes this research move will find a more viable and valuable research path.

As Edward said, “[The library sources] produced a narrowed search pattern and created less results based on a more reliable pool from which to pull the information.” The research approach I am suggesting can be quick and easy, and it can also be more connected to the values of researchers and the skills of adept information users. Don’t just take my word for it though.

Consider Susan’s closing comment from the questionnaire she completed after our research session:

I really hadn’t ever thought of using library sources in looking up information because I’ve always used open Web resources. I now know the benefits of using library sources and how they can simplify my search. I found being able to categorize articles by date and relevancy very helpful . . . I am inclined to change the way I research papers from using the open Web to using library sources because they are more valid and it’s as easy to use as Google.

In just a single one-hour-long preliminary research session, Susan and Edward were able to utilize the research behaviors they were comfortable with, were encouraged to continue starting their research in Googlepedia, and learned to remix their behaviors inside the online library. Working on your own or with a teacher or librarian to make the research move from Googlepedia to the library, as I suggest in this chapter, should help to improve the quality of your research and your writing based upon it.
Conclusion
Susan Blum notes that “if we want to teach students to comply with academic norms of [research], it may be helpful to contrast their ordinary textual practices—rich, varied, intersecting, constant, ephemeral, speedy—with the slower and more careful practices required in the academy” (16). Working through the research process as we have in this chapter, we are moving away from the research process to a combination of our process, as librarians and teachers, with your process—a process that blends technological comfort and savvy with academic standards and rigor. I believe this combination makes for an intellectual, real, and honest approach for researching in the digital age. Blum comments, “By the time we punish students, we have failed. So let’s talk. These text-savvy students may surprise us” (16). Susan and Edward have done just that for me, and I hope you have learned a little from them, too.

Discussion
1. In the discussion of Edward’s preliminary research, several characteristics of a Web-based source that most academic researchers consider are mentioned including the title of the webtext, the author, his or her credentials, the website or source that contains the webtext, the URL, and the domain name (e.g. .org, .edu, .net, .com). What characteristic or characteristics do you examine if any? Which ones do you believe are the most important? Why?

2. Susan mentions that she “would have to sift through too much stuff” when searching for information on Google. Do you agree that Google provides too much information to examine? Why or why not? In addition to Susan’s approach of using a search term suggested by Google, what strategies do you have for limiting the information returned to you when seeking information using a search engine?

3. Type your name or your favorite subject into a search engine, such as Google or Yahoo. What do you notice about the search returns? How do the returns appear to be prioritized? From the results you see, consider how the rankings of returns could help and hurt your research for an academic paper if you relied only on a search engine for your information. Discuss your response with a group of classmates.

4. Try working with Susan’s search terms in reverse—the “cons” and “pros” of outsourcing. Use a search engine like Google or Yahoo to compare the results when you switch the order of search terms. How are the results for the “cons and pros of outsourcing” similar to and different from the results for the search for the “pros and cons of outsourcing”? Discuss your findings with a group of classmates.

Notes
1. Wikis are websites that allow a user to add new web pages or edit any page and have the changes he or she makes integrated into that page.

2. See pages 209–211 in Purdy for more discussion on the value of Wikipedia in preliminary research.

3. See pages 217–218 in Purdy for an example of a student engaging in written conversation with her sources rather than just “parroting” them.

Works Cited
Chapter Ten: Research Writing


Appendices

Appendix One: MLA and APA Formats

Given the nature of updates with citation formats, we have opted to introduce MLA and APA formats in this guide rather than providing comprehensive citation examples that may be outdated in a few months. For more comprehensive information on MLA and APA formats, please refer to the websites www.mla.org and www.apa.org.

Introduction
by Kate Geiselman, Sinclair Community College

Any time you are writing for an audience, it is important to observe document formatting conventions, as well as rules for documenting sources. Learning these rules can be difficult, and students may sometimes wonder why it matters exactly how they lay out their manuscripts or how they cite their sources, as long as they do so. It may help to think of style guides as sets of manners that are specific to a particular culture. For example, many American kids are raised to believe that it’s rude to put their elbows on the table while they are eating. There is no particular reason for this; in fact, there are many cultures where this rule doesn’t even exist. But observing a set of manners and customs shows respect for the culture(s) in which we live. When we all agree on a certain set of table manners, it just makes the world a little less chaotic. Think of a style guide that way: when all students in an academic discipline adhere to the same rules, teachers, peers and other readers will know what to expect and where to find the information they need. That’s why we have style guides.

In academic writing, the two most commonly-used style guides are MLA (Modern Language Association) and APA (American Psychological Association). MLA is used primarily in the arts and humanities, and APA is used in the sciences. When in doubt, ask your instructor which style guide you should use.

Using style guides correctly is more than just a matter of good manners, though. Citing credible sources, and doing so clearly and correctly, shows you to be a credible writer with good command over your material. Most importantly, correctly citing sources is a matter of ethics: it gives credit to those whose work informs your writing, and protects you from allegations of plagiarism.

There are three key elements of academic style guides:

**Manuscript form:** dictates how to lay out your paper (font size and style, line spacing, margins, etc.), how to number your pages, and what kind of heading is needed, etc.

**In-text citations:** indicate when you have used a source in the body of your paper, and point the reader to the specific source’s publication information.

**List of sources:** includes complete publication information for each source you cited in the body of your paper. In MLA format this is called a Works Cited list; in APA it is called a “Reference Page.”
MLA Updates for 8th Edition
by Jim Paquette, Writing Commons

Yes, it’s that time again: MLA has updated the format to account for new advances in technology, namely how to cite online sources.

The basics remain the same—cite where the information came from inside some parenthesis and then include the full bibliographic citation on your Works Cited Page. So, nothing to fret over there.

So what is different? Mostly the Works Cited Page.

The publication format no longer matters! You won’t have to hunt for the formatting guidelines by searching “How do I cite an article I found in an online newspaper?” or “How do I cite this song I just listened to on Pandora?” or worry about the difference between a magazine, newspaper, and journal article. Instead, you will simply have to include the core information in a specific order.

What does this order look like?

Author. Title of source. Title of container, other contributors, version, number, publisher, publication date, location.

1. Author. Still the author. We really care about who said it. Some things don’t change at all.
2. Title of source. Yes, you still use the same guidelines—quotations around shorter works and italics for longer ones.
3. Title of container. What’s a container, you ask? Wherever you found the source is the source’s container: The New York Times, Wikipedia, CNBC.
4. Other contributors. Is there an editor? A translator? Credit them now.
I know it may seem like MLA is a lot to remember, but this new edition simplifies the citing process for you. The important thing has always been the ease with which readers can find the source you are referencing. Share this information in this order, and readers will thank you for the information they needed to see the original.

**Quoting in MLA**
by Angela Eward-Mangione, *Writing Commons*

Quotations are effective in academic writing when used carefully and selectively. Although misquoting or quoting too much can confuse or overwhelm your audience, quoting relevant and unique words, phrases, sentences, lines, or passages can help you achieve your purpose.

The Modern Language Association (MLA) provides guidelines/rules for quoting:

- Prose.
- Poetry.
- Drama.
- Quotes within quotes.

This article discusses rules for quoting both prose and quotes within quotes. It also addresses a few special issues, like what to do if there is a spelling error in a quote, as well as how to handle punctuation. Consult the [MLA Handbook](https://www.mla.org) to review additional topics and learn more.

**Accuracy**

Writers must always accurately quote the source. If you decide to quote a source in order to support your thesis statement, reproduce the source word for word. Unless you use brackets or parentheses (see below), changes to the source’s words, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation cannot be made. Additionally, introducing the quote with a signal phrase helps you smoothly incorporate the quotation (“Quotations” 75).

**Quoting Prose**

The rules for quoting prose vary according to how much you quote. Adhere to the following guidelines.
Special Issues: Omissions in Passages

According to the *MLA Handbook*, if you must omit a word, phrase, or sentence from a quoted passage, mark the omission with *ellipsis points* (…), or three spaced periods (80-81).

If you omit an entire sentence, use ellipses points, and retain rules for end punctuation (always place a period at the end of a declarative sentence). In other words, use four periods, with no space before the first or after the last. Follow this rule for a quotation with an ellipses at the end as well, except when a parenthetical citation follows the ellipses.

**Original**: “I know I have said this before and will say it again, but it bears repeating: if it’s not in the text, it doesn’t exist. We can only read what is present in a novel, play, or film. If something informed the author’s creation of the text but the evidence is not present in the text, that’s a matter for scholars concerned with motives, not with readers wrestling with meaning” (80).

**Quote with Omission**: In *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, Thomas Foster emphasizes the importance of focusing on textual evidence: “I know I have said this before and will say it again, but it bears repeating: if it’s not in the text, it doesn’t exist. . . . If something informed the author’s creation of the text but the evidence is not

**Explanation**: Foster’s main point is that readers of literature should concern themselves with the evidence in the text. Pointing out that readers can only read what is actually present in a particular text is illustrative, but this assertion can be omitted without changing the meaning of the passage.

**A Word of Caution**: Never present a quote in a way that could cause a reader to misunderstand the original quote (80-81).
Appendices

Additional Special Issues

Other Alterations of Quotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Original Quote</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
<th>Example of Alteration</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling or grammatical error</td>
<td>Jane admitted, “Nothing can diminish my interest in Shakespear.”</td>
<td>(sic)</td>
<td>Jane admitted, “Nothing can diminish my interest in Shakespear” (sic).</td>
<td>The final “e” in Shakespeare is missing, so the writer has included (sic) after the quote to inform the audience that the spelling error is present in the original source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary Comment or Explanation</td>
<td>Although some aspects of the play are puzzling, there is no doubt that Hamlet wishes to avenge his father’s murder. He feels morally bound to do so.</td>
<td>brackets</td>
<td>Although some aspects of the play are puzzling, there is no doubt that Hamlet wishes to avenge his father’s murder. He [Hamlet] feels morally bound to do so.</td>
<td>Without clarifying the antecedent of the subject of the second sentence (he/Hamlet), readers may assume the subject is the closest masculine noun (Hamlet’s father).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There may be some occasions when you need to alter a quote in order to prevent the audience from becoming confused.

Punctuation

1. When you formally introduce a quote, such as with a complete sentence, precede it with a colon (87).

   In the book Subliminal, Leonard Mlodinow explains the role that technology has played in furthering our understanding of the unconscious: “The current revolution in thinking about the unconscious came about because, with modern instruments, we can watch as different structures and substructures in the brain generate feelings and emotions. We can measure the electrical output of individual neurons” (15).

2. When you informally introduce a quote, such as when you make the quote an integral part of the sentence structure, precede it with a comma or no punctuation (87).

   As Harry Frankfurt cautions, “The fact that a person could not have avoided doing something is a sufficient condition of his having done it. But, as some of my examples show, this fact may play no role whatever in the explanation of why he did it” (8).

3. Additionally, the MLA Handbook advises to “use double quotation marks around quotations incorporated into the text and single quotation marks around quotations within those quotations” (87).

   To further explain the principle of diminishing marginal utility of income, Watts quotes Abba Lerner, who argues that the principle “can be derived from the assumption that consumers spend their income in a way that maximizes the satisfaction they can derive from the good obtained” (Lerner qtd. in Watts 141).
4. If a quote ends with a question or an exclamation point, the original punctuation is retained.

“No!” she emphatically responded, for the third time.

5. Required commas and periods follow the citations, except when the quote is a block quote (88). All other punctuation marks—semicolons, colons, question marks, and exclamation points—go outside a closing quotation mark, except when they are part of the quoted material (89).

Do you agree with Watts’s view regarding the essential difference between persons and other creatures: that it is to be found in the “structure of a person’s will” (12)?

The question mark is not part of the quoted material, so it should be placed outside the closing quotation mark.

Quoting prose in MLA format can seem like a daunting task. Fortunately, the MLA has offered clear guidelines for doing so. Consult the MLA Handbook to learn more about quoting in MLA.

Works Cited


How might you format your in-text citations so that they’re more compliant with MLA guidelines?

You already know why MLA formatting guidelines are an important part of an academic paper, but let’s face it—who can remember all those rules about when and where certain citation information is requisite and when and where particular punctuation is appropriate? Thankfully, memorizing all of MLA’s formatting guidelines is not necessary! MLA style guides can be found easily online or in texts like *The MLA Handbook*, and writers can refer to these resources when they are unclear about a particular MLA style guideline.

Nonetheless, as you create multiple drafts of your composition papers, there are some MLA conventions that you will need to call on time and time again. In particular, as you integrate source material masterfully into your work, you will be required to call on proper in-text citation guidelines repeatedly. It is therefore important that you take the time to memorize the MLA guidelines for in-text citations.

Because the use of in-text citations will be so integral to your writing processes, being able to instantly craft correct citations and identify incorrect citations will save you time during writing and will help you avoid having unnecessary points taken off for citation errors.

Here is the standard correct in-text citation style according to MLA guidelines:

“Quotation” (Author’s Last Name Page Number).

Take a moment to carefully consider the placement of the parts and punctuation of this in-text citation. Note that there is no punctuation indicating the end of a sentence inside of the quotation marks—closing punctuation should instead follow the parentheses. There is also no punctuation between the author’s last name and the page number inside of the parentheses. The misplacement of these simple punctuation marks is one of the most common errors students make when crafting in-text citations.

So, let’s say we have the following quote, which comes from page 100 of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*: "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it." [1]

The following examples show incorrect MLA formatting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect MLA formatting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it.&quot; (Gaskell 100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Incorrect because the period falls within the quotation marks</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it&quot; (Gaskell, 100).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Incorrect because of the comma separating the author’s last name and the page number</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it&quot; (Elizabeth Gaskell 100).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Incorrect because the author’s full name is used instead of just her last name</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it&quot; (<em>North and South</em> 100).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Incorrect because the title of the work appears, rather than the author’s last name; the title should only be used if no author name is provided</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices

The following example shows correct MLA formatting:

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell 100).

However, there are exceptions to the above citation guideline. Consider the following format of an in-text citation, which is also formed correctly.

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (100).

Do you notice the difference between this citation format and the format of the first example? Unlike the first example, this citation does not list the author’s last name inside the parentheses. This is because the last name is included in quotation's introduction, which makes the identity of the author clear to the reader. Including the author’s last name again inside of the parenthesis would be thus redundant and is not required for MLA citation.

The same rule about inclusion of the author’s last name applies for paraphrased information, as well, as shown in the following example:

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that her protagonist does not speak of her home once she is in Milton (100).

In this paraphrase, the author’s last name precedes the paraphrased material, but as in the case of quotation integration, if the author’s last name is not described in the paraphrase then it is required inside of the parentheses before the page number.

Being more compliant with MLA in-text citation guidelines will become easier if you review these examples and the citation rules on which they rely.

Work Cited


Exercise: In-Text Citations (MLA)

by Jennifer Janechek, Writing Commons

Look at the sentences below, each of which contains an incorrectly formatted in-text citation. Specify the error made in each sentence; then, write a new sentence in which the in-text citation is correctly formatted.

1. The parlor metaphor of writing describes writing as entering into a conversation, as in arriving late and a parlor and talking to guests who have been there long before you have (7).

2. In “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love,” Jim Corder explains that “Everyone is an argument.” (1)

3. David Sedaris's Me Talk Pretty One Day takes place at a school in Paris (Sedaris 1).
4. The opening lines of the novel are “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins” (Nabokov, 1).

5. The opening lines of the novel are "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins" (Lolita 1).

**APA Format**

**Manuscript form:**
- Use a legible, 12pt. font (Times New Roman is recommended) throughout.
- Use 1-inch margins.
- Indent paragraphs 1/2 inch (use the tab key rather than the space bar).
- Double space throughout your document.
- Do not include an extra space after paragraphs.
- Use only one space after each period.
- Include a header with the page number in the top, right hand corner of each page and the title of your paper (or an abbreviated version of it) in all caps, in the left corner.
- If you use section headings, they should be centered above your text.

The first page:

Start with a title page.

The header on your title page should include the words “Running head” before the all-caps, condensed title you use as the header in the rest of your paper, with the page number 1 in the upper, right-hand corner.

Type your full title in upper and lower case letters, centered in the top half of the page. (No bold, italics, or other formatting.)

Beneath the title, center your full name on the next line.

The name of your institution (school) should be centered beneath your name.

All text on the title page should be uniformly double spaced.

**In-text citation**

In-text citations are used in the body of your paper to indicate when you have used a source. They contain just enough information to point your reader to the complete publication information on the works cited page. You might think of them as links to your reference page.

When writing from research, you must decide what needs to be cited and what doesn’t. If you cite too often, your paper will look like you’ve just cut and pasted information from sources without including any insights of your own. If you cite too little, you may look uninformed, or worse, you could be accused of plagiarism.

You should always cite direct (verbatim) quotes, statistics and dollar amounts, and very specific facts. You don’t need to cite common knowledge. Sometimes, it’s hard to know what is common knowledge and what isn’t, especially about a topic you may not know that much about before conducting your research. The best rule of thumb is this: when in doubt, cite your source. It is better to cite too often and risk cluttering up your paper than it is to omit citations and inadvertently plagiarize. As you revise, it is much easier to delete an extra citation than add one you’ve forgotten.

In APA format, in-text citations should include the source’s author(s) and the year of publication. For direct quotes, you should also include a page number. Citations should appear directly after the quotation or information from your source, before the end punctuation, like this:
“A rider’s ability to withstand crash forces decreases with every birthday past the age of 21” (Krisberg, 2008, p. 20).

Separate author, year, and page with commas, and use “p.” to indicate page number (again, only if you’re using a direct quote). If you mention any part of citation in a signal phrase, include the rest of the information in the parenthetical citation, like this:

According to Krisberg (2008), “A rider’s ability to withstand crash forces decreases with every birthday past the age of 21,” (p. 20).

If there are two authors, list them both with an ampersand (&) between them: (Smith & Jones, 2011). If you mention the authors’ names in a signal phrase, use the word “and” to join them.

If there are three to five authors, list all of them (Smith, Jones, Brown, Green & White, 2011) the first time you cite the source. Thereafter, use the first author and the abbreviation et al.: (Smith et al., 2011).

Ampersands (&) should only be used in parenthetical in-text citations. An ampersand separates the last and second to last author of a cited work.

Research has demonstrated that “synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences” (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81). [1]

If there are more than five authors, list the first, followed by the abbreviation et al.: (Smith et al. 2011).

When citing a single work with many authors, you may need to substitute some of the authors’ names with the term et al. The term et al. should not be italicized in your paper, and a period should be placed after the word al as it is an abbreviated term. Follow these guidelines regarding the usage of et al.:

Use et al.:

The first time and every time you cite a source with at least six authors.


(Krauss et al., 2003, p. 91)

As Krauss et al. (2003) observed, ...

Every following instance (after the first instance) that you cite a source with at least three authors.

Citing the article “Modality and variability of synesthetic experience” by Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen would appear as follows: [1]

The first instance: (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81)

Every following instance: (Niccolai et al., 2012)

Avoid using et al.:

The first time you cite a source with up to five authors. Instead, list all of the authors at their first mentioning.

To cite a work that only has two authors. Instead, always list the two authors’ names in every citation (separated by either an ampersand or the word and, depending on the location).
In the event that no author is listed, cite the article by the first word or two in its title, like this:

“Oracle Eye Centre is aiming to redefine the sports prescription eyewear market with the launch of the first prescription visor,” (“Visor,” 2011).

It should be clear from the citation exactly which source on your works cited page the information came from, so be sure the information in your in-text citation corresponds to the first word (whether that is a name or a title) in the reference page entry.

Citing Paraphrases and Summaries (APA)

How should a paraphrased passage be cited?
When paraphrasing a passage, it is essential to express the ideas of the author in your own original words; however, the author’s message and meaning should always be preserved.

Charges of plagiarism can be avoided by including the proper citation of the work you are drawing from in your paraphrase. The APA requires a paraphrase to include the author’s last name and the work’s year of publication, but also suggests that the page number of the original text be included.

Let's look at an example of a cited paraphrase:
Original text: “A yellow flower is yellow because it reflects yellow light and absorbs other wavelengths. The red glass of a stained glass window is red because it transmits red light and absorbs other wavelengths. The process by which we perceive the colours of natural objects around us can therefore be described as a ‘subtractive’ process” (Pender, 1998, p. 14). [1]

Paraphrase: Pender explains that through subtractive process, humans see the color of objects based on the wavelengths of light that are absorbed by each object (Pender, 1998, p. 14). [1]

Note: The paraphrase maintains the ideas of the original passage while expressing the message in a new voice. The original author is also cited properly.

How should a summarized passage or work be cited?
When summarizing a passage or work from another writer, briefly outline in your own original words the major ideas presented in the source material. As brevity is the key feature of a summary, it is essential to express the main concepts of the original passage in as concise a manner as possible. Consider using a summary—rather than a short or block quotation—when preserving the original wording of the source material is not necessary for the reader to understand the ideas under discussion.

Let's look at an example of a cited summary:
Original text: “In their everyday life, people generally assume that they see the world around them the way it really is. When camping in Colorado, hikers believe they see the horizon as dotted with snow-covered mountaintops. When laying on the beach in North Carolina, sunbathers believe they see pelicans flying above the breaking waves. And these people would nearly always be right. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine not believing that the sights and sounds delivered to conscious awareness by perceptual systems are accurate renderings of the outside world. It would be difficult to know how to
act if one could not trust one’s senses to accurately report what the world outside is like” (Balcetis, 2010, p. 77). [2]

**Summary:** In *Social Psychology of Visual Perception*, Balcetis (2010) argues that because humans rely on the sensory information received from their body, they form preconceived beliefs about their surroundings that manifest as imaginary visual occurrences (p. 77). [2]

**Note:** The summary maintains the ideas of the original passage while concisely expressing its main concepts. The original author is also cited properly.

How should multiple sources be cited in a single parenthetical reference?

If multiple works need to be cited in the same set of parentheses, simply arrange them in alphabetical order by the author's last names, or the order in which they would be listed in the References page. Use a semicolon to separate each work from the next one.

**Let's look at an example of multiple authors being cited:**

In the past thirty years, Parkinson’s disease has been written about extensively by recognized figures in the field (Dorros, 1989; Duvoisin, 1991; Hauser & Zesiewicz, 1996). [3][4][5]

**Note:** This example includes the in-text citations of three works arranged in alphabetical order by authors' names, separated by semi-colons, and enclosed in parentheses.


**References** (list of sources)

Your References page should be the very last page of your paper, numbered consecutively with the text. If you have a 5-page paper, your references page will be page 6. Include an abbreviated title and page number in the header, just as you did in the rest of your paper.

On the first line of your references page, center the word **References** in plain text. Do not use bold, italics, underlining, or larger font size.

**Double space** throughout your works cited page. Do not put extra returns or extra white space between entries.

Begin each entry at the left margin, and indent the second and subsequent lines 1/2 inch from the left margin. This is called a **hanging indent**.

**Alphabetize your sources** by the first word in the entry, which is usually an author’s last name. If the source has no author, use the first word in the title other than a, an, or the. If there are two or more sources by the same author, list them in chronological order.

**Include only the sources you cited specifically the body of your paper.**

The purpose of a reference page is to provide complete publication information for each of your
sources, so if your readers want to read more about your topic, they can find that information on their own. It also ensures that the author or publication you cited gets full credit for having published the information you used in your paper. Citations generally include the following information:

- Author’s name(s): last name followed by first initial(s)
- Year (in parentheses)
- Title of article (in plain text, first word capitalized)
- Title of publication in which the article appeared (italicized)
- Volume and issue number (if applicable)
- Page(s)
- Url

The order and format of this information on your reference page depends on what kind of publication you consulted and though what medium. The APA guide lists many different kinds of sources in their style guide, so it’s important that you find and use a comprehensive APA style guide as you prepare your works cited list. The following is a list of basic format guidelines for the most commonly used types of sources. Pay strict attention to formatting, capitalization and punctuation as you prepare your reference page entries. If you don’t find your source type here, consult one of the resources listed at the end of this section.

An article in an online periodical:
An online article should include the author, date of publication, title of article, name of online publication, volume and issue (if available) and url.

**Generic example:**

**Specific example:**

A website:
How you cite a website in APA style depends on the kind of site it is and what information you are using. If you are referring to an entire website and not a particular article or post on it, you may just use an in-text signal phrase. However, if you want to point your reader to a specific page, use the following format:

**Generic example:**

**Specific example**

An article from an online database:
If you are using an article from an online database, such as CQ Researcher, Academic Search Complete, etc., include the article publication information (author, year, title, publication, volume, issue, etc.
Appendices

depending on the article), just as you would for a print source. APA does not require that you include all of the database information or indicate how you accessed the article, but your instructor might. If the article is easily found online, you may include the web address of the source publication (you may have to conduct a search for this). If it is not readily available without using the database, include the database url at the end of the citation.

Generic example:


Specific example:


A book:

When using a whole book, include the author, year, title and complete publication information, like this:

Generic example:

   Lastname, Initial(s). (year). Title of book. City of Publication: Publisher.

Specific example:


For more Information:

The information in this chapter covers most, but not all, of what you need to know in order to use APA format correctly. You should invest in an APA guide or use reliable online resources to supplement this text.

The APA website: http://www.apastyle.org contains online tutorials, FAQ sections, and links to purchase print and Kindle versions of the APA Publication Manual, the definitive guide for APA style.

The Purdue OWL: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

This comprehensive website contains just about everything you need to know about APA format.

Citation Machine: http://www.citationmachine.net/apa/

This site includes a citation generator where you can both create your citations and save them to export into your document. Note: This is a great tool, but is not a substitute for knowing how to cite your sources. Be sure to choose “manual entry” when entering source information in order to ensure no important information is left out of your citation.
Appendices

Appendix 2: Self-Assessment

Chapter Contributor: Sally Lahmon

Introduction
by Sally Lahmon, Sinclair Community College

What is Self-Assessment and Why Is It Important?
Self-assessment is the process taking an objective and honest look at your own work in order to evaluate what’s working well, what isn’t, and how you can improve as a writer. It is critical thinking in action. Being able to authentically assess yourself at a mid-point and at the conclusion of a composition course is essential for meaningful growth as a writer.

Being able to effectively assess your writing empowers you to become your own editor. Acquiring good habits as a writer demands taking the time to pause and look at your progress, considering strengths and successes as well as weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. If you don’t take the time to reflect, you cannot expect to see progress in your overall writing ability. Practicing this pause and critical reflection is important at mid-term and at the end-of-course because we need to make sure that our writing is meeting standards and doing what we intend for it to do.

Another advantage of a mid-term or end-of-course self-assessment is having an opportunity to provide feedback to your instructor about the overall quality of the course. Faculty need to know what is working and what needs to change in order better meet the needs of students and enhance their learning experience.

Mid-term Self-Assessment

Objectives
The objectives of a mid-term self-assessment are to:

- reflect on your progress as a writer, student, and individual this term.
- set goals for improvement while there is time to make them
- provide honest reflection on how your instructor can better help you learn
- put into practice what you are learning by producing an articulate, organized, polished piece of writing that demonstrates your progress.

About you:

- What have you learned so far in this course? (About yourself? About writing? Other?)
- What has been your biggest challenge so far?
- What do you think has been your best work this semester?
- What would you like to improve upon as we move forward?
- What are your goals for the remainder of the semester?
- What will you keep doing, or what will you change in order to accomplish these goals?
Appendices

About the course:

- What is the best feature of this course?
- What is helping you learn in this course?
- What is making learning difficult?
- What, if anything, would you change about this course to improve it?
- What can your professor do to help?

End-of-Term Self-Assessment

The end-of-term self-assessment offers you an opportunity to review and reflect upon the development of your writing skills and assess your improvement over the course of the term. Thoughtful reflection can provide students with a clearer understanding of their abilities and the potential for deeper learning.

Objectives

The objectives of an end-of-term self-assessment are to:

- reflect on your growth as a writer, student, and individual this term
- put into practice what you have learned by producing an articulate, organized, polished piece of writing that demonstrates this growth

Reading

Reflective Writing and the Revision Process: What Were You Thinking?

by Sandra L. Giles, Writing Spaces

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“Reflection” and “reflective writing” are umbrella terms that refer to any activity that asks you to think about your own thinking.* As composition scholars Kathleen Blake Yancey and Jane Bowman Smith explain, reflection records a “student’s process of thinking about what she or he is doing while in the process of that doing” (170). In a writing class, you may be asked to think about your writing processes in general or in relation to a particular essay, to think about your intentions regarding rhetorical elements such as audience and purpose, or to think about your choices regarding development strategies such as comparison-contrast, exemplification, or definition. You may be asked to describe your decisions regarding language features such as word choice, sentence rhythm, and so on. You may
be asked to evaluate or assess your piece of writing or your development as a writer in general. Your instructor may also ask you to perform these kinds of activities at various points in your process of working on a project, or at the end of the semester.

A Writer’s Experience

The first time I had to perform reflective writing myself was in the summer of 2002. And it did feel like a performance, at first. I was a doctoral student in Wendy Bishop’s Life Writing class at Florida State University, and it was the first class I had ever taken where we English majors actually practiced what we preached; which is to say, we actually put ourselves through the various elements of process writing. Bishop led us through invention exercises, revision exercises, language activities, and yes, reflective writings. For each essay, we had to write what she called a “process note” in which we explained our processes of working on the essay, as well as our thought processes in developing the ideas. We also discussed what we might want to do with (or to) the essay in the future, beyond the class. At the end of the semester, we composed a self-evaluative cover letter for our portfolio in which we discussed each of our essays from the semester and recorded our learning and insights about writing and about the genre of nonfiction.

My first process note for the class was a misguided attempt at good-student-gives-the-teacher-what-she-wants. Our assignment had been to attend an event in town and write about it. I had seen an email announcement about a medium visiting from England who would perform a “reading” at the Unity Church in town. So I went and took notes. And wrote two consecutive drafts. After peer workshop, a third. And then I had to write the process note, the likes of which I had never done before. It felt awkward, senseless. Worse than writing a scholarship application or some other mundane writing task. Like a waste of time, and like it wasn’t real writing at all. But it was required.

So, hoop-jumper that I was, I wrote the following: “This will eventually be part of a longer piece that will explore the Foundation for Spiritual Knowledge in Tallahassee, Florida, which is a group of local people in training to be mediums and spirituals healers. These two goals are intertwined.”

Yeah, right. Nice and fancy. Did I really intend to write a book-length study on those folks? I thought my professor would like the idea, though, so I put it in my note. Plus, my peer reviewers had asked for a longer, deeper piece. That statement would show I was being responsive to their feedback, even though I didn’t agree with it. The peer reviewers had also wanted me to put myself into the essay more, to do more with first-person point of view rather than just writing a reporter-style observation piece. I still disagree with them, but what I should have done in the original process note was go into why: my own search for spirituality and belief could not be handled in a brief essay. I wanted the piece to be about the medium herself, and mediumship in general, and the public’s reaction, and why a group of snarky teenagers thought they could be disruptive the whole time and come off as superior. I did a better job later—more honest and thoughtful and revealing about my intentions for the piece—in the self-evaluation for the portfolio. That’s because, as the semester progressed and I continued to have to write those darned process notes, I dropped the attitude. In a conference about my writing, Bishop responded to my note by asking questions focused entirely on helping me refine my intentions for the piece, and I realized my task wasn’t to please or try to dazzle her. I stopped worrying about how awkward the reflection was, stopped worrying about how to please the teacher, and started actually reflecting and thinking. New habits and ways of thinking formed. And unexpectedly, all the hard decisions about
revising for the next draft began to come more easily.

And something else clicked, too. Two and a half years previously, I had been teaching composition at a small two-year college. Composition scholar Peggy O'Neill taught a workshop for us English teachers on an assignment she called the “Letter to the Reader.” That was my introduction to reflective writing as a teacher, though I hadn’t done any of it myself at that point. I thought, “Okay, the composition scholars say we should get our students to do this.” So I did, but it did not work very well with my students at the time. Here’s why: I didn’t come to understand what it could do for a writer, or how it would do it, until I had been through it myself.

After Bishop’s class, I became a convert. I began studying reflection, officially called metacognition, and began developing ways of using it in writing classes of all kinds, from composition to creative nonfiction to fiction writing. It works. Reflection helps you to develop your intentions (purpose), figure out your relation to your audience, uncover possible problems with your individual writing processes, set goals for revision, make decisions about language and style, and the list goes on. In a nutshell, it helps you develop more insight into and control over composing and revising processes. And according to scholars such as Chris M. Anson, developing this control is a feature that distinguishes stronger from weaker writers and active from passive learners (69–73).

**My Letter to the Reader Assignment**

Over recent years, I’ve developed my own version of the Letter to the Reader, based on O’Neill’s workshop and Bishop’s class assignments. For each essay, during a revising workshop, my students first draft their letters to the reader and then later, polish them to be turned in with the final draft. Letters are composed based on the following instructions:

This will be a sort of cover letter for your essay. It should be on a separate sheet of paper, typed, stapled to the top of the final draft. Date the letter and address it to “Dear Reader.” Then do the following in nicely developed, fat paragraphs:

1. Tell the reader what you intend for the essay to do for its readers. Describe its purpose(s) and the effect(s) you want it to have on the readers. Say who you think the readers are.

   • Describe your process of working on the essay. How did you narrow the assigned topic? What kind of planning did you do? What steps did you go through, what changes did you make along the way, what decisions did you face, and how did you make the decisions?

   • How did comments from your peers, in peer workshop, help you? How did any class activities on style, editing, etc., help you?

2. Remember to sign the letter. After you’ve drafted it, think about whether your letter and essay match up. Does the essay really do what your letter promises? If not, then use the draft of your letter as a revising tool to make a few more adjustments to your essay. Then, when the essay is polished and ready to hand in, polish the letter as well and hand them in together.
Following is a sample letter that shows how the act of answering these prompts can help you uncover issues in your essays that need to be addressed in further revision. This letter is a mock-up based on problems I’ve seen over the years. We discuss it thoroughly in my writing classes:

Dear Reader,

This essay is about how I feel about the changes in the financial aid rules. I talk about how they say you’re not eligible even if your parents aren’t supporting you anymore. I also talk a little bit about the HOPE scholarship. But my real purpose is to show how the high cost of books makes it impossible to afford college if you can’t get on financial aid. My readers will be all college students. As a result, it should make students want to make a change. My main strategy in this essay is to describe how the rules have affected me personally.

I chose this topic because this whole situation has really bugged me. I did freewriting to get my feelings out on paper, but I don’t think that was effective because it seemed jumbled and didn’t flow. So I started over with an outline and went on from there. I’m still not sure how to start the introduction off because I want to hook the reader’s interest but I don’t know how to do that. I try to include many different arguments to appeal to different types of students to make the whole argument seem worthwhile on many levels.

I did not include comments from students because I want everyone to think for themselves and form their own opinion. That’s my main strategy. I don’t want the paper to be too long and bore the reader. I was told in peer workshop to include information from other students at other colleges with these same financial aid problems. But I didn’t do that because I don’t know anybody at another school. I didn’t want to include any false information.

Thanks,

(signature)

Notice how the letter shows us, as readers of the letter, some problems in the essay without actually having to read the essay. From this (imaginary) student’s point of view, the act of drafting this letter should show her the problems, too. In her first sentence, she announces her overall topic. Next she identifies a particular problem: the way “they” define whether an applicant is dependent on or independent of parents. So far, pretty good, except her use of the vague pronoun “they” makes me hope she hasn’t been that vague in the essay itself. Part of taking on a topic is learning enough about it to be specific. Specific is effective; vague is not. Her next comment about the HOPE scholarship makes me wonder if she’s narrowed her topic enough. When she said “financial aid,” I assumed federal, but HOPE is particular to the state of Georgia and has its own set of very particular rules, set by its own committee in Atlanta. Can she effectively cover both federal financial aid, such as the Pell Grant for example, as well as HOPE, in the same essay, when the rules governing them are different? Maybe. We’ll see. I wish the letter would address more specifically how she sorts that out in the essay. Then she says that her “real purpose” is to talk about the cost of books. Is that really her main purpose? Either she doesn’t have a good handle on what she wants her essay to do or she’s just throwing language around to sound good in the letter. Not good, either way.
Appendices

When she says she wants the readers to be all college students, she has identified her target audience, which is good. Then this: “As a result, it should make students want to make a change.” Now, doesn’t that sound more in line with a statement of purpose? Here the writer makes clear, for the first time, that she wants to write a persuasive piece on the topic. But then she says that her “main strategy” is to discuss only her own personal experience. That’s not a strong enough strategy, by itself, to be persuasive.

In the second section, where she discusses process, she seems to have gotten discouraged when she thought that freewriting hadn’t worked because it resulted in something “jumbled.” But she missed the point that freewriting works to generate ideas, which often won’t come out nicely organized. It’s completely fine, and normal, to use freewriting to generate ideas and then organize them with perhaps an outline as a second step. As a teacher, when I read comments like this in a letter, I write a note to the student explaining that “jumbled” is normal, perfectly fine, and nothing to worry about. I’m glad when I read that sort of comment so I can reassure the student. If not for the letter, I probably wouldn’t have known of her unfounded concern. It creates a teaching moment.

Our imaginary student then says, “I’m still not sure how to start the introduction off because I want to hook the reader’s interest but don’t know how to do that.” This statement shows that she’s thinking along the right lines—of capturing the reader’s interest. But she hasn’t quite figured out how to do that in this essay, probably because she doesn’t have a clear handle on her purpose. I’d advise her to address that problem and to better develop her overall strategy, and then she would be in a better position to make a plan for the introduction. Again, a teaching moment. When she concludes the second paragraph of the letter saying that she wants to include “many different arguments” for “different types of students,” it seems even more evident that she’s not clear on purpose or strategy; therefore, she’s just written a vague sentence she probably thought sounded good for the letter.

She begins her third paragraph with further proof of the problems. If her piece is to be persuasive, then she should not want readers to “think for themselves and form their own opinion.” She most certainly should have included comments from other students, as her peer responders advised. It wouldn’t be difficult to interview some fellow students at her own school. And as for finding out what students at other schools think about the issue, a quick search on the Internet would turn up newspaper or newsletter articles, as well as blogs and other relevant sources. Just because the official assignment may not have been to write a “research” paper doesn’t mean you can’t research. Some of your best material will come that way. And in this particular type of paper, your personal experience by itself, without support, will not likely persuade the reader. Now, I do appreciate when she says she doesn’t want to include any “false information.” A lot of students come to college with the idea that in English class, if you don’t know any in-formation to use, then you can just make it up so it sounds good. But that’s not ethical, and it’s not persuasive, and just a few minutes on the Internet will solve the problem.

This student, having drafted the above letter, should go back and analyze. Do the essay and letter match up? Does the essay do what the letter promises? And here, does the letter uncover lack of clear thinking about purpose and strategy? Yes, it does, so she should now go back and address these issues in her essay. Without having done this type of reflective exercise, she likely would have thought her essay was just fine, and she would have been unpleasantly surprised to get the grade back with my (the teacher’s) extensive commentary and critique. She never would have predicted what I would say because she wouldn’t have had a process for thinking through these issues—and might not have known how to begin
thinking this way. Drafting the letter should help her develop more insight into and control over the revising process so she can make more effective decisions as she revises.

**How It Works**
Intentions—a sense of audience and purpose and of what the writer wants the essay to do—are essential to a good piece of communicative writing. Anson makes the point that when an instructor asks a student to verbalize his or her intentions, it is much more likely that the student will have intentions (qtd. in Yancey and Smith 174). We saw this process in mid-struggle with our imaginary student’s work (above), and we’ll see it handled more effectively in real student examples (below). As many composition scholars explain, reflective and self-assessing activities help writers set goals for their writing. For instance, Rebecca Moore Howard states that “writers who can assess their own prose can successfully revise that prose” (36). This position is further illustrated by Xiaoguang Cheng and Margaret S. Steffenson, who conducted and then reported a study clearly demonstrating a direct positive effect of reflection on student revising processes in “Metadiscourse: A Technique for Improving Student Writing.” Yancey and Smith argue that self-assessment and reflection are essential to the learning process because they are a “method for assigning both responsibility and authority to a learner” (170). Students then become independent learners who can take what they learn about writing into the future beyond a particular class rather than remaining dependent on teachers or peer evaluators (171). Anson echoes this idea, saying that reflection helps a writer grow beyond simply succeeding in a particular writing project: “Once they begin thinking about writing productively, they stand a much better chance of developing expertise and working more success-fully in future writing situations” (73).

**Examples from Real Students**
Let’s see some examples from actual students now, although for the sake of space we’ll look at excerpts. The first few illustrate how reflective writing helps you develop your intentions. For an assignment to write a profile essay, Joshua Dawson described his purpose and audience: “This essay is about my grandmother and how she overcame the hardships of life. [. . .] The purpose of this essay is to show how a woman can be tough and can take anything life throws at her. I hope the essay reaches students who have a single parent and those who don’t know what a single parent goes through.” Joshua showed a clear idea of what he wanted his essay to do. For a cultural differences paper, Haley Moore wrote about her mission trip to Peru: “I tried to show how, in America, we have everything from clean water to freedom of religion and other parts of the world do not. Also, I would like for my essay to inspire people to give donations or help in any way they can for the countries that live in poverty.” Haley’s final draft actually did not address the issue of donations and focused instead on the importance of mission work, a good revision decision that kept the essay more focused.

In a Composition II class, Chelsie Mathis wrote an argumentative essay on a set of controversial photos published in newspapers in the 1970s which showed a woman falling to her death during a fire escape collapse. Chelsie said,

The main purpose of this essay is to argue whether the [newspaper] editors used correct judgment when deciding to publish such photos. The effect that I want my paper to have on the readers is to really make people think about others’ feelings and to make people realize that poor judgment can have a big effect. [. . .] I intend for my readers to possibly be high school students going into the field of journalism or photojournalism.

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Chelsie demonstrated clear thinking about purpose and about who she wanted her essay to influence. Another Comp II student, Daniel White, wrote, “This essay is a cognitive approach of how I feel YouTube is helping our society achieve its dreams and desires of becoming stars.” I had no idea what he meant by “cognitive approach,” but I knew he was taking a psychology class at the same time. I appreciated that he was trying to integrate his learning from that class into ours, trying to learn to use that vocabulary. I was sure that with more practice, he would get the hang of it. I didn’t know whether he was getting much writing practice at all in psychology, so I was happy to let him practice it in my class. His reflection showed learning in process.

My students often resist writing about their composing processes, but it’s good for them to see and analyze how they did what they did, and it also helps me know what they were thinking when they made composing decisions. Josh Autry, in regards to his essay on scuba diving in the Florida Keys at the wreck of the Spiegel Grove, said, “Mapping was my preferred method of outlining. It helped me organize my thoughts, go into detail, and pick the topics that I thought would be the most interesting to the readers.” He also noted, “I choose [sic] to write a paragraph about everything that can happen to a diver that is not prepared but after reviewing it I was afraid that it would scare an interested diver away. I chose to take that paragraph out and put a few warnings in the conclusion so the aspiring diver would not be clue-less.” This was a good decision that did improve the final draft. His earlier draft had gotten derailed by a long discussion of the dangers of scuba diving in general. But he came to this realization and decided to correct it without my help—except that I had led the class through reflective revising activities. D’Amber Walker wrote, “At first my organization was off because I didn’t know if I should start off with a personal experience which included telling a story or start with a statistic.” Apparently, a former teacher had told her not to include personal experiences in her essays. I reminded her that in our workshop on introductions, we had discussed how a personal story can be a very effective hook to grab the reader’s attention. So once again, a teaching moment. When Jonathan Kelly said, “I probably could have given more depth to this paper by interviewing a peer or something but I really felt unsure of how to go about doing so,” I was able to scold him gently. If he really didn’t know how to ask fellow students their opinions, all he had to do was ask me. But his statement shows an accurate assessment of how the paper could have been better. When Nigel Ellington titled his essay “If Everything Was Easy, Nothing Would Be Worth Anything,” he explained, “I like this [title] because it’s catchy and doesn’t give too much away and it hooks you.” He integrated what he learned in a workshop on titles. Doing this one little bit of reflective thinking cemented that learning and gave him a chance to use it in his actual paper.

How It Helps Me (the Instructor) Help You
Writing teachers often play two roles in relation to their students. I am my students’ instructor, but I am also a fellow writer. As a writer, I have learned that revision can be overwhelming. It’s tempting just to fiddle with words and commas if I don’t know what else to do. Reflection is a mechanism, a set of procedures, to help me step back from a draft to gain enough distance to ask myself, “Is this really what I want the essay (or story or poem or article) to do? Is this really what I want it to say? Is this the best way to get it to say that?” To revise is to re-vision or re-see, to re-think these issues, but you have to create a critical distance to be able to imagine your piece done another way. Reflection helps you create that distance. It also helps your instructor better guide your work and respond to it.

The semester after my experience in Bishop’s Life Writing Class, I took a Fiction Writing Workshop taught by Mark Winegardner, author of The Godfather Returns and The Godfather’s Revenge, as well as
numerous other novels and short stories. Winegardner had us create what he called the “process memo.” As he indicated in an interview, he uses the memo mainly as a tool to help the workshop instructor know how to respond to the writer’s story. If a writer indicates in the memo that he knows something is still a problem with the story, then the instructor can curtail lengthy discussion of that issue’s existence during the workshop and instead prompt peers to provide suggestions. The instructor can give some pointed advice, or possibly reassurance, based on the writer’s concerns that, without being psychic, the instructor would not otherwise have known about. Composition scholar Jeffrey Sommers notes that reflective pieces show teachers what your intentions for your writing actually are, which lets us respond to your writing accurately, rather than responding to what we think your intentions might be (“Enlisting” 101–2). He also points out that we can know how to reduce your anxiety about your writing appropriately (“Behind” 77). Thus, without a reflective memo, your teacher might pass right over the very issue you have been worried about.

The Habit of Self-Reflective Writing
One of the most important functions of reflective writing in the long run is to establish in you, the writer, a habit of self-reflective thinking. The first few reflective pieces you write may feel awkward and silly and possibly painful. You might play the teacher-pleasing game. But that’s really not what we want (see Smith 129). Teachers don’t want you to say certain things, we want you to think in certain ways.

Once you get the hang of it and start to see the benefits in your writing, you’ll notice that you’ve formed a habit of thinking reflectively almost invisibly. And not only will it help you in writing classes, but in any future writing projects for biology class, say, or even further in the future, in writing that you may do on the job, such as incident reports or annual reports for a business. You’ll become a better writer. You’ll become a better thinker. You’ll become a better learner. And learning is what you’ll be doing for the rest of your life. I recently painted my kitchen. It was a painful experience. I had a four-day weekend and thought I could clean, prep, and paint the kitchen, breakfast nook, and hallway to the garage in just four days, not to mention painting the trim and doors white. I pushed myself to the limit of endurance. And when I finished the wall color (not even touching the trim), I didn’t like it. The experience was devastating. A very similar thing had happened three years before when I painted my home office a color I now call “baby poop.” My home office is still “baby poop” because I got so frustrated I just gave up. Now, the kitchen was even worse. It was such a light green it looked like liver failure and didn’t go with the tile on the floor. Plus, it showed brush marks and other flaws. What the heck?

But unlike three years ago, when I had given up, I decided to apply reflective practices to the situation. I decided to see it as time for revision-type thinking. Why had I wanted green to begin with? (Because I didn’t want blue in a kitchen. I’ve really been craving that hot dark lime color that’s popular now. So yes, I still want it to be green.) Why hadn’t I chosen a darker green? (Because I have the darker, hotter color into the room with accessories. The lighter green has a more neutral effect that I shouldn’t get sick of after six months. Perhaps I’ll get used to it, especially when I get around to paintin the trim white.)

What caused the brush strokes? (I asked an expert. Two factors: using satin finish rather than eggshell, and using a cheap paintbrush for cut-in-areas.) How can they be fixed? (Most of the brush strokes are just in the cut-in areas and so they can be redone quickly with a better quality brush. That is, if I decide to keep this light green color.) Is the fact that the trim is still cream-colored rather than white part of the problem? (Oh, yes. Fix that first and the other problems might diminish.) What can I learn about timing for my next paint project? (That the cleaning and prep work take much longer than you think, and that you will need two coats, plus drying time. And so what if you didn’t finish it in four days? Relax! Allow
Appendices

more time next time.) Am I really worried about what my mother will say? (No, because I’m the one who has to look at it every day.) So the solution? Step one is to paint the trim first and then re-evaluate. Using a method of reflection to think back over my “draft” gives me a method for proceeding with “revision.” At the risk of sounding like a pop song, when you stop to think it through, you’ll know what to do.

Revision isn’t just in writing. These methods can be applied any time you are working on a project—of any kind—or have to make decisions about something. Establishing the habit of reflective thinking will have far-reaching benefits in your education, your career, and your life. It’s an essential key to success for the life-long learner.

Discussion
- Define what metacognitive or reflective writing is. What are some of the prompts or “topics” for reflective writing?
- Have you ever been asked to do this type of writing? If so, briefly discuss your experience.
- Why does reflective writing help a student learn and develop as a better writer? How does it work?
- Draft a Letter to the Reader for an essay you are working on right now. Analyze the letter to see what strengths or problems it uncovers regarding your essay.

Works Cited
Winegardner, Mark. Personal interview. 3 February 2003.
Be concise. Once you have written a solid draft, a document that has been well researched, take a step back and question whether or not you can delete half of the words. In a world where billions of instant messages and emails are sent daily, brevity is a virtue. People love conciseness. They respect writers and leaders who can explain difficult matters simply.

Tips for Pruning Your Sentences

The following paragraph hurts the eyes and ears of a successful writer:

"Writing that is redundant and states the obvious and says the same thing over and over again is irritating for readers who want writers to get to the point right away. On the other hand, as I am sure you can understand, it is equally important for writers to avoid confusion when they write and to put down as much information--that is, as many words--as the reader needs in order to understand what the writer means when he or she says what he or she says. Also, of course, when you are writing, it is important for you to remember that readers are reading your words and that you need to be somewhat entertaining--even when the subject is technical when conveying information, so that your readers will keep reading and not go off and do something else like play ice hockey."

Writers abhor wordiness. All of the empty phrases in the above can be translated into one sentence:

"Balance conciseness with the reader's need for information and voice."

No matter how much you appreciate the sounds of the words you have used, editing for economy may mean cutting the length of your document in half! By using the editing strategies already discussed, you have begun to chip away needless abstractions, unnecessary jargon, awkward passive constructions, weak verbs, tangled sentence patterns, unnecessary nouns, and strings of prepositional phrases. Yet by evaluating the content in light of your audience and the tone that you hope to establish, you can still find ways to eliminate unnecessary transitions, definitions, references, and examples. In your search for precision and persuasive appeal, you should also delete unnecessary repetitions--redundant adjectives,
repeated phrases, and synonyms. Remember, you add clarity and grace by presenting an idea simply. Cutting away unnecessary "deadwood" can eliminate much that interferes with communication.

**Maintain a High Verb-to-Noun Ratio**  
by Joe Moxley, Writing Commons

Create a persuasive, dynamic voice by packing your sentences with verbs rather than nominalizations. You can imbue your language with a sense of vigor by eliminating unnecessary nouns and choosing powerful verbs. When editing, consider changing Latinated nouns—those that end with -ance, -ing, -ion, -tion, or -ment—into verbs.

Make Your Writing Dynamic: Transform Nouns into Verbs  
For example, transform introduction into introduce; commitment, commit; feeling, feel. Changing nouns into verbs can result in a more concise and vigorous passage, as illustrated below:

Sample: The assumption that creative ability has a relationship to intelligence warrants further examination.  
Revision: We must examine how creative ability relates to intelligence.

Sample: This introduction is a rough conception of the assumptions about the decision-making process underlying the conception: Decisions about belief or action generally occur in the context of some problem and have some basis.  
Revision: We can assume that decisions occur in response to problems.

Remember, when you are writing and trying to be creative, you should not worry about whether or not your words are verbs or nouns. Only after you have written a solid draft should you critically evaluate your use of words.

**Eliminate 'to be' Verbs**  
by Joseph Moxley, Writing Commons
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

Make your sentences pack a punch. Eliminate unnecessary "to be" verbs.

In our daily speech and in rough drafts, we tend to rely heavily on the various forms of the verb to be.

The verb to be is unlike any other verb because it is inert—that is, it doesn't show any action. For example, in the sentence "The researcher is a professor at Duke" the verb is merely connects the subject with what grammarians call the subject complement. We could just as easily say "The professor at Duke is a researcher" without changing the meaning of the sentence.

It would be nearly impossible to draft documents without some linking verbs. Because you diminish the vigor of a document by using an excessive number of is and are constructions, you should try to limit their frequency. Finally, note that the progressive form of a linking verb—which involves using to be as an auxiliary verb with a participle—is much more acceptable. The advantage of the progressive form is that it illustrates action progressing over time, enabling us to shape concise sentences that indicate something is currently happening: "The coauthors are disagreeing about the order in which their names should be listed when the book is published."

It is and there are constructions often lead to sluggish, passive sentences, so you should limit their frequency, as illustrated below.

Sample: While it is crucial for us to speak out on behalf of education, it is important that we do so in a manner consistent with statute and administrative rules.

Revision: We need to speak out on behalf of education while observing statute and administrative rules.

Sample: According to the certification theory, there is no intrinsic relation between creativity and IQ.

Revision: Certification theory posits no intrinsic relation between creativity and IQ.

However, some it is and there are constructions allow you to be more succinct and avoid repetition of a subject rather than placing the true subject at the beginning of the sentence, so you should not attempt to eliminate all such constructions.

Edit Strings of Prepositional Phrases

Eliminate choppy writing by avoiding unnecessary prepositions.

When used in moderation, prepositions are invaluable: they work as connecting words, linking the object of the preposition to a word that appears earlier in the sentence. Like linking verbs, however, prepositions do not convey action, nor do they subordinate one thought to another. Instead, they merely link chunks of meaning that readers must gather together in order to understand the sentence.

Prepositional Phrases Create a Choppy Style

When used excessively, as demonstrated by the following example, prepositional phrases create a choppy, list-like style:

Sample: The major objective of this study was to determine the perceived effects of the union on monetary and on non-monetary aspects of compensation over the period in which respondents to the survey had been union members.

Because this sentence occurs in the conclusion of a five-page published essay, a careful editor should probably have eliminated this sentence altogether. Let's face it: If the readers still don't have the point after five pages, there is little hope for them. Nevertheless, the editor and author could have improved the sentence by reducing the number of prepositions:
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

Sample: This study examines how the union affects monetary and non-monetary aspects of compensation.

To help identify and eliminate prepositions, isolate them by putting slashes between prepositional phrases and other basic sentence parts as illustrated here:

/Furthermore,/ /in response/ /to the increased pressure/ /to publish/ /in academia/ /the past decade/ /and the growing complexity/ /of the academic areas and research tools/, /one should expect/ /to find/ /increased emphasis/ /on cost-cutting techniques/ /by academic writers/. /An increase/ /in cost/ /can probably be observed/ /by investigating/ /the changing trends/ /in the multiple authorship/ /of articles/ /over time./

**Punctuation**

Learn how to use proper punctuation.

Below is a summary of how to punctuate different sentence patterns and how to analyze the likely effect of different syntactical forms on readers’ comprehension.

**Commas**: Understand conventions for using commas and appreciate the likely effects of particular sentence lengths and patterns on reading comprehension.

**Dashes**: Create emphasis and define terms by interrupting the flow of a sentence using a dash; know when the dash must be used as opposed to the comma.

**Colons**: Use the colon when the first sentence anticipates the second sentence or phrase, thereby creating an emphatic tone.

**Semicolons**: Use a semicolon to join two sentences or to punctuate a series or list of appositives that already include commas.

**Commas**

by Joe Moxley, Writing Commons

Understand conventions for using commas and appreciate the likely effects of particular sentence lengths and patterns on reading comprehension.

Commas are like pawns in chess: They seem relatively insignificant and unobtrusive, yet they are actually very important. If properly placed, the lowly pawn can checkmate the king or, once it has reached the end of the board, become a more powerful piece. Commas play an extremely important role in ensuring that your documents are understandable. In fact, failing to insert a comma in the correct spot can cause considerable misreading (and subsequent embarrassment). Beyond a few special circumstances, there are six basic ways to use commas correctly.
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

Use Commas to Separate Adjacent Parallel Elements
As demonstrated by the following examples, a series is composed of three or more parallel elements, and the series can appear in the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence:

- Stretching, warming up, and cooling down are important to a good exercise program.
- All of the necessary qualities of a good assistant -- typing, shorthand, and patience -- she had in abundance.
- The three qualities of a good introduction are context, purpose, and organization.

Editors and grammarians are in sharp disagreement about whether a comma should be placed before the last element in a series. The trend in the popular press is not to include the comma if the elements in the series are brief. However, many well-known stylists have persuasively argued that conjunctions connect and commas separate, so it is incorrect in their opinion to judge the comma as redundant punctuation before a conjunction such as "and." In addition, uninformed readers may perceive the last two elements in the series to be a compound if the comma is omitted. For example, placement of the comma before the word "and" in the following example makes it clear that flowering plants are not the same as ornamental bushes:

- The landscaping contract includes several exotic plants, ornamental bushes, and flowering plants.

Occasionally, as dictated by your ear and the rhythm you hope to establish, you may want to insert a comma and forgo the and, as in this example:

- We have a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

When you want to slow down the rhythm of your sentence and emphasize a point, you can replace all the serial commas with and or or:

- He does not like shrimp or crayfish or lobster or anything that turns red when cooked.
- If the abuse of the wetlands continues, we will be without waterfowl and fish and wildlife.

When you must present a long array of parallel elements in your documents, you can avoid listing them by grouping them into logical parts and punctuating accordingly, as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Writing is painful and exhilarating, tedious and inspiring, chaotic and planned.
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

Human activities such as coal and oil burning, population growth and increased food demands, clearing and burning forests have caused increases in the release of carbon dioxide and methane.

Finally, note that coequal, consecutive coordinate adjectives that modify the same noun should generally be separated with commas:

Although he appears to have your best interests in mind, he truly is a competitive, combative, cantankerous boss.

However, you should not separate two consecutive adjectives with commas if the first adjective is modifying both the following adjective and noun as a unit, as illustrated below:

The competitive track star runs forty miles a week.

Use Commas to Join Two or More Independent Clauses
In most instances, place a comma between two sentences that are joined with a coordinating conjunction—and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet:

She was not sure if she had the necessary mathematical abilities to be an engineer, so she pursued a graduate degree in history.

He was surrounded by fifty people, yet he felt all alone.

You do not need to place a comma between two independent clauses if they are short and similar in meaning, provided that no misunderstanding will take place, as illustrated in the following example:

Some doctors advertise their services but many doctors find this reprehensible.

The absence of the comma in this sentence is acceptable; it is not necessary to prevent misreading.

Use Commas after Introductory Subordinate Clauses
To avoid confusion, use a comma after an introductory subordinate clause or phrase:

Because the costs of conducting research continue to increase, we need to raise our rates.

As the shrimp boats trawl, sea grass can collect on the trap door, allowing shrimp to escape.

According to the professor, rich women are more likely to have caesarean sections than poor women.

In keeping with the modern trend toward using as little punctuation as possible, some stylistists believe that it is not necessary to place a comma after short introductory words (now, thus, hence) and phrases (In 1982 he committed the same crime). However, conservative style manuals still call for the comma, so you are better off playing it safe and placing a comma after introductory words and clauses.

Use a Comma After Conjunctive Adverbs and Transitional Phrases at the Beginnings of Sentences
Although our modern style calls for using as few commas as possible, you should generally place a comma after conjunctive adverbs and transitional words because they modify the entire sentence:

Nevertheless, we must push forward with our plans.

In other words, you're fired. Hey, I'm just kidding.

Because commas cause readers to pause in their reading, you want to use them sparingly. Although logic would suggest that it makes sense to follow coordinating conjunctions with commas, convention does not call for this usage unless the conjunction is followed by an introductory phrase. Thus, it would be inappropriate to write:

Yet, I think we should go ahead as planned.
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

When a short phrase follows the conjunction at the beginning of the sentence, however, it is appropriate—although not absolutely necessary—to place a comma after the conjunction:

Yet, as I mentioned yesterday, I think we should go ahead as planned.

**Use Commas Around Nonrestrictive Parenthetical Elements**
You should limit the number of times that you interrupt the flow of a sentence by placing modifying words between the subject and its verb. When you do introduce such appositives, participial phrases, or adjective phrases or clauses, you must determine whether the modifiers are restrictive or nonrestrictive. Essentially, restrictive modifiers add information that is essential to the meaning of the sentence, whereas nonrestrictive modifiers add information that is not essential. The best way to determine whether a modifier is restrictive or nonrestrictive is to see if taking it out changes the meaning of the sentence.

Restrictive: Lawyers who work for McGullity, Anderson, and Swenson need to take a course in copyediting.

In this case the relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence. If you embedded the clause in commas, then the meaning would change, suggesting that all lawyers need a course in copyediting.

Restrictive: The lawyer who has worked on this case for three years thinks that we have no chance of winning.

In this case the relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence. In other words, the sentence refers to only the lawyer who has worked on this case. The discussion is restricted to the lawyer.

Nonrestrictive: The lawyers, who have an office downtown, think that we have no chance of winning.

Because the location of the lawyers' office is superfluous to the gist of the sentence, it should be set off by commas.

**Use Commas Before Nonrestrictive Adverbial Phrases or Clauses at the Ends of Sentences**
At the end of your sentence, you need to be especially careful about where you place your commas. In particular, you need to question whether the modifying words are restrictive or nonrestrictive. For instance, suppose you received a memo from your writing instructor that said,

You should revise the essay, as I suggested.

You could assume that you were directed to revise the essay in any way you deem appropriate. However, if the instructor omitted the comma, then you would be receiving an entirely different message: revise the essay exactly as prescribed by the instructor.

Below are some additional sentences to give you a sense of how to determine whether your modifying words are restrictive or nonrestrictive:

**Nonrestrictive**: Reports indicate that a Turtle Excluder Device (TED) costs from $85 to $400, depending on the model.

**Restrictive**: Writers can change readers' outlooks on issues provided that they offer sufficient evidence.

In this case, a comma after *issues* could suggest that writers have numerous ways to change readers' opinions and that one of these methods is providing sufficient evidence. In contrast, the lack of a comma means that providing evidence is the one criterion writers need to follow.
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

Semicolons

Use a semicolon to join two sentences or to punctuate a series or list of appositives that already includes commas.

The semicolon offers a "higher" form of punctuation than the comma or dash. Unlike commas or dashes, the semicolon can correctly be used to separate sentences. If readers tend to pause for a half-second when they come to a comma, they pause for three-quarters of a second when they reach a semicolon. Writers use semicolons two major ways.

Use a Semicolon to Join Two Sentences

You can show that ideas are closely related by using a semicolon rather than a period between them.

The secretary's fingers burned across the typewriter; the financial statements would be picked up by the client in one hour.

The question, though, is not economics; it is professional objectivity.

Breast cancer used to be the biggest killer for women; now it's lung cancer.

Use a Semicolon to Punctuate a Series or List of Appositives That Already Includes Commas

When elements in a series require internal commas to ensure clarity, then semicolons must be used to separate those elements:

A perfect vacation would be long, relaxing, and cheap; include personable, sweet, flexible people; and make everything else seem trivial.

The delegates were from Sacramento, California; Jacksonville, Florida; Providence, Rhode Island; and Ann Arbor, Michigan.

A good proofreader must have good grammar, punctuation, and spelling skills; must like to read; and must have patience.

Note, however, that you are wise to avoid using unnecessary semicolons. Experienced writers and readers would prefer the second sentence because it avoids self-conscious punctuation.

He was dressed in white pants; a white, Mexican wedding shirt; and sandals.

He was dressed in a white, Mexican wedding shirt, white pants, and sandals.

Dashes and Parentheses

Create emphasis and define terms by interrupting the flow of a sentence by using a dash; know when the dash must be used as opposed to the comma.

Some stylists view the dash with great suspicion—the sort of suspicion that a man in the 1990s who wears a plaid leisure suit to work would arouse. Some people erroneously believe that the dash is acceptable only in informal discourse. However, the dash can provide you with subtle ways to repeat modifiers and dramatic ways to emphasize your point.

Use a Dash after a Series or List of Appositives

When you introduce a long series or list of appositives before the subject and verb, you are placing high demands on the reader's short-term memory. Therefore, use this pattern rarely and only for emphasis. This pattern is particularly appropriate in conclusions, when you are bringing together the major threads of your discussion or argument. Finally, you should place a summary word after the dash and preferably before the subject of the sentence, as indicated by the following examples. The most common summary words that writers use are all, those, this, each, what, none, such, these.
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

Jealousy, lust, hate, greed--these are the raw emotions we will explore.

Lying, stealing, cheating, committing adultery--which is the greatest sin?

To struggle with meaning, to edit, to combine sentences--these activities are well known to the struggling writer.

Wining and dining his friends, stroking people’s egos, maintaining a good appearance, and spending money--all were part of his scheme to gain influence.

Use Dashes When You Wish to Emphasize a Parenthetical Element

Commas are usually sufficient punctuation to set off parenthetical elements. In some instances, however, you can use a dash instead, especially if you want to make the insertion more noticeable:

The building next to ours--the one with the all-cedar exterior--was engulfed in flames.

When you want to whisper rather than shout, you can place the modifiers inside parentheses:

The secret I have to tell you (the one I've been hinting about) will surprise you.

Use Dashes to Embed a Series or List of Appositives

A single appositive or modifier can easily be set off from the rest of the sentence in commas, but you must use dashes when you insert a series of appositives or modifiers. After all, how else will the reader know when the series is over?

The essential qualities of an effective writer--discipline, effort, inspiration--can be learned by regular writing.

With the help of her assistant--a high-speed personal computer--she produced a delightful letter.

Use Dashes to Set off an Emphatic Repetition

You can emphasize an important point by placing a dash or comma at the end of the sentence and then repeating a key word or phrase:

Hal is a computer, the ultimate computer.

Mrs. Leavitt is a gambler, a compulsive gambler.

He was disturbed by the warning--the warning that everyone else ignored.

All rapists should be severely punished--punished in a way they will never forget.

Colons

Use the colon when the first sentence anticipates the second sentence or phrase, thereby creating an emphatic tone.
The colon provides a dramatic and somewhat underutilized way to bring a little spark to your writing. Beyond normal business correspondence (Dear Sir or Madam:), you can use the colon before quotations, formal statements and explanations. The colon enables you to highlight a semantic relationship—that is, a movement from a general statement to a specific clarification. The colon also provides a dramatic way to tease the reader’s curiosity:

As a modern ordeal by torture, litigation excels: It is exorbitantly expensive, agonizingly slow, and exquisitely designed to avoid any resemblance to fairness or justice.

You can also use the colon before an instruction or example:

An intelligent writer knows how to polish documents: revise the document countless times.

Although usage does differ, most stylists agree that you should not capitalize the first letter after the colon unless the colon is introducing a quotation or formal statement:

You'll be surprised by what his former employees wrote in the character report: "His attitude toward his new associates was rude and pretentious." This sentence can easily be revised:

Note that a colon must always follow an independent clause. You should never place a colon between a verb and its direct object. Incorrect: Our choices are: rescind our offer, go ahead with our plans, try to renegotiate the deal.

We have three choices: a, b, c.

Our choices are the following: a, b, c.

Because the colon works as the equivalent to “for example” or “such as,” it would be redundant and incorrect to write

We have a number of options, such as: a, b, c.
Appendix Two: Editing and Punctuation

When we proofread a document, we are looking for small errors such as misspellings or accidental omissions. Have you ever sent off an email message or submitted a school paper only to later discover that it was full of typographical errors? How could you have missed all of these errors?

The answer seems to have something to do with how our brains work. Our brains recognize patterns. This is part of the reason why people who read frequently tend to read faster than infrequent readers: their brains more speedily recognize and process patterns of words on the page.

Texts that we write ourselves are the texts that we can read fastest of all, because our brains are already deeply familiar with the patterns of our words.

But what helps us as readers can hurt us as writers. When we read our own work, our brains tend to quickly see the patterns that we put on the page rather than the individual words. We see what we meant to write, and not necessarily what we actually wrote.

To our readers, however, who are not as familiar with our words, the errors are more apparent—and they detract from our credibility as authors.

To proofread effectively, we need to distance ourselves from the text and see it as our readers will see it.

Towards this end, consider the following proofreading strategies:

- Allow as much time as possible between when you complete a document and when you proofread it. For example, if you finish writing in the evening, wait until morning to proofread.
- Print out the document before attempting to proofread it. If this isn’t an option, try enlarging the text size on your screen. This larger view will make errors somewhat easier to see.
- Read the document aloud. Read slowly. Make sure you are reading the text itself rather than reading from memory.
- Read the document backwards—not word-by-word, but sentence-by-sentence. Again, read slowly.
- Ask a friend or family member to read your paper out loud to you while you silently read along on a second copy of the paper. (This two-reader method is used by many professional proofreaders.)
- Run your paper through a text-to-speech converter, and have a computer read it to you. The computer voice defamiliarizes your words and sets a steady pace that prevents you from skimming over sections of text that you know well. Free web-based online text-to-speech converters can be found at http://www.text2speech.org/ and http://www.yakitome.com. Two text-to-speech mobile apps are iSpeech (iOS) and Classic Text to Speech (Android).
Student Survey for OER

Please complete the following survey and offer any further information you can provide to help us make this text better!

1. How does the OER compare to other textbooks you've used?
   - I use it more than other textbooks.
   - I use it less than other textbooks.
   - I use it about the same as other textbooks.

2. I think the electronic version is
   - Easy to use
   - Somewhat easy to use
   - Difficult to use
   - Other (please specify)

No index entries found.

3. The instructional material about writing essays is
   - Helpful
   - Somewhat helpful
   - Not helpful

If not helpful, please explain why:

4. The readings within the OER are (check all that apply)
   - Long
Student Survey for OER 2017-2018

- Easy to read
- Relevant
- Helpful
- Irrelevant

5. The sections of the OER that I found the most helpful are (check all that apply):
   - Introductions to chapters
   - Chapters dedicated to specific essays (i.e., Narrative, Evaluation, Analysis)
   - Companion readings (i.e., "What is Academic Writing?", "How to Read like a Writer?")
   - Chapter dedicated to writing thesis statements
   - Appendix dedicated to MLA/APA format

Please provide any feedback regarding how we can make this textbook easier for students to use and how it might work better as a resource.