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Lesson Proper for Week 11

CREATING EFFECTIVE NOTES

Whether you write notes on a computer or by hand, you should keep in mind some basic rules, summarized in the checklist.

Using a Computer for Notetaking

1. Record notes and save them using one of two methods:
 - a. Write each note as a separate temporary file in a common directory so each can be moved later into the appropriate section of your draft via the Copy and Paste commands.
 - b. Write all notes in a single file. Begin each new note with a code word or phrase. When you begin the actual writing of the paper, you can begin writing at the top of the file, which will push the notes down as you write.
2. You can record the bibliography information for each source you encounter by listing it in a BIBLIO file so that you build the necessary list of references in one alphabetical file. Chapters 14, 15, 16, and 17 will assist with the correct style and formatting.

WRITING PERSONAL NOTES

The content of a research paper is not a collection of ideas transmitted by experts in books and articles; it is an expression of your own ideas as supported by the scholarly evidence. Readers are primarily interested in *your* thesis statement, *your* topic sentences, and *your* personal view and analysis of the issues. Therefore, during your



research, record your thoughts on the issues by writing plenty of personal notes in your research journal or in your computer files. Personal notes are essential because they allow you to:

- Record your discoveries.
- Reflect on the findings.
- Make connections
- Explore another point of view.
- Identify prevailing views and patterns of thought.

Personal notes should conform to these three standards:

1. The idea on the note is yours.
2. The note is labeled with “my idea,” “mine,” or “personal thought” so that later you can be certain it has not been borrowed.
3. The note is a rough summary, a sketch of ideas, or, preferably, a complete sentence or two.

A sample of a personal note follows:

Personal Thought

For me, organ donation is a gift of life, so I have signed my donor card. At least a part of me will continue to live if an accident claims my life. My boyfriend says I'm gruesome, but I consider it practical. Besides, he might be the one who benefits, and then what will he say?

CHECKLIST

Writing Effective Notes

1. Write one item per note to facilitate the shuffling and rearranging of the data as you develop your paper during all stages of organization. Several notes can be kept in a computer file if each is labeled clearly.
2. List the source with name, year, and page to prepare for in-text citations and/or bibliographic entries.
3. Label each note with a descriptive word or term (for example, “objectivity on television”).
4. Write a full note in well-developed sentences to speed the writing of your first draft.
5. Keep everything (photocopy, scribbled note, or computer file) in order to authenticate dates, page numbers, and full names of authors and publication information.
6. Label your personal notes with “my idea” or “personal note” to distinguish them from the sources.



Writing Direct Quotation Notes

Quoting the words of another person is the easiest type of note to write. Quotation notes are essential because they allow you to:

1. Capture the authoritative voice of the experts on the topic.
2. Feature essential statements.
3. Provide proof that you have researched the subject carefully.
4. Offer conflicting points of view.
5. Show the dialog that exists about the topic.

Writing Paraphrased Notes

A paraphrase is the most difficult note to write. It requires you to restate, in your own words, the thought, meaning, and attitude of someone else. With *interpretation*, you act as a bridge between the source and the reader as you capture the wisdom of the source in approximately the same number of words. Use paraphrase for these reasons:

- To maintain your voice in the paper
- To sustain your style
- To avoid an endless string of direct quotations
- To interpret the source as you rewrite it

Keep in mind these five rules for paraphrasing a source:

1. Rewrite the original in about the same number of words.
2. Provide an in-text citation of the source (the author and page number in MLA style).
3. Retain exceptional words and phrases from the original by enclosing them within quotation marks.
4. Preserve the tone of the original by suggesting moods of satire, anger, humor, doubt, and so on. Show the author's attitude with appropriate verbs: "Edward Zigler condemns . . . defends . . . argues . . . explains . . . observes . . . defines."
5. To avoid unintended plagiarism, put the original aside while paraphrasing to avoid copying word for word. Compare the finished paraphrase with the original source to be certain the paraphrase truly restates the original and uses quotation marks with any phrasing or standout words retained from the original.

HINT: When instructors see an in-text citation but no quotation marks, they will assume that you are paraphrasing, not quoting. Be sure their assumption is true.



Here are examples that show the differences between a quotation note and a paraphrased one:

Original Quotation:

Bullying Colvin 211

Dr. Delaney Colvin explains, "Cyberbullying is increasing at a disturbing rate. While most bullying in the past happened primarily at school, social cruelty can now occur with the ease of a keystroke." (211).

Paraphrase of the Original Quotation:

Cyberbullying Colvin 211

Dr. Delaney Colvin explains that bullying has moved past the school setting, for online harassment through social media sites continues to increase at an alarming rate (211).

Original Quotation (more than four lines):

Cyberbullying Colvin 211

Dr. Delaney Colvin clarifies the trend:

While the Internet is a tool that benefits the individual as well as society, online bullying has increased the power imbalance between victims and perpetrators. Serious problems arise when screen names are stolen and used to send malicious messages with racist or sexist content as well as compromising photographs to unlimited audiences. (211)

As shown above, MLA style requires a ten-space (two tabs) indentation.

Paraphrase of the Original Quotation:

Cyberbullying Colvin 211

Online resources and social sites can enhance society, yet Colvin pinpoints the imbalance between cyberbullies and their victims. Hurtful and harmful attacks can occur "when screen names are stolen and used to send malicious messages." Through racial and sexual attacks as well as inappropriate images, online bullying plunges the victim



into a web of lies and insinuation (211).

As shown in the example above, place any key wording of the source within quotation marks.

Original Quotation:

Bullying Colvin 211

“Cyberbullying is the most problematic yet least-studied form of bullying that adolescent’s face today” (Colvin 211).

Paraphrase of the Original Quotation:

Cyberbullying Colvin 211

Dr. Delaney Colvin encourages further research to address the broad spectrum of hurtful, online dangers faced by today’s teenagers (211).

Writing Summary Notes

The *summary note* describes and rewrites the source material without great concern for style or expression. Your purpose at the moment will be quick, concise writing without careful wording. If the information is needed, you can rewrite it later in a clear, appropriate prose style and, if necessary, return to the source for revision. Use summary notes for these reasons:

- To record material that has marginal value
- To preserve statistics that have questionable value for your study
- To note an interesting position of a source speaking on a closely related subject but not on your specific topic
- To reference several works that address the same issue, as shown in this example:

The logistics and cost of implementing a recycling program have been examined in books by West and Loveless and in articles by Jones et al., Coffee and Street, and Abernathy.

Success with the summary requires the following:

1. Keep it short. It has marginal value, so don’t waste time fine-tuning it.
2. Mark with quotation marks any key phrasing you cannot paraphrase.



3. Provide documentation to the author and page number. However, a page number is unnecessary when the note summarizes the entire article or book, not a specific passage.

WRITING PRÉCIS NOTES

A précis note differs from a quick summary note. It serves a specific purpose, so it deserves a polished style for transfer into the paper. It requires you to capture in just a few words the ideas of an entire paragraph, section, or chapter. Use the précis for these reasons:

- To review an article or book
- To annotate a bibliography entry
- To provide a plot summary
- To create an abstract

Success with the précis requires the following:

1. Condense the original with precision and directness. Reduce a long paragraph to a sentence, tighten an article to a brief paragraph, and summarize a book in one page.
2. Preserve the tone of the original. If the original is serious, suggest that tone in the précis. In the same way, retain moods of doubt, skepticism, optimism, and so forth.
3. Write the précis in your own language. However, retain exceptional phrases from the original, enclosing them in quotation marks. Guard against taking material out of context.
4. Provide documentation.

Use the Précis to Review Briefly an Article or Book

Note this example of the short review:

On the “Donor Initiative” 2014 Website

The National Community of Organ and Tissue Sharing has a website devoted to its initiatives. Its goal is to communicate the problem—for example, more than 55,000 people are on the waiting lists. It seeks a greater participation from the public.

With three sentences, the writer has made a précis of the entire article.

Use the Précis to Write an Annotated Bibliography



An annotation is a sentence or paragraph that offers explanatory or critical commentary on an article or book. It seldom extends beyond two or three sentences. The difficulty of this task is to capture the main idea of the source.

“Top Ten Myths about Organ Donation.” Web. 10 Feb. 2014. This informative site from the National Kidney Foundation dispels the many myths surrounding organ donation, showing that selling organs is illegal, that matching donor and recipient is highly complicated, and secret back room operations are almost impossible.

Use the Précis in a Plot Summary Note

In just a few sentences, a précis summarizes a novel, short story, drama, or similar literary work, as shown by this next note:

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens describes young Pip, who inherits money and can live the life of a gentleman. But he discovers that his “great expectations” have come from a criminal. With that knowledge, his attitude changes from one of vanity to one of compassion.

Furnish a plot summary in your paper as a courtesy to your readers to cue them about the contents of a work. The précis helps you avoid a full-blown retelling of the whole plot.

Use the Précis as the Form for an Abstract

An abstract is a brief description that appears at the beginning of an article to summarize the contents. It is, in truth, a précis. Usually, it is written by the article’s author, and it helps readers make decisions about reading or skipping the article. You can find entire volumes devoted to abstracts, such as *Psychological Abstracts* and *Abstracts of English Studies*. An abstract is required for most papers in the social and natural sciences.

Here’s a sample:

Abstract

The functional food revolution has begun! Functional foods, products that provide benefits beyond basic nutrition, are adding billions to the nation’s economy each year. So what is their secret? Why are functional foods a hit? Functional foods are suspected to be a form of preventive medicine. This news has made the public swarm and food nutritionists salivate. Consumers hope that functional foods can calm some of their medical anxieties. Many researchers believe that functional foods may be the answer to the nation’s prayers for lower health care costs. This paper goes behind the scenes, behind all the hype, in its attempt to determine if functional foods are an effective form of preventive medicine. The paper identifies several functional foods, locates the components that make them work, and explains the role that each plays in the body.



Depending on the focus and scope of your project, you might be expected to conduct field research. This work requires different kinds of notes kept on charts, cards, notepads, laboratory notebooks, a research journal, or the computer. If you interview knowledgeable people, make careful notes during the interview and transcribe those notes to your draft in a polished form. A digital recorder can serve as a backup to your notetaking.

If you conduct a **questionnaire**, the results will become valuable data for developing notes and graphs and charts for your research paper.

If you conduct **experiments**, **tests**, and **measurements**, the findings serve as your notes for the results section of the report and will give you the basis for the discussion section.

CREATING OUTLINES USING ACADEMIC MODELS

A General All-Purpose Model

If you are uncertain about the design of your paper, start with this bare-bones model and expand it with your material. Readers, including your instructor, are accustomed to this sequence for research papers. It offers plenty of leeway.

Identify the subject.

Explain the problem.

Provide background information.

Frame a thesis statement.

Analyze the subject.

Examine the first major issue.

Examine the second major issue.

Examine the third major issue.

Discuss your findings.

Restate your thesis and point beyond it.

Interpret the findings.

Provide answers, solutions, or a final opinion.

To the introduction you can add a quotation, an anecdote, a definition, or comments from your source materials. Within the body, you can compare, analyze, give evidence, trace historical events, and handle other matters. In the conclusion, you can challenge an assumption, take exception to a prevailing point of view, and reaffirm your thesis. Flesh out each section, adding subheadings as necessary, to create an outline.



Writing a Formal Outline

Not all papers require a formal outline, nor do all researchers need one. A short research paper can be created from key terms, a list of issues, a rough outline, and a first draft. As noted earlier in this chapter, rough or informal outlines will help you to make sure you cover the key points and guide your research. However, a formal outline can be important because it classifies the issues of your study into clear, logical categories with main headings and one or more levels of subheadings. An outline will change miscellaneous notes, computer drafts, and photocopied materials into an ordered progression of ideas.

HINT: A formal outline is not rigid and inflexible; you may, and should, modify it while writing and revising. In every case, treat an outline or organizational chart as a tool. Like an architect's blueprint, it should contribute to, not inhibit, the construction of a finished product.

You may wish to experiment with the Outline feature of your computer software, which will allow you to view the paper at various levels of detail and to highlight and drop the essay into a different organization.

Using Standard Outline Symbols

List your major categories and subtopics in this form:

- I. _____ First major heading
 - A. _____ Subheading of first degree
 - 1. _____ Subheadings of second degree
 - 2. _____
 - a. _____ Subheadings of third degree
 - b. _____
 - (1) _____ Subheadings of fourth degree
 - (2) _____
 - a) _____ Subheading of fifth degree
 - B. _____ Subheading of first degree

The degree to which you continue the subheads will depend, in part, on the complexity of the subject. Subheads in a research paper seldom carry beyond subheadings of the third degree, the first series of small letters.

Writing a Formal Topic Outline



If your purpose is to arrange quickly the topics of your paper without detailing your data, build a topic outline of balanced phrases. The topic outline may use noun phrases:

III. The senses

A. Receptors to detect light

1. Rods of the retina
2. Cones of the retina

It may also use gerund phrases:

III. Sensing the environment

A. Detecting light

1. Sensing dim light with retina rods
2. Sensing bright light with retina cones

And it may also use infinitive phrases:

III. To use the senses

A. To detect light

1. To sense dim light
2. To sense bright light

No matter which grammatical format you choose, you should follow it consistently throughout the outline.

Writing a Formal Sentence Outline

The sentence outline requires full sentences for each heading and subheading. It has two advantages over the topic outline:

1. Many entries in a sentence outline can serve as topic sentences for paragraphs, thereby accelerating the writing process.
2. The subject/verb pattern establishes the logical direction of your thinking (for example, the phrase "Vocabulary development" becomes "Television viewing can improve a child's vocabulary").

Consequently, the sentence outline brings into the open any possible organizational problems rather than hiding them as a topic outline might do.

Outline

Thesis: Prehistoric humans were motivated by biological instincts toward warfare rather than cultural demands for a share of limited resources.

- I. The conflict of "noble savage" versus prehistoric warriors has surfaced in recent literature.



A. Some literature has advocated the existence of harmony and peace among early tribes.

1. Rousseau argued for a noble savage in the 1700s.
2. The Bible speaks of the Garden of Eden.

B. Recent research suggests that wars have existed since the dawn of life.

1. LaBlanc cites evidence from the Southwest Indians.
2. Yates reports on Chinese weapons from 28,000 bc.
3. Ferrill has examined cave paintings.

II. The evidence points clearly to the existence of prehistoric wars.

A. Anthropologists have uncovered skeletal remains of captives who were executed.

1. Victims were skinned alive.
2. Victims were decapitated.
3. Massacres occurred in Europe, North and South America, Japan, and other parts of the world.

YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Look carefully at each of the sources you have collected so far— books, photocopies of journal articles, and Internet printouts. Try writing a summary or précis of each one. At the same time, make decisions about material worthy of direct quotation and material that you want to paraphrase or summarize.
2. Decide how you will keep your notes—and handwritten notes in a research journal or in computer files. *Note:* The computer files will serve you well because you can transfer them into your text and save typing time.
3. Write various types of notes—that is, write a few that use direct quotations, some that paraphrase, and some that summarize.
4. Conscientiously and with dedication, write as many personal notes as possible. These will be your ideas, and they will establish your voice and position. Do not let the sources speak for you; let them support your position.
5. If you have access to OneNote or some other notetaking program, take the time to consider its special features. You can create notes, store them in folders, and even search your own files by keyword, category, and reference.
6. It is easy and simple to use a general all-purpose model, especially for a beginner researcher.
7. Choose the form of outline that you think will be most useful for you. Use standard outline symbols in the process.
8. By this time, you should have notes from sources and a plan for organizing your research project as you pull your thoughts and resources together to begin drafting your paper.



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Activities

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