

# Provincial English



# Provincial English

Allison Kilgannon

BCCAMPUS  
VICTORIA, B.C.



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This textbook is available in the following formats:

- **Online webbook.** You can read this textbook online on a computer or mobile device in one of the following browsers: Chrome, Firefox, Edge, and Safari.
- **PDF.** You can download this book as a PDF to read on a computer (Digital PDF) or print it out (Print PDF).
- **Mobile.** If you want to read this textbook on your phone or tablet, you can use the EPUB (eReader) file.
- **HTML.** An HTML file can be opened in a browser. It has very little style so it doesn't look very nice, but some people might find it useful.

For more information about the accessibility of this textbook, see the [Accessibility Statement](#).

You can access the online webbook and download any of the formats for free here: [Provincial English](#). To download the book in a different format, look for the “Download this book” drop-down menu and select the file type you want.

### How can I use the different formats?

Format	Internet required?	Device	Required apps	Accessibility Features	Screen reader compatible
Online webbook	Yes	Computer, tablet, phone	An Internet browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari)	WCAG 2.0 AA compliant, option to enlarge text, and compatible with browser text-to-speech tools	Yes
PDF	No	Computer, print copy	Adobe Reader (for reading on a computer) or a printer	Ability to highlight and annotate the text. If reading on the computer, you can zoom in.	Unsure
EPUB	No	Computer, tablet, phone	An eReader app	Option to enlarge text, change font style, size, and colour.	Unsure
HTML	No	Computer, tablet, phone	An Internet browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari)	WCAG 2.0 AA compliant and compatible with browser text-to-speech tools.	Yes

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*Provincial English* by Allison Kilgannon was funded by BCcampus Open Education.

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## Introduction

Welcome to the *Provincial English* textbook to fulfill the requirements for the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Provincial English Course. This text is an adaptation by an assistant professor with seven years of post-secondary ABE English teaching experience.

### How the Text is Organized

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

### How Should You Use This Text?

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

### Gendered and Gender-Neutral Language

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

### Links and References in Online and Print Versions of This Text

The online text includes links and a few embedded videos, but we have ensured that web address are provided for readers using a print version so they can find the same resource.



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## Preface

*Provincial English* is a text that provides instruction in steps, builds writing, reading, and critical thinking, and combines comprehensive grammar review with an introduction to paragraph writing and composition.

This book addresses each concept with clear, concise, and effective examples that are immediately reinforced with exercises and opportunities to demonstrate learning.

Each chapter allows students to demonstrate mastery of the principles of quality writing. With its incremental approach, this book can address a range of writing levels and abilities, helping each student prepare for the next writing or university course. Constant reinforcement is provided through examples and exercises, and the text involves students in the learning process through reading, problem solving, practicing, listening, and experiencing the writing process.

Each chapter also has integrated examples that unify the discussion and form a common, easy to understand basis for discussion and exploration. This will put students at ease and allow for greater absorption of the material.

Tips for effective writing are included in every chapter, as well. Thought-provoking scenarios provide challenges and opportunities for collaboration and interaction. These exercises are especially helpful for working with groups of students. Clear exercises teach sentence and paragraph writing skills that lead to common English composition and research essays.

*Provincial English* provides a range of discussion, examples, and exercises, from writing development to mastery of the academic essay, that serve both student and instructor.

## Features

Exercises are integrated in each section. Each concept is immediately reinforced as soon as it is introduced to keep students on track. Exercises are designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration. This allows for peer-peer engagement, development of interpersonal skills, and promotion of critical thinking skills. Exercises that involve self editing and collaborative writing are also featured. This develops and promotes student interest in the knowledge areas and content.

There are clear internal summaries and effective displays of information. This contributes to ease of access to information and increases students' ability to locate desired content.

Rule explanations are simplified with clear, relevant, and theme-based examples. This feature provides context that will facilitate learning and increase knowledge retention.

There is an obvious structure to the chapter and segment level. This allows for easy adaptation to existing and changing course needs or assessment outcomes.



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I

## Introduction to Writing



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## 1.

### Reading and Writing

As you begin this chapter, you may be wondering why you need an introduction. After all, you have been writing and reading since elementary school. Why is a writing course even necessary?

Honing your writing skills—and your reading and critical-thinking skills—gives you a more solid academic foundation.

As you continue in your education, academic expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. The quantity of work you are expected to do is increased. When instructors expect you to read pages upon pages or study hours and hours for one particular course, managing your work load can be challenging. This textbook includes strategies for studying efficiently and managing your time.

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

Table 1.1 summarizes some of the other major differences between high school and assignments for adults; this text will get you prepared for these.

**Table 1.1 High School vs. Adult Education Assignments**

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

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

#### Exercise 1.1

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

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

## Reading Strategies

Your academic courses will sharpen both your reading and your writing skills. Most of your writing assignments—from brief response papers to in-depth research projects—will depend on your

understanding of course reading assignments or related readings you do on your own. And it is difficult, if not impossible, to write effectively about a text that you have not understood. Even when you do understand the reading, it can be hard to write about it if you do not feel personally engaged with the ideas discussed.

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

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

## Planning Your Reading

Have you ever stayed up all night cramming just before an exam? Or found yourself skimming a detailed memo from your boss five minutes before a crucial meeting? The first step in handling reading successfully is planning. This involves both managing your time and setting a clear purpose for your reading.

## Managing Your Reading Time

You will learn more detailed strategies for time management in “Developing Study Skills”, but for now, focus on setting aside enough time for reading and breaking your assignments into manageable chunks. If you are assigned a seventy-page chapter to read for next week’s class, try not to wait until the night before to get started. Give yourself at least a few days and tackle one section at a time.

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

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

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

## Setting a Purpose

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

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

- **How did my instructor frame the assignment?** Often your instructors will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading:
  - Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current teaching practices in elementary math.
  - Read these two articles and compare Smith’s and Jones’s perspectives on the 2010 health care reform bill.
  - Read Chapter 5 and think about how you could apply these guidelines to running your own business.
- **How deeply do I need to understand the reading?** If you are majoring in computer science and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, “Introduction to Computer Science,” it is safe to assume the chapter presents fundamental concepts that you will be expected to master. However, for some reading assignments, you may be expected to form a general understanding but not necessarily master the content. Again, pay attention to how your instructor presents the assignment.
- **How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class?** Your instructor may make some of these connections explicitly, but if not, try to draw connections on your own. (Needless to say, it helps to take detailed notes both when in class and when you read.)
- **How might I use this text again in the future?** If you are assigned to read about a topic that has always interested you, your reading assignment might help you develop ideas for a future research paper. Some reading assignments provide valuable tips or summaries worth bookmarking for future reference. Think about what you can take from the reading that will stay with you.

## Improving Your Comprehension

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

For any expository writing—that is, nonfiction, informational writing—your first comprehension goal

is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. Because academic texts can be challenging, you will also need to monitor your reading comprehension. That is, you will need to stop periodically and assess how well you understand what you are reading. Finally, you can improve comprehension by taking time to determine which strategies work best for you and putting those strategies into practice.

## Identifying the Main Points

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

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

Regardless of what type of expository text you are assigned to read, your primary comprehension goal is to identify the main point: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate and often states early on. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and relate the reading to concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, you will find the supporting points, the details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point.

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

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

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

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

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

## Monitoring Your Comprehension

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

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

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

1. **Summarize.** At the end of each section, pause to summarize the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.
2. **Ask and answer questions.** When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to answer after you finish it. Write down your questions and use them to test yourself on the reading. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Is the answer buried in that section of reading but just not coming across to you? Or do you expect to find the answer in another part of the reading?
3. **Do not read in a vacuum.** Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers'.

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

### Exercise 1.2

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

1. Summarize the main points of the text in two to three sentences.
2. Write down two to three questions about the text that you can bring up during class discussion.

**TIP:** Students are often reluctant to seek help. They feel like doing so marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up with the course reading but feel like you are in over your head, seek out help. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your institution's learning center for assistance.

Deal with the problem as early in the semester as you can. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

## Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading

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

### Using the SQ3R Strategy

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

1. **Survey** the text in advance.
2. Form **questions** before you start reading.
3. **Read** the text.
4. **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after reading.
5. **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

Before you read, you survey, or preview, the text. As noted earlier, reading introductory paragraphs and headings can help you begin to figure out the author's main point and identify what important topics

will be covered. However, surveying does not stop there. Look over sidebars, photographs, and any other text or graphic features that catch your eye. Skim a few paragraphs. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. This will help you form a first impression of the material.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Exercise 1.3

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

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

## Using Other Active Reading Strategies

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

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

### Writing in Practice

Many courses require students to participate in interactive online components, such as a discussion forum, a page on a social networking site, or a class blog. These tools are a great way to reinforce learning. Do not be afraid to be the student who starts the discussion.

Remember that when you interact with other students and teachers online, you need to project a mature, professional image. You may be able to use an informal, conversational tone, but complaining about the work load, using inappropriate language, or insulting other participants is inappropriate.

Active reading can benefit you in ways that go beyond just earning good grades. By practicing these

strategies, you will find yourself more interested in your courses and better able to relate your academic work to the rest of your life. Being an interested, engaged student also helps you form lasting connections with your instructors and with other students that can be personally and professionally valuable. In short, it helps you get the most out of your education.

## Common Writing Assignments

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1.2 lists some of the most common types of writing assignments. It includes minor, less formal assignments as well as major ones. Which specific assignments you encounter will depend on the courses you take and the learning objectives developed by your instructors.

**Table 1.2: Common Types of Writing Assignments**

<b>Assignment Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Personal Response Paper</b>	Expresses and explains your response to a reading assignment, a provocative quote, or a specific issue; may be very brief (sometimes a page or less) or more in-depth	For an environmental science course, students watch and write about President Obama's June 15, 2010, speech about the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
<b>Summary</b>	Restates the main points of a longer passage objectively and in your own words	For a psychology course, students write a one-page summary of an article about a man suffering from short-term memory loss.
<b>Position Paper</b>	States and defends your position on an issue (often a controversial issue)	For a medical ethics course, students state and support their position on using stem cell research in medicine.
<b>Problem-Solution Paper</b>	Presents a problem, explains its causes, and proposes and explains a solution	For a business administration course, a student presents a plan for implementing an office recycling program without increasing operating costs.
<b>Literary Analysis</b>	States a thesis about a particular literary work (or works) and develops the thesis with evidence from the work and, sometimes, from additional sources	For a literature course, a student compares two novels by the twentieth-century African American writer Richard Wright.
<b>Research Review or Survey</b>	Sums up available research findings on a particular topic	For a course in media studies, a student reviews the past twenty years of research on whether violence in television and movies is correlated with violent behavior.
<b>Case Study or Case Analysis</b>	Investigates a particular person, group, or event in depth for the purpose of drawing a larger conclusion from the analysis	For an education course, a student writes a case study of a developmentally disabled child whose academic performance improved because of a behavioral-modification program.
<b>Laboratory Report</b>	Presents a laboratory experiment, including the hypothesis, methods of data collection, results, and conclusions	For a psychology course, a group of students presents the results of an experiment in which they explored whether sleep deprivation produced memory deficits in lab rats.
<b>Research Journal</b>	Records a student's ideas and findings during the course of a long-term research project	For an education course, a student maintains a journal throughout a semester-long research project at a local elementary school.
<b>Research Paper</b>	Presents a thesis and supports it with original research and/or other researchers' findings on the topic; can take several different formats depending on the subject area	For examples of typical research projects, see "Writing a Research Paper".

### Writing in Practice

Part of managing your education is communicating well with others at your institution. For instance, you might need to e-mail your instructor to request an office appointment or explain why you will need to miss a class. You might need to contact administrators with questions about your tuition or financial aid. Later, you might ask instructors to write recommendations on your behalf.

Treat these documents as professional communications. Address the recipient politely; state your question, problem, or request clearly; and use a formal, respectful tone. Doing so helps you make a positive impression and get a quicker response.

### Text Attributions

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## 2.

### Developing Study Skills

By now, you have a general idea of what to expect from your courses. You have probably received course syllabi, started on your first few assignments, and begun applying the strategies you learned about reading and writing.

At the beginning of the semester, your work load is relatively light. This is the perfect time to brush up on your study skills and establish good habits. When the demands on your time and energy become more intense, you will have a system in place for handling them.

This section covers specific strategies for managing your time effectively. You will also learn about different note-taking systems that you can use to organize and record information efficiently.

As you work through this section, remember that every student is different. The strategies presented here are tried and true techniques that work well for many people. However, you may need to adapt them slightly to develop a system that works well for you personally. If your friend swears by her smartphone, but you hate having to carry extra electronic gadgets around, then using a smartphone will not be the best organizational strategy for you.

Read with an open mind, and consider what techniques have been effective (or ineffective) for you in the past. Which habits from your high school years or your work life could help you succeed now? Which habits might get in your way? What changes might you need to make?

### Understanding Yourself as a Learner

To succeed in education—or any situation where you must master new concepts and skills—it helps to know what makes you tick. For decades, educational researchers and organizational psychologists have examined how people take in and assimilate new information, how some people learn differently than others, and what conditions make students and workers most productive. Here are just a few questions to think about:

- **What is your learning style?** For the purposes of this text, learning style refers to the way you prefer to take in new information, by seeing, by listening, or through some other channel.
- **What times of day are you most productive?** If your energy peaks early, you might benefit from blocking out early morning time for studying or writing. If you are a night owl, set aside a few evenings a week for schoolwork.
- **How much clutter can you handle in your work space?** Some people work fine at a messy desk and know exactly where to find what they need in their stack of papers; however, most people benefit from maintaining a neat, organized space.

- **How well do you juggle potential distractions in your environment?** If you can study at home without being tempted to turn on the television, check your e-mail, fix yourself a snack, and so on, you may make home your work space. However, if you need a less distracting environment to stay focused, you may be able to find one on your campus or in your community.
- **Does a little background noise help or hinder your productivity?** Some people work better when listening to background music or the low hum of conversation in a coffee shop. Others need total silence.
- **When you work with a partner or group, do you stay on task?** A study partner or group can sometimes be invaluable. However, working this way takes extra planning and effort, so be sure to use the time productively. If you find that group study sessions turn into social occasions, you may study better on your own.
- **How do you manage stress?** Accept that at certain points in the semester, you will feel stressed out. In your day-to-day routine, make time for activities that help you reduce stress, such as exercising, spending time with friends, or just scheduling downtime to relax.

## Learning Styles

Most people have one channel that works best for them when it comes to taking in new information. Knowing yours can help you develop strategies for studying, time management, and note taking that work especially well for you.

To begin identifying your learning style, think about how you would go about the process of assembling a piece of furniture. Which of these options sounds most like you?

1. You would carefully look over the diagrams in the assembly manual first so you could picture each step in the process.
2. You would silently read the directions through, step by step, and then look at the diagrams afterward.
3. You would read the directions aloud under your breath. Having someone explain the steps to you would also help.
4. You would start putting the pieces together and figure out the process through trial and error, consulting the directions as you worked.

Now read the following explanations. Again, think about whether each description sounds like you.

- If you chose (a), you may be a visual learner. You understand ideas best when they are presented in a visual format, such as a flowchart, a diagram, or text with clear headings and many photos or illustrations.
- If you chose (b), you may be a verbal learner. You understand ideas best through reading and writing about them and taking detailed notes.
- If you chose (c), you may be an auditory learner. You understand ideas best through listening. You learn well from spoken lectures or books on tape.

- If you chose (d), you may be a kinesthetic learner. You learn best through doing and prefer hands-on activities. In long lectures, fidgeting may help you focus.

Your learning style does not completely define you as a student. Auditory learners can comprehend a flow chart, and kinesthetic learners can sit still long enough to read a book. However, if you do have one dominant learning style, you can work with it to get the most out of your classes and study time. Table 2.1 “Learning Style Strategies” lists some tips for maximizing your learning style.

**Table 2.1: Learning Style Strategies**

Learning Style	Strategies
<b>Visual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When possible, represent concepts visually—in charts, diagrams, or sketches.</li> <li>• Use a visual format for taking notes on reading assignments or lectures.</li> <li>• Use different-coloured highlighters or pens to colour-code information as you read.</li> <li>• Use visual organizers, such as maps, flowcharts, and so forth, to help you plan writing assignments.</li> <li>• Use coloured pens, highlighters, or the review feature of your word-processing program to revise and edit writing.</li> </ul>
<b>Verbal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the instructional features in course texts—summaries, chapter review questions, glossaries, and so on—to aid your studying.</li> <li>• Take notes on your reading assignments.</li> <li>• Rewrite or condense reading notes and lecture notes to study.</li> <li>• Summarize important ideas in your own words.</li> <li>• Use informal writing techniques, such as brainstorming, freewriting, blogging, or posting on a class discussion forum to generate ideas for writing assignments.</li> <li>• Reread and take notes on your writing to help you revise and edit.</li> </ul>
<b>Auditory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask your instructor's permission to tape-record lectures to supplement your notes.</li> <li>• Read parts of your textbook or notes aloud when you study.</li> <li>• If possible, obtain an audiobook version of important course texts. Make use of supplemental audio materials, such as CDs or DVDs.</li> <li>• Talk through your ideas with other students when studying or when preparing for a writing assignment.</li> <li>• Read your writing aloud to help you draft, revise, and edit.</li> </ul>
<b>Kinesthetic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you read or study, use techniques that will keep your hands in motion, such as highlighting or taking notes.</li> <li>• Use tactile study aids, such as flash cards or study guides you design yourself.</li> <li>• Use self-stick notes to record ideas for writing. These notes can be physically reorganized easily to help you determine how to shape your paper.</li> <li>• Use a physical activity, such as running or swimming, to help you break through writing blocks.</li> <li>• Take breaks during studying to stand, stretch, or move around.</li> </ul>

**TIP:** The material presented here about learning styles is just the tip of the iceberg. There are numerous other variations in how people learn. Some people like to act on information right away while others reflect on it first. Some people excel at mastering details and understanding concrete, tried and true ideas while others enjoy exploring abstract theories and innovative, even impractical ideas. For more information about how you learn, visit your school's academic resource center.

## Time Management

As an adult student, you have increased freedom to structure your time as you please. With that freedom comes increased responsibility. High school teachers often take it upon themselves to track down students who miss class or forget assignments. Instructors if adults, however, expect you to take full responsibility for managing yourself and getting your work done on time.

### Getting Started: Short- and Long-Term Planning

At the beginning of the semester, establish a weekly routine for when you will study and write. A general guideline is that for every hour spent in class, students should expect to spend another two to three hours on reading, writing, and studying for tests. Therefore, if you are taking a biology course that meets three times a week for an hour at a time, you can expect to spend six to nine hours per week on it outside of class. You will need to budget time for each class just like an employer schedules shifts at work, and you must make that study time a priority.

That may sound like a lot when taking multiple classes, but if you plan your time carefully, it is manageable. A typical full-time schedule of fifteen credit hours translates into thirty to forty-five hours per week spent on schoolwork outside of class. All in all, a full-time student would spend about as much time on school each week as an employee spends on work. Balancing school and a job can be more challenging, but still doable.

In addition to setting aside regular work periods, you will need to plan ahead to handle more intense demands, such as studying for exams and writing major papers. At the beginning of the semester, go through your course syllabi and mark all major due dates and exam dates on a calendar. Use a format that you check regularly, such as your smartphone or the calendar feature in your e-mail.

**TIP:** The two- to three-hour rule may sound intimidating. However, keep in mind that this is only a rule of thumb. Realistically, some courses will be more challenging than others, and the demands will ebb and flow throughout the semester. You may have trouble-free weeks and stressful weeks. When you schedule your classes, try to balance introductory-level classes with more advanced classes so that your work load stays manageable.

**Exercise 2.1**

Now that you have learned some time-management basics, it is time to apply those skills. For this exercise, you will develop a weekly schedule and a semester calendar.

1. Working with your class schedule, map out a week-long schedule of study time. Try to apply the “two- to three-hour” rule. Be sure to include any other nonnegotiable responsibilities, such as a job or child care duties.
2. Use your course syllabi to record exam dates and due dates for major assignments in a calendar (paper or electronic). Use a star, highlighting, or other special marking to set off any days or weeks that look especially demanding.

### **Staying Consistent: Time Management Dos and Don’ts**

Setting up a schedule is easy. Sticking with it, however, may create challenges. A schedule that looked great on paper may prove to be unrealistic. Sometimes, despite students’ best intentions, they end up procrastinating or pulling all-nighters to finish a paper or study for an exam.

Keep in mind, however, that your weekly schedule and semester calendar are time-management tools. Like any tools, their effectiveness depends on the user: you. If you leave a tool sitting in the box unused (e.g., if you set up your schedule and then forget about it), it will not help you complete the task. And if, for some reason, a particular tool or strategy is not getting the job done, you need to figure out why and maybe try using something else.

With that in mind, read the list of time-management dos and don’ts. Keep this list handy as a reference you can use throughout the semester to “troubleshoot” if you feel like your schoolwork is getting off track.

#### **Dos**

1. Set aside time to review your schedule or calendar regularly and update or adjust them as needed.
2. Be realistic when you schedule study time. Do not plan to write your paper on Friday night when everyone else is out socializing. When Friday comes, you might end up abandoning your plans and hanging out with your friends instead.
3. Be honest with yourself about where your time goes. Do not fritter away your study time on distractions like e-mail and social networking sites.
4. Accept that occasionally your work may get a little off track. No one is perfect.
5. Accept that sometimes you may not have time for all the fun things you would like to do.
6. Recognize times when you feel overextended. Sometimes you may just need to get through an especially demanding week. However, if you feel exhausted and overworked all the time,

you may need to scale back on some of your commitments.

7. Have a plan for handling high-stress periods, such as final exam week. Try to reduce your other commitments during those periods—for instance, by scheduling time off from your job. Build in some time for relaxing activities, too.

#### Don'ts

1. Do not procrastinate on challenging assignments. Instead, break them into smaller, manageable tasks that can be accomplished one at a time.
2. Do not fall into the trap of “all-or-nothing” thinking: “There is no way I can fit in a three-hour study session today, so I will just wait until the weekend.” Extended periods of free time are hard to come by, so find ways to use small blocks of time productively. For instance, if you have a free half hour between classes, use it to preview a chapter or brainstorm ideas for an essay.
3. Do not fall into the trap of letting things slide and promising yourself, “I will do better next week.” When next week comes, the accumulated undone tasks will seem even more intimidating, and you will find it harder to get them done.
4. Do not rely on caffeine and sugar to compensate for lack of sleep. These stimulants may temporarily perk you up, but your brain functions best when you are rested.

#### Exercise 2.2

The key to managing your time effectively is consistency. Completing the following tasks will help you stay on track throughout the semester.

1. Establish regular times to “check in” with yourself to identify and prioritize tasks and plan how to accomplish them. Many people find it is best to set aside a few minutes for this each day and to take some time to plan at the beginning of each week.
2. For the next two weeks, focus on consistently using whatever time-management system you have set up. Check in with yourself daily and weekly, stick to your schedule, and take note of anything that interferes. At the end of the two weeks, review your schedule and determine whether you need to adjust it.
3. Review the preceding list of dos and don’ts.
  - a. Identify the habit from the “Don’ts” list that you are most likely to slip into as the semester gets busier. What could you do to combat this habit
  - b. Identify at least two habits from the “Dos” list that you could use to improve your time-management skills.

### Writing in Practice

If you are part of the workforce, you have probably established strategies for accomplishing job-related tasks efficiently. How could you adapt these strategies to help you be a successful student? For instance, you might sync up your school and work schedules on an electronic calendar. Instead of checking in with your boss about upcoming work deadlines, establish a buddy system where you check in with a friend about school projects. Give school the same priority you give to work.

## Note-Taking Methods

One final valuable tool to have in your arsenal as a student is a good note-taking system. Just the act of converting a spoken lecture to notes helps you organize and retain information, and of course, good notes also help you review important concepts later. Although taking good notes is an essential study skill, many students enter education without having received much guidance about note taking.

These sections discuss different strategies you can use to take notes efficiently. No matter which system you choose, keep the note-taking guidelines in mind.

### General Note-Taking Guidelines

1. Before class, quickly review your notes from the previous class and the assigned reading. Fixing key terms and concepts in your mind will help you stay focused and pick out the important points during the lecture.
2. Come prepared with paper, pens, highlighters, textbooks, and any important handouts.
3. Come to class with a positive attitude and a readiness to learn. During class, make a point of concentrating. Ask questions if you need to. Be an active participant.
4. During class, capture important ideas as concisely as you can. Use words or phrases instead of full sentences and abbreviate when possible.
5. Visually organize your notes into main topics, subtopics, and supporting points, and show the relationships between ideas. Leave space if necessary so you can add more details under important topics or subtopics.
6. Record the following:
  - a. Ideas that the instructor repeats frequently or points out as key ideas
  - b. Ideas the instructor lists on a whiteboard or transparency
  - c. Details, facts, explanations, and lists that develop main points
  - d. Definitions of key terms

7. Review your notes regularly throughout the semester, not just before exams.

## Organizing Ideas in Your Notes

A good note-taking system needs to help you differentiate among major points, related subtopics, and supporting details. It visually represents the connections between ideas. Finally, to be effective, your note-taking system must allow you to record and organize information fairly quickly. Although some students like to create detailed, formal outlines or concept maps when they read, these may not be good strategies for class notes, because spoken lectures may not allow time for elaborate notes.

Instead, focus on recording content simply and quickly to create organized, legible notes. Try one of the following techniques.

### Modified outline format

A modified outline format uses indented spacing to show the hierarchy of ideas without including roman numerals, lettering, and so forth. Just use a dash or bullet to signify each new point unless your instructor specifically presents a numbered list of items.

The first example shows a student's notes from a developmental psychology class about an important theorist in this field. Notice how the line for the main topic is all the way to the left. Subtopics are indented, and supporting details are indented one level further. She also used abbreviations for terms like *development* and *example*.

#### Child Development – 20th Century Theorists

- Jean Piaget
  - Swiss psychologist, influential in education
  - First developed theories in 1920s–30s
  - 4 major stages of cognitive dev.
    - sensorimotor (0–2) – infants explore the world through motion and 5 senses
      - self-centred perspective
      - need to learn that environment still exists even when they can't see people/objects (for ex., playing peek-a-boo)
    - preoperational (2–7) – kids use “magical” thinking, often not logical
      - less self-centred
      - poor sense of time
      - can think about people/objects that are not physically present

- concrete operations (7–12) – kids begin to think logically
  - thinking is very concrete
  - improved understanding of physical world
- formal operations (12–adulthood) – logical thinking develops further
  - can understand & test abstract ideas
  - more concerned about the future, hypothetical possibilities

### Idea mapping

If you discovered in this section that you learn best with visual presentations, you may prefer to use a more graphic format for notes, such as an idea map. The next example shows how a student's lecture notes could be set up differently. Although the format is different, the content and organization are the same.

## Child Development—20th Century Theorists

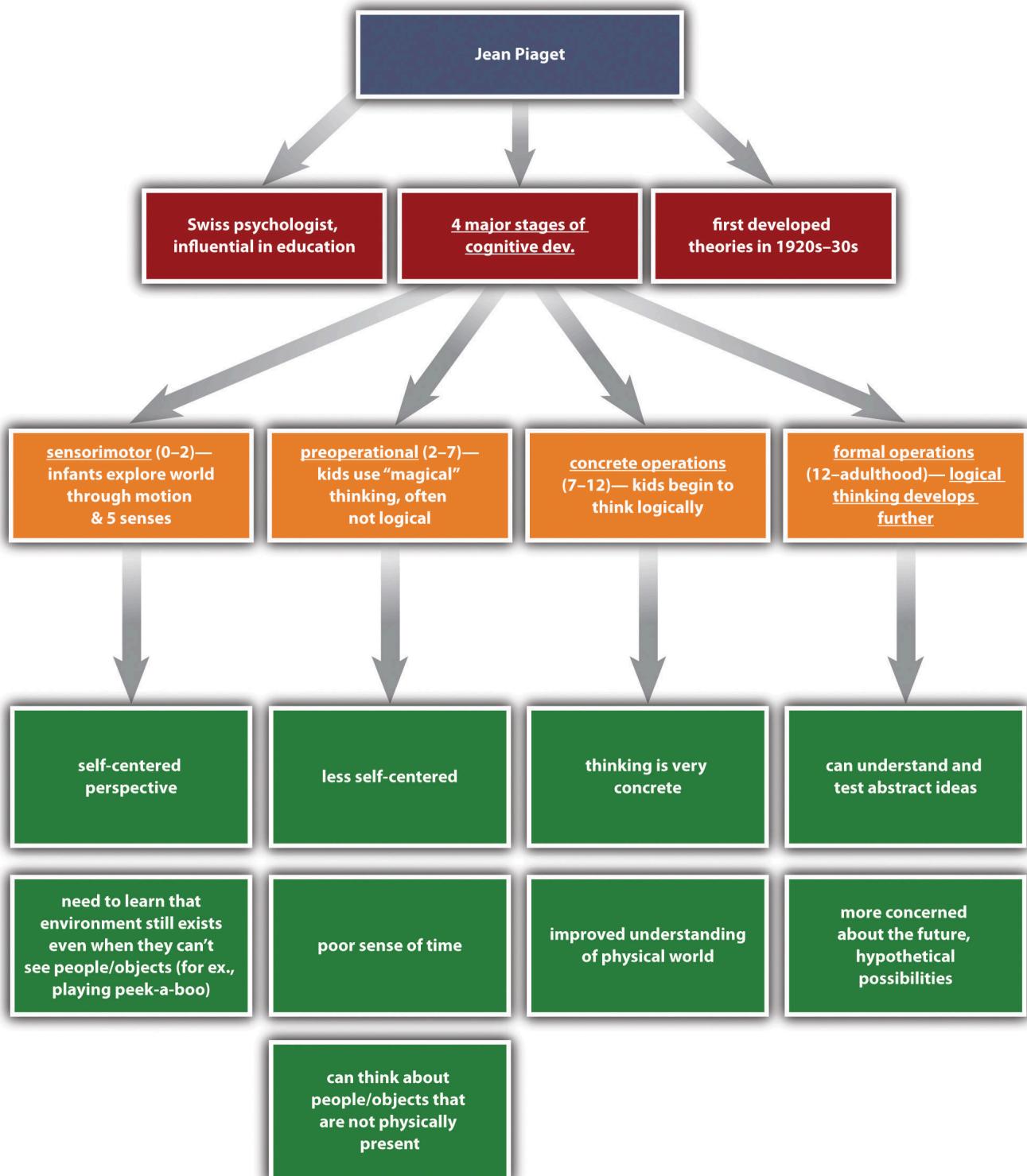


Figure 2.1

### Charting

If the content of a lecture falls into a predictable, well-organized pattern, you might choose to use a

chart or table to record your notes. This system works best when you already know, either before class or at the beginning of class, which categories you should include. Table 2.2 shows how this system might be used.

**Table 2.2: Notes Organized in a Table**

Theorist	Country of Origin	Years Active	Stages of Child Development
Jean Piaget	Switzerland	1920s through 1970s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. sensorimotor (0-2)</li> <li>2. preoperational (2-7)</li> <li>3. concrete operational (7-12)</li> <li>4. formal operational (12-adulthood)</li> </ol>
Erik Erikson	Denmark (studied in Austria, emigrated to US in 1930s)	1930s through 1980s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. trust vs. mistrust (infants)</li> <li>2. autonomy vs. shame and doubt (toddler)</li> <li>3. initiative vs. guilt (preschool-K)</li> <li>4. industry vs. inferiority (elementary school)</li> <li>5. identity vs. role confusion (teen years)</li> </ol> <p>***See also stages of adult development</p>

### The Cornell note-taking system

In addition to the general techniques already described, you might find it useful to practice a specific strategy known as the Cornell note-taking system. This popular format makes it easy not only to organize information clearly but also to note key terms and summarize content.

To use the Cornell system, begin by setting up the page with these components:

- The course name and lecture date at the top of the page
- A narrow column (about two inches) at the left side of the page
- A wide column (about five to six inches) on the right side of the page
- A space of a few lines marked off at the bottom of the page

During the lecture, you record notes in the wide column. You can do so using the traditional modified outline format or a more visual format if you prefer.

Then, as soon as possible after the lecture, review your notes and identify key terms. Jot these down in the narrow left-hand column. You can use this column as a study aid by covering the notes on the right-hand side, reviewing the key terms, and trying to recall as much as you can about them so that you can mentally restate the main points of the lecture. Uncover the notes on the right to check your

understanding. Finally, use the space at the bottom of the page to summarize each page of notes in a few sentences.

Using the Cornell system, a student's notes would look like the following:

Child Development	September 13, 2011
Piaget cognitive development sensorimotor preoperational concrete operations formal operations concrete thinking abstract thinking	Child Development—20th Century Theorists –Jean Piaget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Swiss psychologist, influential in education</li> <li>–first developed theories in 1920s–30s</li> <li>–4 major stages of cognitive dev. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–sensorimotor (0–2)—infants explore world through motion &amp; 5 senses</li> <li>–self-centered perspective</li> <li>–need to learn that environment still exists even when they can't see people/objects (for ex., playing peek-a-boo)</li> </ul> </li> <li>–preoperational (2–7)—kids use “magical” thinking, often not logical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–less self-centered</li> <li>–poor sense of time</li> <li>–can think about people/objects that are not physically present</li> </ul> </li> <li>–concrete operations (7–12)—kids begin to think logically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–thinking is very concrete</li> <li>–improved understanding of physical world</li> </ul> </li> <li>–formal operations (12–adulthood)—logical thinking develops further <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–can understand &amp; test abstract ideas</li> <li>–more concerned about the future, hypothetical possibilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Piaget believed children go through four stages of cognitive development—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations. Gradually they progress from having a very limited understanding of the world (infants and young children), to being more logical (older kids), to being able to think abstractly (preteens and teens).

Figure 2.2

### Writing in Practice

Often, at school or in the workplace, a speaker will provide you with pregenerated notes summarizing electronic presentation slides. You may be tempted not to take notes at all because much of the content is already summarized for you. However, it is a good idea to jot down at least a few notes. Doing so keeps you focused during the presentation, allows you to record details you might otherwise forget, and gives you the opportunity to jot down questions or reflections to personalize the content.

### Exercise 2.3

Over the next few weeks, establish a note-taking system that works for you.

1. If you are not already doing so, try using one of the aforementioned techniques. (Remember that the Cornell system can be combined with other note-taking formats.)
2. It can take some trial and error to find a note-taking system that works for you. If you find that you are struggling to keep up with lectures, consider whether you need to switch to a different format or be more careful about distinguishing key concepts from unimportant details.
3. If you find that you are having trouble taking notes effectively, set up an appointment with your school's academic resource centre.

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### 3.

## Becoming a Successful Writer

These general techniques you will learn will help ensure your success on any writing task, whether you complete a final exam in an hour or an in-depth research project over several weeks.

### Strategies for Success

Writing well is difficult. Even people who write for a living sometimes struggle to get their thoughts on the page. Even people who generally enjoy writing have days when they would rather do anything else. For people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, writing assignments can be stressful or even intimidating. And of course, you cannot get through your education without having to write—sometimes a lot, and often at a higher level than you are used to.

No magic formula will make writing quick and easy. However, you can use strategies and resources to manage writing assignments more easily. This section presents a broad overview of these strategies and resources. The remaining chapters of this book provide more detailed, comprehensive instruction to help you succeed at a variety of assignments. Your education will challenge you as a writer, but it is also a unique opportunity to grow.

### Using the Writing Process

To complete a writing project successfully, good writers use some variation of the following process.

#### The Writing Process

- **Prewriting.** In this step, the writer generates ideas to write about and begins developing these ideas.
- **Outlining a structure of ideas.** In this step, the writer determines the overall organizational structure of the writing and creates an outline to organize ideas. Usually this step involves some additional fleshing out of the ideas generated in the first step.
- **Writing a rough draft.** In this step, the writer uses the work completed in prewriting to develop a first draft. The draft covers the ideas the writer brainstormed and follows the organizational plan that was laid out in the first step.
- **Revising.** In this step, the writer revisits the draft to review and, if necessary, reshape its content.

This stage involves moderate and sometimes major changes: adding or deleting a paragraph, phrasing the main point differently, expanding on an important idea, reorganizing content, and so forth.

- **Editing.** In this step, the writer reviews the draft to make additional changes. Editing involves making changes to improve style and adherence to standard writing conventions—for instance, replacing a vague word with a more precise one or fixing errors in grammar and spelling. Once this stage is complete, the work is a finished piece and ready to share with others.
- **Submission.** In this step, you hand in your assignment in the approved format for your course and that required by your instructor. Be careful not to neglect the care needed to make sure you are submitting your assignment correctly.

Chances are, you have already used this process. You may have used it for other types of creative projects, such as developing a sketch into a finished painting or composing a song. The steps listed above apply broadly to any project that involves creative thinking. You come up with ideas (often vague at first), you work to give them some structure, you make a first attempt, you figure out what needs improving, and then you refine it until you are satisfied.

Most people have used this creative process in one way or another, but many people have misconceptions about how to use it to write. Here are a few of the most common misconceptions students have about the writing process:

- **“I do not have to waste time on prewriting if I understand the assignment.”** Even if the task is straightforward and you feel ready to start writing, take some time to develop ideas before you plunge into your draft. Freewriting—writing about the topic without stopping for a set period of time—is one prewriting technique you might try in that situation.
- **“It is important to complete a formal, numbered outline for every writing assignment.”** For some assignments, such as lengthy research papers, proceeding without a formal outline can be very difficult. However, for other assignments, a structured set of notes or a detailed graphic organizer may suffice. The important thing is that you have a solid plan for organizing ideas and details.
- **“My draft will be better if I write it when I am feeling inspired.”** By all means, take advantage of those moments of inspiration. However, understand that sometimes you will have to write when you are not in the mood. Sit down and start your draft even if you do not feel like it. If necessary, force yourself to write for just one hour. By the end of the hour, you may be far more engaged and motivated to continue. If not, at least you will have accomplished part of the task.
- **“My instructor will tell me everything I need to revise.”** If your instructor chooses to review drafts, the feedback can help you improve. However, it is still your job, not your instructor’s, to transform the draft to a final, polished piece. That task will be much easier if you give your best effort to the draft before submitting it. During revision, do not just go through and implement your instructor’s corrections. Take time to determine what you can change to make the work the best it can be.
- **“I am a good writer, so I do not need to revise or edit.”** Even talented writers still need to

revise and edit their work. At the very least, doing so will help you catch an embarrassing typo or two. Revising and editing are the steps that make good writers into great writers.

**TIP:** The writing process also applies to timed writing tasks, such as essay exams. Before you begin writing, read the question thoroughly and think about the main points to include in your response. Use scrap paper to sketch out a very brief outline. Keep an eye on the clock as you write your response so you will have time to review it and make any needed changes before turning in your exam.

## Managing Your Time

When your instructor gives you a writing assignment, write the due date on your calendar. Then work backward from the due date to set aside blocks of time when you will work on the assignment. Always plan at least two sessions of writing time per assignment, so that you are not trying to move from step 1 to step 5 in one evening. Trying to work that fast is stressful, and it does not yield great results. You will plan better, think better, and write better if you space out the steps.

Ideally, you should set aside at least three separate blocks of time to work on a writing assignment: one for prewriting and outlining, one for drafting, and one for revising and editing. Sometimes those steps may be compressed into just a few days. If you have a couple of weeks to work on a paper, space out the five steps over multiple sessions. Long-term projects, such as research papers, require more time for each step.

**TIP:** In certain situations you may not be able to allow time between the different steps of the writing process. For instance, you may be asked to write in class or complete a brief response paper overnight. If the time available is very limited, apply a modified version of the writing process (as you would do for an essay exam). It is still important to give the assignment thought and effort. However, these types of assignments are less formal, and instructors may not expect them to be as polished as formal papers. When in doubt, ask the instructor about expectations, resources that will be available during the writing exam, and if they have any tips to prepare you to effectively demonstrate your writing skills.

Imagine this scenario: each Monday in a Foundations of Education class, the instructor distributes copies of a current news article on education and assigns students to write a one-and-one-half- to two-page response due the following Monday. Together, these weekly assignments count for 20 percent of the course grade. Although each response takes just a few hours to complete, one student finds that she learns more from the reading and gets better grades on her writing if she spreads the work out in the following way:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Article response assigned.		Read article, prewrite, and outline response paper.		Draft response.		Revise and edit response.

Figure 3.1

## Setting Goals

One key to succeeding as a student and as a writer is setting both short- and long-term goals for yourself. You have already glimpsed the kind of short-term goals a student might set. By planning carefully and following through on daily and weekly goals, you can fulfill your goals for the semester. How does this experience relate to your own experience?

To do well in your education, it is important to stay focused on how your day-to-day actions determine your long-term success. You may not have defined your career goals or chosen a major yet. Even so, you surely have some overarching goals for what you want out of your education: to expand your career options, to increase your earning power, or just to learn something new. In time, you will define your long-term goals more explicitly. Doing solid, steady work, day by day and week by week, will help you meet those goals.

### Exercise 3.1

In this exercise, make connections between short- and long-term goals.

1. For this step, identify one long-term goal you would like to have achieved by the time you complete your education. For instance, you might want a particular job in your field or hope to graduate with honours.
2. Next, identify one semester goal that will help you fulfill the goal you set in step one. For instance, you may want to do well in a particular course or establish a connection with a professional in your field.
3. Review the goal you determined in step two. Brainstorm a list of stepping stones that will help you meet that goal, such as “doing well on my midterm and final exams” or “talking to Instructor Gibson about doing an internship.” Write down everything you can think of that would help you meet that semester goal.
4. Review your list. Choose two to three items, and for each item identify at least one concrete action you can take to accomplish it. These actions may be recurring (meeting with a study group each week) or one time only (calling the professor in charge of internships).
5. Identify one action from step four that you can do today. Then do it.

## Using Your Institution's Resources

One reason students sometimes find education overwhelming is that they do not know about, or are reluctant to use, the resources available to them. Some aspects of your education will be challenging. However, if you try to handle every challenge alone, you may become frustrated and overwhelmed.

Academic institutions have resources in place to help students cope with challenges. Your student fees help pay for resources such as a health center or tutoring, so use these resources if you need them. The following are some of the resources you might use if you find you need help:

- **Your instructor.** If you are making an honest effort but still struggling with a particular course, set up a time to meet with your instructor and discuss what you can do to improve. They may be able to shed light on a confusing concept or give you strategies to catch up.
- **Your academic counselor.** Many institutions assign students an academic counselor who can help you choose courses and ensure that you fulfill degree and major requirements.
- **The academic resource centre.** These centres offer a variety of services, which may range from general coaching in study skills to tutoring for specific courses. Find out what is offered at your institution and use the services that you need.
- **The writing centre.** These centres employ tutors to help you manage writing assignments. They will not write or edit your paper for you, but they can help you through the stages of the writing process. (In some schools, the writing center is part of the academic resource centre.)
- **The career resource centre.** Visit the career resource centre for guidance in choosing a career path, developing a résumé, and finding and applying for jobs.
- **Counseling services.** Many institutions offer psychological counseling for free or for a low fee. Use these services if you need help coping with a difficult personal situation or managing depression, anxiety, or other problems.

Students sometimes neglect to use available resources due to limited time, unwillingness to admit there is a problem, or embarrassment about needing to ask for help. Unfortunately, ignoring a problem usually makes it harder to cope with later on. Waiting until the end of the semester may also mean fewer resources are available, since many other students are also seeking last-minute help.

#### Exercise 3.2

Identify at least one college resource that you think could be helpful to you and you would like to investigate further. Schedule a time to visit this resource within the next week or two so you can use it throughout the semester.

## Overview: Writing Skills

You now have a solid foundation of skills and strategies you can use to succeed in college. The remainder of this book will provide you with guidance on specific aspects of writing, ranging from grammar and style conventions to how to write a research paper.

For any college writing assignment, use these strategies:

- Plan ahead. Divide the work into smaller, manageable tasks, and set aside time to accomplish each task in turn.
- Make sure you understand the assignment requirements, and if necessary, clarify them with your instructor. Think carefully about the purpose of the writing, the intended audience, the

topics you will need to address, and any specific requirements of the writing form.

- Complete each step of the writing process. With practice, using this process will come automatically to you.
- Use the resources available to you. Remember that most colleges have specific services to help students with their writing.

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## 4.

### Writing: Exercises

#### Exercise 4.1

1. Find out more about your learning style by visiting your academic resource centre or doing Internet research. Take note of strategies that are recommended for different types of learners. Which strategies do you already use? Which strategies could you incorporate into your routine?
2. Apply the following comprehension and active reading strategies to an assigned reading:
  - Locate the writer’s main idea and major supporting points. (Use text features to gather clues.)
  - Apply the SQ3R strategy: Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Record, and Review and Reflect.
  - Apply at least one other active reading strategy appropriate for the text, such as visualizing or connecting the text to personal experiences.
3. After reviewing your syllabus, map out a timeline of major assignments in the course. Describe the steps you anticipate needing to follow in order to complete these assignments.

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II

## The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?



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## 5.

### Prewriting

If you think that a blank sheet of paper or a blinking cursor on the computer screen is a scary sight, you are not alone. Many writers, students, and employees find that beginning to write can be intimidating. When faced with a blank page, however, experienced writers remind themselves that writing, like other everyday activities, is a process. Every process, from writing to cooking, bike riding, and learning to use a new cell phone, will get significantly easier with practice.

Just as you need a recipe, ingredients, and proper tools to cook a delicious meal, you also need a plan, resources, and adequate time to create a good written composition. In other words, writing is a process that requires following steps and using strategies to accomplish your goals.

#### Writing in Process

These are the six steps in the writing process:

1. Prewriting
2. Outlining the structure of ideas
3. Writing a rough draft
4. Revising
5. Editing
6. Submission

Effective writing can be simply described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order. This chapter will give you the chance to work on all these important aspects of writing. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, this chapter covers six: using experience and observations, freewriting, asking questions, brainstorming, mapping, and searching the Internet. Using the strategies in this chapter can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

### Prewriting

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques

can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following four strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

1. Using experience and observations
2. Reading
3. Freewriting
4. Asking questions

At this stage in the writing process, it is okay if you choose a general topic. Later you will learn more prewriting strategies that will narrow the focus of the topic.

## Choosing a Topic

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also understand that choosing a good general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about but also fits the assignment's purpose and its audience.

In this chapter, you will prepare a piece of writing. The first important step is for you to understand why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.

My purpose: \_\_\_\_\_

My audience: \_\_\_\_\_

## Using Experience and Observations

When selecting a topic, you may also want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

**TIP:** Have you seen an attention-grabbing story on your local news channel? Many current issues appear on television, in magazines, and on the Internet. These can all provide inspiration for your writing.

## Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about his main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own. If this step already seems daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

**TIP:** The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future. The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly.

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading prewriting exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) will further develop your topic and ideas. As you continue to follow the writing process, you will see how a student can use critical reading skills to assess her own prewriting exercises.

## Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes). During the time limit, you may jot down any thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

Writing often comes easier when you have a personal connection with the topic you have chosen. Remember, to generate ideas in your freewriting, you may also think about readings that you have enjoyed or that have challenged your thinking. Doing this may lead your thoughts in interesting directions.

Quickly recording your thoughts on paper will help you discover what you have to say about a topic. When writing quickly, try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely and unselfconsciously. Once you start writing with few limitations, you may find you have more to say than you first realized. Your flow of thoughts can lead you to discover even more ideas about the topic. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

**TIP:** Some prewriting strategies can be used together. For example, you could use experience and observations to come up with a topic related to your course studies. Then you could use freewriting to describe your topic in more detail and figure out what you have to say about it.

### Figure 5.1: Freewriting example

Last semester my favourite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I tried not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. Newspapers I don't read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my e-mail. E-mail could be considered mass media too these days. I used to go to the video store a few times a week before I started school, but now the only way I know what movies are current is to listen for the Oscar nominations. We have cable but we can't afford the movie channels, so I sometimes look at older movies late at night. UGH. A few of them get played again and again until you're sick of them. My husband thinks I'm crazy, but sometimes there are old black-and-whites from the 1930s and '40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use colours on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of colour. Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me – or my husband. I'm handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us.

### Exercise 5.1

Freewrite about one event you have recently experienced. With this event in mind, write without stopping for five minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you as a good general topic to write about?

## Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise? Even the title of this chapter begins with the question “How do I begin?”

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

**Table 5.1**

Questions	Answers
Who?	I use media. Students, teachers, parents, employers and employees-almost everyone uses media.
What?	The media can be a lot of things. Television, radio, e-mail (I think), newspapers, magazines, books.
Where?	The media is almost everywhere now. It's in homes, at work, in cars, even on cell phones!
When?	Media has been around for a long time, but seems a lot more important now.
Why?	Hmm. This is a good question. I don't know why there is mass media. Maybe we have it because we have the technology now. Or people live far away from their families and they have to stay in touch.
How?	Well, media is possible because of the technology inventions, but I don't know how they all work!

**TIP:** Prewriting is very purpose driven; it does not follow a set of hard-and-fast rules. The purpose of prewriting is to find and explore ideas so that you will be prepared to write. A prewriting technique like asking questions can help you both find a topic and explore it. The key to effective prewriting is to use the techniques that work best for your thinking process. Freewriting may not seem to fit your thinking process, but keep an open mind. It may work better than you think. Perhaps brainstorming a list of topics might better fit your personal style. Mariah found freewriting and asking questions to be fruitful strategies to use. In your own prewriting, use the 5WH questions in any way that benefits your planning.

### Exercise 5.2

Choose a general topic idea from the prewriting you completed in the first exercise. Then read each question and use your own paper to answer the 5WH questions. It is okay if you do not know all the answers. If you do not know an answer, use your own opinion to speculate, or guess. You may also use factual information from books or articles you previously read on your topic. Later in the chapter, you will read about additional ways (like searching the Internet) to answer your questions and explore your guesses.

#### 5 WH Questions

1. Who?
2. What?
3. Where?
4. When?
5. Why?

## 6. How?

Now that you have completed some of the prewriting exercises, you may feel less anxious about starting a paper from scratch. With some ideas down on paper (or saved on a computer), writers are often more comfortable continuing the writing process. After identifying a good general topic, you, too, are ready to continue the process.

### Exercise 5.3

Write your general topic on your own sheet of paper, under where you recorded your purpose and audience. Choose it from among the topics you listed or explored during the prewriting you have done so far. Make sure it is one you feel comfortable with and feel capable of writing about.

My general topic:

**TIP:** You may find that you need to adjust your topic as you move through the writing stages (and as you complete the exercises in this chapter). If the topic you have chosen is not working, you can repeat the prewriting activities until you find a better one.

## More Prewriting Techniques

The prewriting techniques of freewriting and asking questions help students to think more about their topic, but the following prewriting strategies can help you narrow the focus of the topic:

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping
- Searching the Internet

## Narrowing the Focus

Narrowing the focus means breaking up the topic into subtopics, or more specific points. Generating lots of subtopics will help you eventually select the ones that fit the assignment and appeal to you and your audience.

## Brainstorming

Brainstorming is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic.

The following is a student's brainstorming list:



Figure 5.2

Imagine you have to write an e-mail to your current boss explaining your prior work experience, but you do not know where to start. Before you begin the e-mail, you can use the brainstorming technique to generate a list of employers, duties, and responsibilities that fall under the general topic “work experience.”

## Idea Mapping

Idea mapping allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and

writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped. Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map, start with your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then write specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them together. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

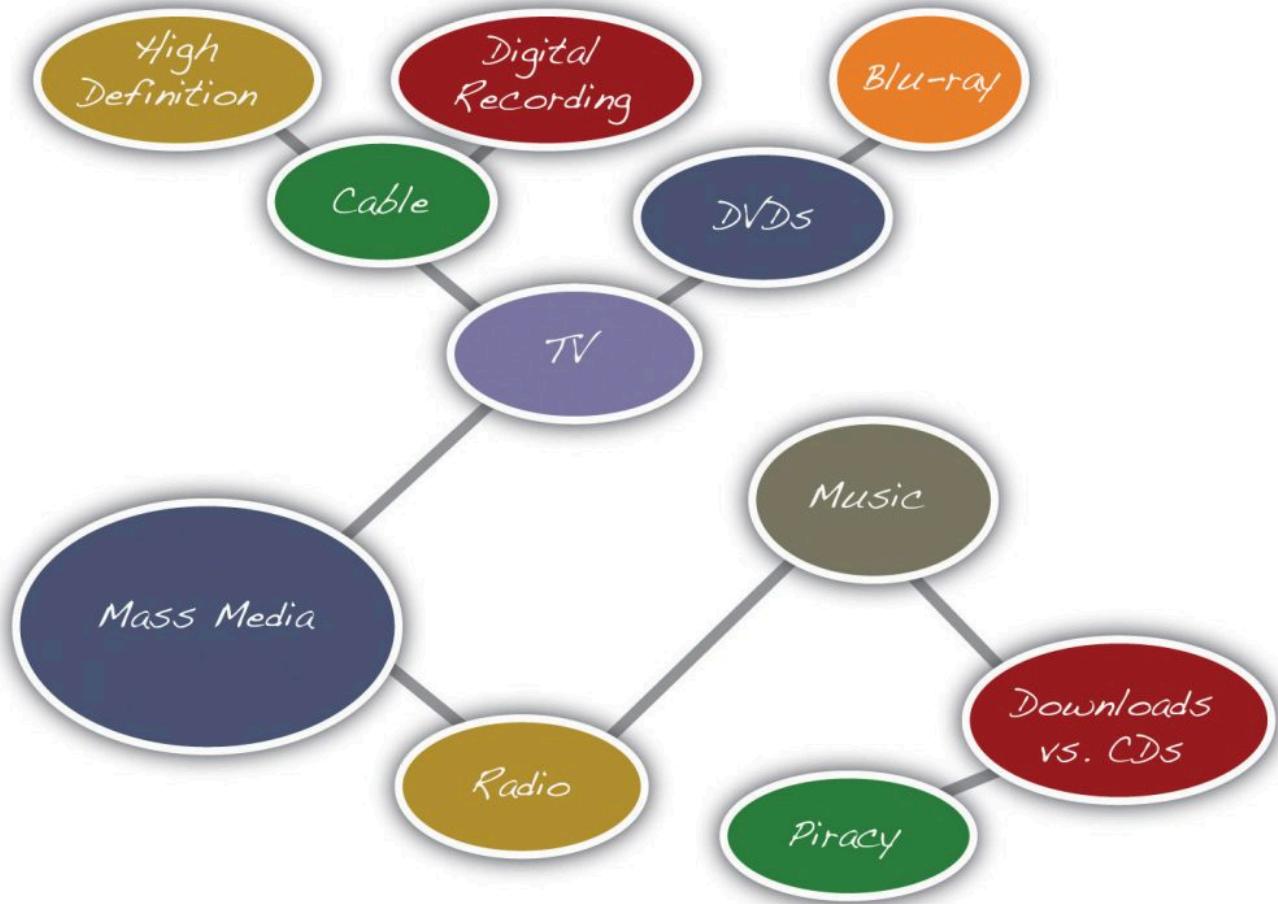


Figure 5.3

Notice the largest circle contains a general topic, mass media. Then, the general topic branches into two subtopics written in two smaller circles: television and radio. The subtopic television branches into even more specific topics: cable and DVDs. From there, draw more circles and write more specific ideas: high definition and digital recording from cable and Blu-ray from DVDs. The radio topic leads to draw connections between music, downloads versus CDs, and, finally, piracy.

From this idea map, you can narrow the focus of the mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

## Searching the Internet

Using search engines on the Internet is a good way to see what kinds of websites are available on your

topic. Writers use search engines not only to understand more about the topic's specific issues but also to get better acquainted with their audience.

**TIP:** Look back at the chart you completed in the second exercise. Did you guess at any of the answers? Searching the Internet may help you find answers to your questions and confirm your guesses. Be choosy about the websites you use. Make sure they are reliable sources for the kind of information you seek.

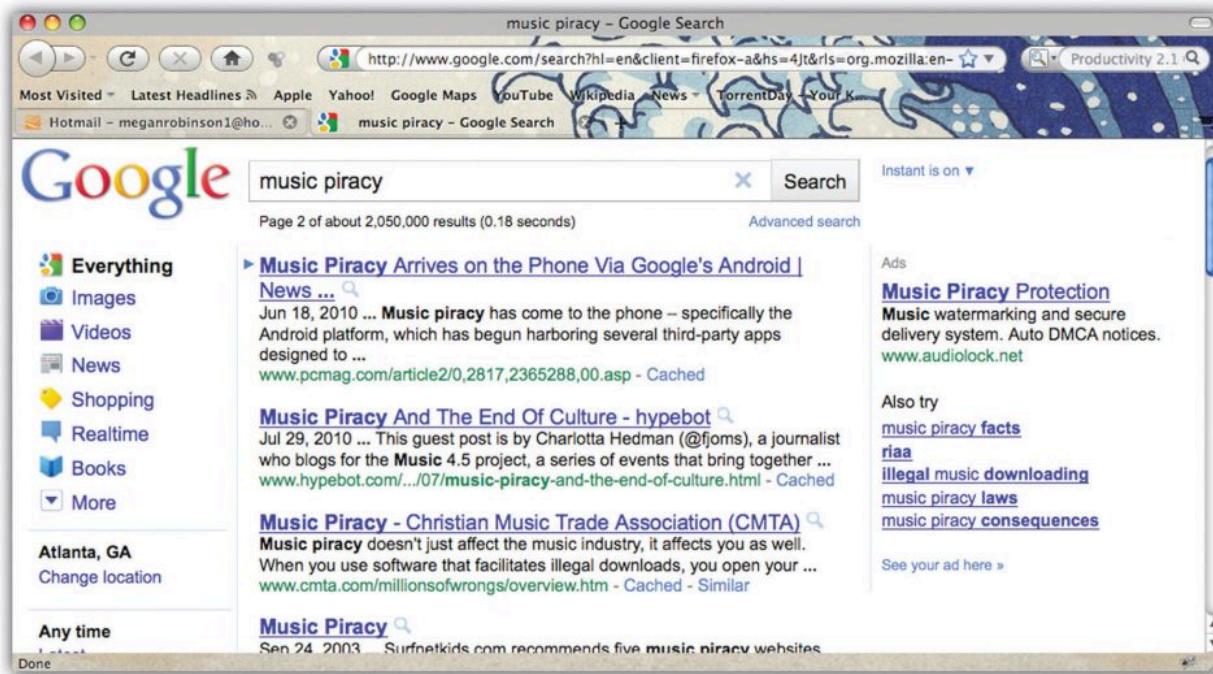
When you search the Internet, type some key words from your broad topic or words from your narrowed focus into your browser's search engine (many good general and specialized search engines are available for you to try). Then look over the results for relevant and interesting articles.

Results from an Internet search show writers the following information:

- Who is talking about the topic
- How the topic is being discussed
- What specific points are currently being discussed about the topic

**TIP:** If the search engine results are not what you are looking for, revise your key words and search again. Some search engines also offer suggestions for related searches that may give you better results.

Type the words *music piracy* from the idea map into the search engine Google.



Retrieved from

<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=4Jt&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&q=music+piracy&start=10&sa=N!>>

Figure 5.4

Not all the results online search engines return will be useful or reliable. Give careful consideration to the reliability of an online source before selecting a topic based on it. Remember that factual information can be verified in other sources, both online and in print. If you have doubts about any information you find, either do not use it or identify it as potentially unreliable.

#### Exercise 5.4

In exercise 2, you chose a possible topic and explored it by answering questions about it using the 5WH questions. However, this topic may still be too broad. Here, choose and complete one of the prewriting strategies to narrow the focus. Use either brainstorming, idea mapping, or searching the Internet.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Share what you found and what interests you about the possible topic(s).

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you first choose a broad topic and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step.

### Checklist 5.1 Developing a Good Topic

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is a good topic for your assignment.

- Am I interested in this topic?
- Would my audience be interested?
- Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experiences?
- Do I want to learn more about this topic?
- Is this topic specific?
- Does it fit the length of the assignment?

With your narrowed focus in mind, answer the bulleted questions in the checklist 5.1 for developing a good topic. If you can answer “yes” to all the questions, write your topic on the line. If you answer “no” to any of the questions, think about another topic or adjust the one you have and try the prewriting strategies again.

My narrowed topic: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Text Attributions

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## 6.

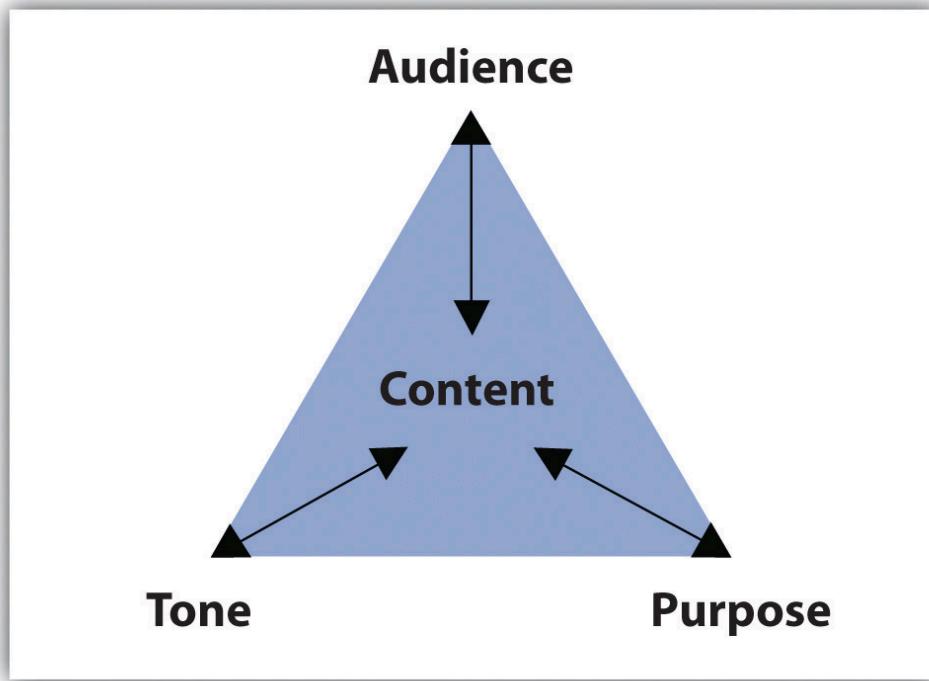
### Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. One technique that effective writers use is to begin a fresh paragraph for each new idea they introduce.

Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks. One paragraph focuses on only one main idea and presents coherent sentences to support that one point. Because all the sentences in one paragraph support the same point, a paragraph may stand on its own. To create longer assignments and to discuss more than one point, writers group together paragraphs.

Three elements shape the content of each paragraph:

1. **Purpose.** The reason the writer composes the paragraph.
2. **Tone.** The attitude the writer conveys about the paragraph's subject.
3. **Audience.** The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.



*Figure 6.1*

The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what the paragraph covers and how it will support one main point. This section covers how purpose, audience, and tone affect reading and writing paragraphs.

## Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose for a piece of writing identifies the reason you write a particular document. Basically, the purpose of a piece of writing answers the question “Why?” For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theater. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform him or her of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your congressman? To persuade him to address your community’s needs.

In academic settings, the reasons for writing fulfill four main purposes:

1. to summarize,
2. to analyze,
3. to synthesize, and
4. to evaluate.

You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but also as you read for work or pleasure. Because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as you read.

Eventually, your instructors will ask you to complete assignments specifically designed to meet one of the four purposes. As you will see, the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of the paper, helping you make decisions about content and style. For now, identifying these purposes by reading paragraphs will prepare you to write individual paragraphs and to build longer assignments.

## Summary Paragraphs

A summary shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials. You probably summarize events, books, and movies daily. Think about the last blockbuster movie you saw or the last novel you read. Chances are, at some point in a casual conversation with a friend, coworker, or classmate, you compressed all the action in a two-hour film or in a two-hundred-page book into a brief description of the major plot movements. While in conversation, you probably described the major highlights, or the main points in just a few sentences, using your own vocabulary and manner of speaking.

Similarly, a summary paragraph condenses a long piece of writing into a smaller paragraph by extracting only the vital information. A summary uses only the writer’s own words. Like the summary’s purpose in daily conversation, the purpose of an academic summary paragraph is to maintain all the essential information from a longer document. Although shorter than the original piece of writing, a summary should still communicate all the key points and key support. In other words, summary paragraphs should be succinct and to the point.

Here is a report on youth alcohol consumption:

According to the Monitoring the Future Study, almost two-thirds of 10-grade students reported having tried alcohol at least once in their lifetime, and two-fifths reported having been drunk at least once (Johnston et al, 2006x). Among 12th-grade students, these rates had risen to over three-quarters who reported having tried alcohol at least once and nearly three-fifths who reported having been drunk at least once. In terms of current alcohol use, 33.2 percent of the Nation's 10th graders and 47.0 percent of the 12th graders reported having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days; 17.6 percent and 30.2 percent, respectively, reported having had five or more drinks in a row in the past 2 weeks (sometimes called binge drinking); and 1.3 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively, reported daily alcohol use (Johnston et al. 2006a).

Alcohol consumption continue to escalate after high school. In fact, eighteen to twenty-four-year-olds have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol dependence of any age group. In the first 2 years after high school, lifetime prevalence of alcohol use (based on 2005 follow-up surveys from the Monitoring the Future Study) was 81.8 percent, 30-day use prevalence was 59 percent, and binge-drinking prevalence was 36.3 percent (Johnston et al, 2006b). Of note, college students on average drink more than their noncollege peers, even though they drink less during high school than those who did not go on to college (Johnston et al, 2006a,b; Schulenberg and Maggs 2002). For example, in 2005, the rate of binge drinking for college students (1 to 4 years beyond high school was 40.1 percent, whereas the ate for their noncollege age mates was 35.1 percent.

Alcohol use and problem drinking in late adolescence vary by sociodemographic characteristics. For example, the prevalence of alcohol use is higher for boys than for girls, higher for White and Hispanic adolescents than for African-American adolescents, and higher for those living in the north and north central United States than for those living in the South and West. Some of these relationships change with early adulthood, however. For example, although alcohol use high school tends to be higher areas with lower population density (i.e., rural areas) than in more densely populated areas, this relationship reverses during early adulthood (Johnston et al., 2006 a,b). Lower economic status (i.e., lower education level of parents) is associated with more alcohol use during early high school years; by the end of high school, and during the transition to adulthood, this relationship changes, and youth from higher socioeconomic background consume greater amounts of alcohol.

A summary of the report should present all the main points and supporting details in brief. Read the following summary of the report written by a student:

Brown et al. inform us that by tenth grade, nearly two-thirds of students have tried alcohol at least once, and by twelfth grade this figure increases to over three-quarters of students. After high school, alcohol consumption increases further, and college-aged students have the highest levels of alcohol consumption dependence of any age group. Alcohol use varies according to factors such as gender, race, geographic location, and socioeconomic status.

Some of these trends may reverse in early childhood. For example, adolescents of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol during high school years, whereas youth from higher socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol in the years after high school.

Notice how the summary retains the key points made by the writers of the original report but omits

most of the statistical data. Summaries need not contain all the specific facts and figures in the original document; they provide only an overview of the essential information.

## Analysis Paragraphs

An analysis separates complex materials in their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. The analysis of simple table salt, for example, would require a deconstruction of its parts—the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride, which is also called simple table salt.

Analysis is not limited to the sciences, of course. An analysis paragraph in academic writing fulfills the same purpose. Instead of deconstructing compounds, academic analysis paragraphs typically deconstruct documents. An analysis takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

Take a look at a student's analysis of the journal report:

At the beginning of their report, Brown et al. use specific data regarding the use of alcohol by high school students and college-age students, which is supported by several studies. Later in the report, they consider how various socioeconomic factors influence problem drinking in adolescence. The latter part of the report is far less specific and does not provide statistics or examples.

The lack of specific information in the second part of the report raises several important questions. Why are teenagers in rural high schools more likely to drink than teenagers in urban areas? Where do they obtain alcohol? How do parental attitudes influence this trend? A follow-up study could compare several high schools in rural and urban areas to consider these issues and potentially find ways to reduce teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the analysis does not simply repeat information from the original report, but considers how the points within the report relate to one another. By doing this, the student uncovers a discrepancy between the points that are backed up by statistics and those that require additional information. Analyzing a document involves a close examination of each of the individual parts and how they work together.

## Synthesis Paragraphs

A synthesis combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Consider the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar—or any other combination of instruments—to create a new sound. The purpose of the synthesizer is to blend together the notes from individual instruments to form new, unique notes.

The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document. An academic synthesis paragraph considers the main points from one or more pieces of writing and links the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document.

Take a look at a student's synthesis of several sources about underage drinking:

In their 2009 report, Brown et al. consider the rates of alcohol consumption among high school and college-aged students and various sociodemographic factors that affect these rates. However, this report is limited to assessing the rates of underage drinking, rather than considering methods of decreasing these rates. Several other studies, as well as original research among college students, provide insight into how these rates may be reduced.

One study, by Spoth, Greenberg, and Thurrissi (2009) considers the impact of various types of interventions as a method for reducing alcohol consumption among minors. They conclude that although family-focused interventions for adolescents aged ten to fifteen have shown promise, there is a serious lack of interventions available for college-aged students who do not attend college. These students are among the highest risk level of alcohol abuse, a fact supported by Brown et al.

I did my own research and interviewed eight college students, four men and four women. I asked them when they first tried alcohol and what factors encouraged them to drink. All four men had tried alcohol by the age of thirteen. Three of the women had also tried alcohol by thirteen and the fourth had tried alcohol by fifteen. All eight students said that peer pressure, boredom, and the thrill of trying something illegal were motivating factors. These results support the research of Brown et al. However, they also raise an interesting point. If boredom is a motivating factor for underage drinking, maybe additional after school programs or other community measures could be introduced to dissuade teenagers from underage drinking. Based on my sources, further research is needed to show true preventative measures for teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the synthesis paragraphs consider each source and use information from each to create a new thesis. A good synthesis does not repeat information; the writer uses a variety of sources to create a new idea.

## Evaluation Paragraphs

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. Thus evaluation paragraphs often follow summary, analysis, and synthesis paragraphs. Read this student's evaluation paragraph:

Throughout their report, Brown et al. provided valuable statistics that highlight the frequency of alcohol use among high school and college students. They use several reputable sources to support their points. However, the report focuses solely on the frequency of alcohol use and how it varies according to certain sociodemographic factors. Other sources, such as Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrissi's study (2009) and the survey I conducted among college students, examine the reasons for alcohol use among young people and offer suggestions as to how to reduce the rates. Nonetheless, I think that Brown et al. offer a useful set of statistics from which to base further research into alcohol use among high school and college students.

Notice how the paragraph incorporates the student's personal judgment within the evaluation. Evaluating a document requires prior knowledge that is often based on additional research.

**TIP:** When reviewing directions for assignments, look for the verbs *summarize*, *analyze*, *synthesize*, or *evaluate*. Instructors often use these words to clearly indicate the assignment's purpose. These words will cue you on how to complete the assignment because you will know its exact purpose.

### Exercise 6.1

Read the following paragraphs about four films and then identify the purpose of each paragraph.

- a. This film could easily have been cut down to less than two hours. By the final scene, I noticed that most of my fellow moviegoers were snoozing in their seats and were barely paying attention to what was happening on screen. Although the director sticks diligently to the book, he tries too hard to cram in all the action, which is just too ambitious for such a detail-oriented story. If you want my advice, read the book and give the movie a miss.
- b. During the opening scene, we learn that the character Laura is adopted and that she has spent the past three years desperately trying to track down her real parents. Having exhausted all the usual options—adoption agencies, online searches, family trees, and so on—she is on the verge of giving up when she meets a stranger on a bus. The chance encounter leads to a complicated chain of events that ultimately result in Laura getting her lifelong wish. But is it really what she wants? Throughout the rest of the film, Laura discovers that sometimes the past is best left where it belongs.
- c. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vice, the director, May Lee, uses a variety of elements to gradually increase the tension. The creepy, haunting melody that subtly enhances the earlier scenes becomes ever more insistent, rising to a disturbing crescendo toward the end of the movie. The desperation of the actors, combined with the claustrophobic atmosphere and tight camera angles create a realistic firestorm, from which there is little hope of escape. Walking out of the theater at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.
- d. The scene in which Campbell and his fellow prisoners assist the guards in shutting down the riot

immediately strikes the viewer as unrealistic. Based on the recent reports on prison riots in both Detroit and California, it seems highly unlikely that a posse of hardened criminals will intentionally help their captors at the risk of inciting future revenge from other inmates. Instead, both news reports and psychological studies indicate that prisoners who do not actively participate in a riot will go back to their cells and avoid conflict altogether. Examples of this lack of attention to detail occur throughout the film, making it almost unbearable to watch.

### Collaboration

Share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### Writing in Process

Thinking about the purpose of writing a report in the workplace can help focus and structure the document. A summary should provide colleagues with a factual overview of your findings without going into too much specific detail. In contrast, an evaluation should include your personal opinion, along with supporting evidence, research, or examples to back it up. Listen for words such as *summarize*, *analyze*, *synthesize*, or *evaluate* when your boss asks you to complete a report to help determine a purpose for writing.

### Exercise 6.2

Consider the essay most recently assigned to you. Identify the most effective academic purpose for the assignment.

My assignment:

My purpose:

## Identifying the Audience

With an expository essay, since you are defining or informing your audience on a certain topic, you need to evaluate how much your audience knows about that topic (aside from having general common knowledge).

You want to make sure you are giving thorough, comprehensive, and clear explanations on the topic. Never assume the reader knows everything about your topic (even if it is covered in the reader's field of study). For example, even though some of your instructors may teach criminology, they may have specialized in different areas from the one about which you are writing; they most likely have a strong understanding of the concepts but may not recall all the small details on the topic. If your instructor

specialized in crime mapping and data analysis for example, they may not have a strong recollection of specific criminological theories related to other areas of study.

Providing enough background information without being too detailed is a fine balance, but you always want to ensure you have no gaps in the information, so your reader will not have to guess your intention.

1. Imagine you must give a presentation to a group of executives in an office. Weeks before the big day, you spend time creating and rehearsing the presentation. You must make important, careful decisions not only about the content but also about your delivery. Will the presentation require technology to project figures and charts? Should the presentation define important words, or will the executives already know the terms? Should you wear your suit and dress shirt? The answers to these questions will help you develop an appropriate relationship with your audience, making them more receptive to your message.
2. Now imagine you must explain the same business concepts from your presentation to a group of high school students. Those important questions you previously answered may now require different answers. The figures and charts may be too sophisticated, and the terms will certainly require definitions. You may even reconsider your outfit and sport a more casual look. Because the audience has shifted, your presentation and delivery will shift as well to create a new relationship with the new audience.

In these two situations, the audience—the individuals who will watch and listen to the presentation—plays a role in the development of presentation. As you prepare the presentation, you visualize the audience to anticipate their expectations and reactions. What you imagine affects the information you choose to present and how you will present it. Then, during the presentation, you meet the audience in person and discover immediately how well you perform.

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about audience has become so common that you may not even detect the audience-driven decisions.

For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send e-mails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could intercept the message.

In other words, being aware of “invisible” readers is a skill you most likely already possess and one you rely on every day. Consider the following paragraphs. Which one would the author send to her parents? Which one would she send to her best friend?

### **Example A**

Last Saturday, I volunteered at a local hospital. The visit was fun and rewarding. I even learned how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR. Unfortunately, I think caught a cold from one of the

patients. This week, I will rest in bed and drink plenty of clear fluids. I hope I am well by next Saturday to volunteer again.

### Example B

OMG! You won't believe this! My advisor forced me to do my community service hours at this hospital all weekend! We learned CPR but we did it on dummies, not even real peeps. And some kid sneezed on me and got me sick! I was so bored and sniffling all weekend; I hope I don't have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

Most likely, you matched each paragraph to its intended audience with little hesitation. Because each paragraph reveals the author's relationship with her intended readers, you can identify the audience fairly quickly. When writing your own paragraphs, you must engage with your audience to build an appropriate relationship given your subject. Imagining your readers during each stage of the writing process will help you make decisions about your writing. Ultimately, the people you visualize will affect what and how you write.

**TIP:** While giving a speech, you may articulate an inspiring or critical message, but if you left your hair a mess and laced up mismatched shoes, your audience would not take you seriously. They may be too distracted by your appearance to listen to your words.

Similarly, grammar and sentence structure serve as the appearance of a piece of writing. Polishing your work using correct grammar will impress your readers and allow them to focus on what you have to say.

Because focusing on audience will enhance your writing, your process, and your finished product, you must consider the specific traits of your audience members. Use your imagination to anticipate the readers' demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations.

- **Demographics.** These measure important data about a group of people, such as their age range, their ethnicity, their religious beliefs, or their gender. Certain topics and assignments will require these kinds of considerations about your audience. For other topics and assignments, these measurements may not influence your writing in the end. Regardless, it is important to consider demographics when you begin to think about your purpose for writing.
- **Education.** Education considers the audience's level of schooling. If audience members have earned a doctorate degree, for example, you may need to elevate your style and use more formal language. Or, if audience members are still in college, you could write in a more relaxed style. An audience member's major or emphasis may also dictate your writing.
- **Prior knowledge.** This refers to what the audience already knows about your topic. If your readers have studied certain topics, they may already know some terms and concepts related to the topic. You may decide whether to define terms and explain concepts based on your audience's prior knowledge. Although you cannot peer inside the brains of your readers to discover their knowledge, you can make reasonable assumptions. For instance, a nursing major would presumably know more about health-related topics than a business major would.
- **Expectations.** These indicate what readers will look for while reading your assignment.

Readers may expect consistencies in the assignment's appearance, such as correct grammar and traditional formatting like double-spaced lines and legible font. Readers may also have content-based expectations given the assignment's purpose and organization. In an essay titled "The Economics of Enlightenment: The Effects of Rising Tuition," for example, audience members may expect to read about the economic repercussions of college tuition costs.

### Exercise 6.3

On your own sheet of paper, generate a list of characteristics under each category for each audience. This list will help you later when you read about tone and content.

1. Your classmates
  - Demographics:
  - Education:
  - Prior knowledge:
  - Expectations:
2. Your instructor
  - Demographics:
  - Education:
  - Prior knowledge:
  - Expectations:
3. The head of your academic department
  - Demographics:
  - Education:
  - Prior knowledge:
  - Expectations:
4. Now think about your next writing assignment. Identify the purpose and then identify the audience. Create a list of characteristics under each category.  
My assignment:  
My purpose:  
My audience:
  - Demographics:
  - Education:
  - Prior knowledge:
  - Expectations:

### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Keep in mind that as your topic shifts in the writing process, your audience may also shift.

Also, remember that decisions about style depend on audience, purpose, and content. Identifying your audience's demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will affect how you write, but purpose and content play an equally important role. The next subsection covers how to select an appropriate tone to match the audience and purpose.

## Selecting an Appropriate Tone

Tone identifies a speaker's attitude toward a subject or another person. You may pick up a person's tone of voice fairly easily in conversation. A friend who tells you about her weekend may speak excitedly about a fun skiing trip. An instructor who means business may speak in a low, slow voice to emphasize her serious mood. Or, a coworker who needs to let off some steam after a long meeting may crack a sarcastic joke.

Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers can transmit through writing a range of attitudes, from excited and humorous to somber and critical. These emotions create connections among the audience, the author, and the subject, ultimately building a relationship between the audience and the text. To stimulate these connections, writers intimate their attitudes and feelings with useful devices, such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language. Keep in mind that the writer's attitude should always appropriately match the audience and the purpose.

Read the following paragraph and consider the writer's tone. How would you describe the writer's attitude toward wildlife conservation?

Many species of plants and animals are disappearing right before our eyes. If we don't act fast, it might be too late to save them. Human activities, including pollution, deforestation, hunting, and overpopulation, are devastating the natural environment. Without our help, many species will not survive long enough for our children to see them in the wild. Take the tiger, for example. Today, tigers occupy just 7 percent of their historical range, and many local populations are already extinct. Hunted for their beautiful pelt and other body parts, the tiger population has plummeted from one hundred thousand in 1920 to just a few thousand. Contact your local wildlife conservation society today to find out how you can stop this terrible destruction.

### Exercise 6.4

Think about the assignment and purpose you selected in exercise 2 and the audience you selected in exercise 3. Now, identify the tone you would use in the assignment.

My assignment:

My purpose:

My audience:

My tone:

## Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content

Content refers to all the written substance in a document. After selecting an audience and a purpose, you must choose what information will make it to the page. Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations, but no matter the type, the information must be appropriate and interesting for the audience and purpose. An essay written for third graders that summarizes the legislative process, for example, would have to contain succinct and simple content.

Content is also shaped by tone. When the tone matches the content, the audience will be more engaged, and you will build a stronger relationship with your readers. Consider that audience of third graders. You would choose simple content that the audience will easily understand, and you would express that content through an enthusiastic tone. The same considerations apply to all audiences and purposes.

### Exercise 6.5

Match the content in the box to the appropriate audience and purpose. On your own sheet of paper, write the correct letter next to the number.

- a. Whereas economist Holmes contends that the financial crisis is far from over, the presidential advisor Jones points out that it is vital to catch the first wave of opportunity to increase market share. We can use elements of both experts' visions. Let me explain how.
  - b. In 2000, foreign money flowed into the United States, contributing to easy credit conditions. People bought larger houses than they could afford, eventually defaulting on their loans as interest rates rose.
  - c. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, known by most of us as the humungous government bailout, caused mixed reactions. Although supported by many political leaders, the statute provoked outrage among grassroots groups. In their opinion, the government was actually rewarding banks for their appalling behavior.
1. Audience: An instructor  
Purpose: To analyze the reasons behind the 2007 financial crisis  
Content:
  2. Audience: Classmates

Purpose: To summarize the effects of the \$700 billion government bailout

Content:

3. Audience: An employer

Purpose: To synthesize two articles on preparing businesses for economic recovery

Content:

### **Collaboration**

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### Exercise 6.6

Using the assignment, purpose, audience, and tone from exercise 4, generate a list of content ideas. Remember that content consists of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations.

My assignment:

My purpose:

My audience:

My tone:

My content ideas:

### Text Attributions

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## 7.

## Outlining

Your prewriting activities and readings have helped you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you found, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. But only when you start to organize your ideas will you be able to translate your raw insights into a form that will communicate meaning to your audience.

**TIP:** Longer papers require more reading and planning than shorter papers do. Most writers discover that the more they know about a topic, the more they can write about it with intelligence and interest.

## Organizing Ideas

When you write, you need to organize your ideas in an order that makes sense. The writing you complete in all your courses exposes how analytically and critically your mind works. In some courses, the only direct contact you may have with your instructor is through the assignments you write for the course. You can make a good impression by spending time ordering your ideas.

Order refers to your choice of what to present first, second, third, and so on in your writing. The order you pick closely relates to your purpose for writing that particular assignment. For example, when telling a story, it may be important to first describe the background for the action. Or you may need to first describe a 3-D movie projector or a television studio to help readers visualize the setting and scene. You may want to group your support effectively to convince readers that your point of view on an issue is well reasoned and worthy of belief.

In longer pieces of writing, you may organize different parts in different ways so that your purpose stands out clearly and all parts of the paper work together to consistently develop your main point.

## Methods of Organizing Writing

The three common methods of organizing writing are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance. Keep these methods of organization in mind as you plan how to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support for your assignment.

When you write, your goal is not only to complete an assignment but also to write for a specific purpose—perhaps to inform, to explain, to persuade, or for a combination of these purposes. Your purpose for writing should always be in the back of your mind, because it will help you decide which pieces of information belong together and how you will order them. In other words, choose the order that will most effectively fit your purpose and support your main point. Table 7.1 “Order versus Purpose” shows the connection between order and purpose.

**Table 7.1 Order versus Purpose**

Order	Purpose
Chronological Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain the history of an event or a topic</li> <li>• To tell a story or relate an experience</li> <li>• To explain how to do or make something</li> <li>• To explain the steps in a process</li> </ul>
Spatial Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help readers visualize something as you want them to see it</li> <li>• To create a main impression using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)</li> </ul>
Order of Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To persuade or convince</li> <li>• To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance</li> </ul>

## Writing a Thesis Statement

One legitimate question readers always ask about a piece of writing is “What is the big idea?” (You may even ask this question when you are the reader, critically reading an assignment or another document.) Every nonfiction writing task—from the short essay to the ten-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a big idea, or a controlling idea, as the spine for the work. The controlling idea is the main idea that you want to present and develop.

**TIP:** For a longer piece of writing, the main idea should be broader than the main idea for a shorter piece of writing. Be sure to frame a main idea that is appropriate for the length of the assignment. Ask yourself, “How many pages will it take for me to explain and explore this main idea in detail?” Be reasonable with your estimate. Then expand or trim it to fit the required length.

The big idea, or controlling idea, you want to present in an essay is expressed in a thesis statement. A thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view. The thesis statement is not

the topic of the piece of writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to tell readers.

**Table 7.2 “Topics and Thesis Statements”**

Topic	Thesis Statement
Music piracy	The recording industry fears that so-called music piracy will diminish profits and destroy markets, but it cannot be more wrong.
The number of consumer choices available in media gear	Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are extensive, and the specifications are often confusing.
E-books and online newspapers increasing their share of the market	E-books and online newspapers will bring an end to print media as we know it.
Online education and the new media	Someday, students and teachers will send avatars to their online classrooms.

The first thesis statement you write will be a preliminary thesis statement, or a working thesis statement. You will need it when you begin to outline your assignment as a way to organize it. As you continue to develop the arrangement, you can limit your working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say.

#### Exercise 7.1

Develop a working thesis statement that states your controlling idea for the piece of writing you are doing. On a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement.

**TIP:** You will make several attempts before you devise a working thesis statement that you think is effective. Each draft of the thesis statement will bring you closer to the wording that expresses your meaning exactly.

## Writing an Outline

For an essay question on a test or a brief oral presentation in class, all you may need to prepare is a short, informal outline in which you jot down key ideas in the order you will present them. This kind of outline reminds you to stay focused in a stressful situation and to include all the good ideas that help you explain or prove your point.

For a longer assignment, like an essay or a research paper, many instructors require students to submit a formal outline before writing a major paper as a way to be sure you are on the right track and are working in an organized manner. A formal outline is a detailed guide that shows how all your

supporting ideas relate to each other. It helps you distinguish between ideas that are of equal importance and ones that are of lesser importance. You build your paper based on the framework created by the outline.

**TIP:** Instructors may also require you to submit an outline with your final draft to check the direction of the assignment and the logic of your final draft. If you are required to submit an outline with the final draft of a paper, remember to revise the outline to reflect any changes you made while writing the paper.

There are two types of formal outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline. You format both types of formal outlines in the same way.

- Place your introduction and thesis statement at the beginning, under roman numeral I.
- Use Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
- Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, E, etc.) to divide your main points into parts.
- Use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) if you need to subdivide any As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts.
- End with the final roman numeral expressing your idea for your conclusion.

Here is what the skeleton of a traditional formal outline looks like. The indentation helps clarify how the ideas are related.

I. Introduction  
Thesis statement

II. Main point 1 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*

- A. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
- B. Supporting detail
- C. Supporting detail

III. Main point 2 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2*

IV. Main point 3 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3*

V. Conclusion

**TIP:** In an outline, any supporting detail can be developed with subpoints. For simplicity, the model shows them only under the first main point.

## Constructing Topic Outlines

A topic outline is the same as a sentence outline except you use words or phrases instead of complete sentences. Words and phrases keep the outline short and easier to comprehend. All the headings, however, must be written in parallel structure.

Here is the topic outline that a student constructed for the essay a student is developing. Their purpose is to inform, and their audience is a general audience of their fellow college students. Notice how they begin with their thesis statement. They then arrange their main points and supporting details in outline form using short phrases in parallel grammatical structure.

- I. Introduction
  - Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.
- II. E-book readers and the way that people read
  - A. Books easy to access and carry around
    - 1. Electronic downloads
    - 2. Storage in memory for hundreds of books
  - B. An expanding market
    - 1. E-book readers from booksellers
    - 2. E-book readers from electronics and computer companies
  - C. Limitations of current e-book readers
    - 1. Incompatible features from one brand to the next
    - 2. Borrowing and sharing e-books
- III. Film cameras replaced by digital cameras
  - A. Three types of digital cameras
    - 1. Compact digital cameras
    - 2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs
    - 3. Cameras that combine the best features of both
  - B. The confusing “megapixel wars”
  - C. The zoom lens battle
- IV. The confusing choice among televisions
  - A. 1080p vs. 768p
  - B. Plasma screens vs. LCDs

C. Home media centres

V. Conclusion

- How to be a wise consumer

### Checklist 7.1 Writing an Effective Topic Outline

This checklist can help you write an effective topic outline for your assignment. It will also help you discover where you may need to do additional reading or prewriting.

- Do I have a controlling idea that guides the development of the entire piece of writing?
- Do I have three or more main points that I want to make in this piece of writing? Does each main point connect to my controlling idea?
- Is my outline in the best order—chronological order, spatial order, or order of importance—for me to present my main points? Will this order help me get my main point across?
- Do I have supporting details that will help me inform, explain, or prove my main points?
- Do I need to add more support? If so, where?
- Do I need to make any adjustments in my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

### Writing in Process

Word processing programs generally have an automatic numbering feature that can be used to prepare outlines. This feature automatically sets indents and lets you use the tab key to arrange information just as you would in an outline. Although in business this style might be acceptable, your instructor might have different requirements. Teach yourself how to customize the levels of outline numbering in your word-processing program to fit your instructor's preferences.

### Exercise 7.2

Using the working thesis statement you wrote in the first exercise, construct a topic outline for your essay. Be

sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and Arabic numerals and capital letters.

### **Collaboration**

Please share with a classmate and compare your outline. Point out areas of interest from their outline and what you would like to learn more about.

## **Constructing Sentence Outlines**

A sentence outline is the same as a topic outline except you use complete sentences instead of words or phrases. Complete sentences create clarity and can advance you one step closer to a draft in the writing process.

Here is the sentence outline that a student constructed for the essay she is developing.

### I. Introduction

- Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

### II. E-book readers and the way that people read.

#### A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry

1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.

#### B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.

1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.

#### C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.

1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries.

### III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced by film cameras.

#### A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.

1. Compactible digital cameras are light by have fewer megapixels.
2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large and heavy but can be sued for many functions.

3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.
  - B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing “megapixel wars.”
  - C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.
- IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions
  - A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 720p?
  - B. In the screen-size war, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
  - C. Does every home really need a media centre?
- V. Conclusion
  - The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

**TIP:** The information compiled under each roman numeral will become a paragraph in your final paper. In the previous example, the outline follows the standard five-paragraph essay arrangement, but longer essays will require more paragraphs and thus more roman numerals. If you think that a paragraph might become too long or stringy, add an additional paragraph to your outline, renumbering the main points appropriately.

#### Writing in Process

PowerPoint presentations, used both in schools and in the workplace, are organized in a way very similar to formal outlines. PowerPoint presentations often contain information in the form of talking points that the presenter develops with more details and examples than are contained on the PowerPoint slide.

#### Exercise 7.3

Expand the topic outline you prepared in the second exercise to make it a sentence outline. In this outline, be sure to include multiple supporting points for your main topic even if your topic outline does not contain them. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentations and the use of Roman and Arabic numerals and capital letters.

## Text Attributions

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## 8.

### Writing a Paragraph

Now that you have identified common purposes for writing and learned how to select appropriate content for a particular audience, you can think about the structure of a paragraph in greater detail. Composing an effective paragraph requires a method similar to building a house. You may have the finest content, or materials, but if you do not arrange them in the correct order, then the final product will not hold together very well.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. Topic sentence. The topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. Body. The body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. Conclusion. The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay and guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

### Developing a Topic Sentence

Pick up any newspaper or magazine and read the first sentence of an article. Are you fairly confident that you know what the rest of the article is about? If so, you have likely read the topic sentence. An effective topic sentence combines a main idea with the writer's personal attitude or opinion. It serves to orient the reader and provides an indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. Read the following example.

Creating a national set of standards for math and English education will improve student learning in many provinces.

This topic sentence declares a favorable position for standardizing math and English education. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to provide supporting details and facts as to why standardizing math and English education might improve student learning in many provinces. If the purpose of the essay is actually to evaluate education in only one particular state, or to discuss math or English education specifically, then the topic sentence is misleading.

**TIP:** When writing a draft of an essay, allow a friend or colleague to read the opening line of your first paragraph. Ask your reader to predict what your paper will be about. If they are unable to guess your topic accurately, you should consider revising your topic sentence so that it clearly defines your purpose in writing.

## Main Idea versus Controlling Idea

Topic sentences contain both a main idea (the subject, or topic that the writer is discussing) and a controlling idea (the writer's specific stance on that subject). Just as a thesis statement includes an idea that controls a document's focus, a topic sentence must also contain a controlling idea to direct the paragraph. Different writers may use the same main idea but can steer their paragraph in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject. Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The antinausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalizing marijuana would create a higher demand for Class A and Class B drugs.

Although the main idea—marijuana—is the same in all three topic sentences, the controlling idea differs depending on the writer's viewpoint.

### Exercise 8.1

Circle the main idea and underline the controlling idea in each of the following topic sentences.

1. Exercising three times a week is the only way to maintain good physical health.
2. Sexism and racism are still rampant in today's workplace.
3. Raising the legal driving age to twenty-one would decrease road traffic accidents.
4. Owning a business is the only way to achieve financial success.
5. Dog owners should be prohibited from taking their pets on public beaches.

## Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the

paragraph. **Weak example.** People rarely give firefighters the credit they deserve for such a physically and emotionally demanding job. (The paragraph is about a specific incident that involved firefighters; therefore, this topic sentence is too general.)

**Stronger example.** During the October riots, Unit 3B went beyond the call of duty. (This topic sentence is more specific and indicates that the paragraph will contain information about a particular incident involving Unit 3B.)

2. A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion. **Weak example.** In this paper, I am going to discuss the rising suicide rate among young professionals. (This topic sentence provides a main idea, but it does not present a controlling idea, or thesis.)

**Stronger example.** The rising suicide rate among young professionals is a cause for immediate concern. (This topic sentence presents the writer's opinion on the subject of rising suicide rates among young professionals.)

3. A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow. **Weak example.** In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but both are buried beneath the confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary. These obstacles make it difficult for the reader to follow.) **Stronger example.** Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline. (This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow.)
4. A good topic sentence does not include supporting details. **Weak example.** Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don't allow the same team to win year after year. (This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.) **Stronger example.** Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons. (This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph.)
5. A good topic sentence engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary. **Weak example.** The military deserves better equipment. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but the language is bland and unexciting.) **Stronger example.** The appalling lack of resources provided to the military is outrageous and requires our immediate attention. (This topic sentence reiterates the same idea and controlling thesis, but adjectives such as *appalling* and *immediate* better engage the reader. These words also indicate the writer's tone.)

#### Exercise 8.2

Choose the most effective topic sentence from the following sentence pairs.

- a. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.

- b. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.
  - a. The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.
  - b. Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure.
    - a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.
    - b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.
  - a. Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.
  - b. This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry.

### Exercise 8.3

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a main idea. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species
2. The cost of fuel
3. The legal drinking age
4. A controversial film or novel

### Writing in Process

When creating a workplace document, use the “top-down” approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each paragraph with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

## Developing Paragraphs That Use Topic Sentences, Supporting Ideas, and

## Transitions Effectively

Learning how to develop a good topic sentence is the first step toward writing a solid paragraph. Once you have composed your topic sentence, you have a guideline for the rest of the paragraph. To complete the paragraph, a writer must support the topic sentence with additional information and summarize the main point with a concluding sentence.

This section identifies the three major structural parts of a paragraph and covers how to develop a paragraph using transitional words and phrases.

### Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. This chapter has already discussed its purpose—to express a main idea combined with the writer’s attitude about the subject. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

**Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer**

**Topic Sentence**

(main idea + personal opinion)

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**Body**

Supporting Sentence

---

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Supporting Sentence

---

---

Supporting Sentence

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---

**Conclusion**

(summary of main idea + personal opinion)

Concluding Sentence

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Figure 8.1

Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

After reading the new TV guide this week I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show *Prisoner*). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph.

Now take a look at the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Last year, a cat traveled 130 miles to reach its family, who had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighbourhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals' senses are better than humans'). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

Sometimes, the topic sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph. Read the following example. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

For many years, I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises. It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the underlined sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic.

## Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:

Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment; stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated. This technique is often used in descriptive or narrative writing. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what they intend to say in the paragraph and stick to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

**TIP:** Avoid using implied topic sentences in an informational document. Readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. The clearest and most efficient way to communicate in an informational document is to position the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

#### Exercise 8.4

Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.

The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a minuscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

## Supporting Sentences

If you think of a paragraph, the supporting sentences make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the controlling idea in the topic sentence. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences depending on the audience and purpose for writing. A supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

- **Reason** (For example: The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.)
- **Fact** (For example: Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.)
- **Statistic** (For example: Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.)
- **Quotation** (For example: “We will not allow this situation to continue,” stated Senator Johns.)
- **Example** (For example: Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.)

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Read the following example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. (**Topic sentence**)

First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle.

**(Supporting sentence 1: statistic)**

Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **(Supporting sentence 2: fact)**

Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)**

Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 4: example)**

“It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I’ve owned.” **(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)**

Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future. **(Concluding sentence)**

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources:

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

**TIP:** When searching for information on the Internet, remember that some websites are more reliable than others. websites ending in .gov or .edu are generally more reliable than websites ending in .com or .org. Wikis and blogs are not reliable sources of information because they are subject to inaccuracies.

## Concluding Sentences

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the “meat” or body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the previous example:

**Topic sentence:** There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

**Concluding sentence:** Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Notice the use of the synonyms *advantages* and *benefits*. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea

that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using the exact same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

You should avoid introducing any new ideas into your concluding sentence. A conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion. Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse the reader and weaken your writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- **Restate the main idea.** (For example: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.)
- **Summarize the key points in the paragraph.** (For Example: A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.)
- **Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.** (For example: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.)
- **Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.** (For example: Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be obese by the year 2030 unless we take evasive action.)
- **Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.** (Example: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.)

#### Exercise 8.5

On your own paper, write one example of each type of concluding sentence based on a topic of your choice.

## Transitions

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas. Take another look at the earlier example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which

helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words is a transition word. Words such as *first* and *second* are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer’s ideas by showing that they have another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include *third*, *also*, and *furthermore*.

The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (*because* they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include *as a result*, *so that*, *since*, or *for this reason*.

To include a summarizing transition in her concluding sentence, the writer could rewrite the final sentence as follows:

In conclusion, given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

The following list provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

## Useful Transitional Words and Phrases

### For supporting sentences

- above all
- aside from
- but
- correspondingly
- for instance
- however
- in particular
- likewise
- moreover
- on one hand
- subsequently
- to begin with
- also
- at the same time
- conversely
- for example
- furthermore
- in addition
- later on
- meanwhile
- nevertheless
- on the contrary
- therefore

### For concluding sentences

- after all
- all things considered
- in brief
- in summary
- on the whole
- to sum up
- all in all
- finally
- in conclusion
- on balance
- thus

#### Exercise 8.6

Using your own paper, write a paragraph on a topic of your choice. Be sure to include a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence and to use transitional words and phrases to link your ideas together.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

#### Writing in Process

Transitional words and phrases are useful tools to incorporate into workplace documents. They guide the reader through the document, clarifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs so that the reader understands why they have been written in that particular order.

For example, when writing an instructional memo, it may be helpful to consider the following transitional words and phrases: *before you begin, first, next, then, finally, after you have completed*. Using these transitions as a template to write your memo will provide readers with clear, logical instructions about a particular process and the order in which steps are supposed to be completed.

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## Writing Essays: From Start to Finish



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## 9.

### Thesis Statement

Have you ever known someone who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following the train of thought as the storyteller jumped from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe the person told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. The ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a **thesis statement** to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

### Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a **controlling idea**—the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your instructor gives you, you must ask yourself, “What do I want to say about it?” Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful, and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea—points that are able to be demonstrated in the body. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

### A Strong Thesis Statement

A **strong thesis** statement contains the following qualities:

- **Specificity:** A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.
- **Precision:** A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.
- **Arguability:** A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.
- **Demonstrability:** For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.
- **Forcefulness/Assertiveness:** A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.
- **Confidence:** In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as I feel or I believe actually weaken the readers' sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

**TIP:** Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, your thesis should not contain phrases such as in my opinion or I believe. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

#### Exercise 9.1

On a sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

##### Topics

- Texting while driving
- The legal drinking age in different provinces of Canada

- Steroid use among professional athletes
- Racism

## Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the qualities discussed above: specificity, precision, arguability, demonstrability, forcefulness/assertiveness, and confidence:

- The societal and personal struggles of Floyd in the play *Where the Blood Mixes*, by *Kevin Loring*, symbolize the challenge of First Nations people of Canada who lived through segregation and placement into residential schools.
- Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
- Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
- J. D. Salinger's character in *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet in an effort to protect himself, he acts like a phony on many occasions.
- Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
- Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
- In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.

**TIP:** You can find thesis statements in many places, such as in the news; in the opinions of friends, co-workers or teachers; and even in songs you hear on the radio. Become aware of thesis statements in everyday life by paying attention to people's opinions and their reasons for those opinions. Pay attention to your own everyday thesis statements as well, as these can become material for future essays.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement and have seen examples, take a look four pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis.

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay. Weak thesis statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.
- A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side. Weak thesis statement: Religious radicals across the country are trying to legislate their puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.

- A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end. Weak thesis statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.
- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad. Weak thesis statement: The life of Pierre Trudeau was long and accomplished.

### Exercise 9.2

Read the following thesis statements. On a piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the 19th century.
4. In this essay, I will give you a lot of reasons why marijuana should not be legalized in British Columbia.
5. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.
6. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### Writing in Process

Often in your career, you will need to ask your boss for something through an email. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your email request. While your email will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your boss know what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request.

## Writing a Thesis Statement

One legitimate question readers always ask about a piece of writing is “What is the big idea?” (You

may even ask this question when you are the reader, critically reading an assignment or another document.) Every nonfiction writing task—from the short essay to the 10-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a big idea, or a controlling idea, as the “spine” for the work. The controlling idea is the main idea that you want to present and develop.

**TIP:** For a longer piece of writing, the main idea should be broader than the main idea for a shorter piece of writing. Be sure to frame a main idea that is appropriate for the length of the assignment. Ask yourself how many pages it will take to explain and explore the main idea in detail? Be reasonable with your estimate. Then expand or trim it to fit the required length.

The big idea, or controlling idea, you want to present in an essay is expressed in your thesis statement. Remember that a thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view. The thesis statement is not the topic of the piece of writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to tell readers.

Look at **Table 9.1: Topics and Thesis Statements** for a comparison of topics and thesis statements.

**Table 9.1: Topics and Thesis Statement**

Topic	Thesis Statement
Music piracy	The recording industry fears that so-called music piracy will diminish profits and destroy markets, but it cannot be more wrong.
The number of consumer choices available in media gear	Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are extensive, and the specifications are often confusing.
E-books and online newspapers increasing their share of the market	E-books and online newspapers will bring an end to print media as we know it.
Online education and the new media	Someday, students and teachers will send avatars to their online classrooms.

The first thesis statement you write will be a **preliminary thesis statement**, or a **working thesis statement**. You will need it when you begin to outline your assignment as a way to organize it. As you continue to develop the arrangement, you can limit your working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say.

### Exercise 9.3

Using a topic you select or one assigned to you, develop a working thesis statement that states your controlling idea for the piece of writing you are doing. On a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement.

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

**TIP:** You will make several attempts before you devise a working thesis statement that you think is effective. Each draft of the thesis statement will bring you closer to the wording that expresses your meaning exactly.

## Revising a Thesis Statement

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Remember, you begin with a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

**TIP:** The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

1. **Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words**, such as people, everything, society, or life, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.
  - Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.
  - Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.
  - The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing the general words like people and work hard, the writer can better focus his or her research and gain more direction in his or her writing.
2. **Clarify ideas that need explanation** by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.
  - Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.
  - Revised thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.
  - Joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By

asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for joke. The writer should ask questions similar to the 5WH questions. By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, the writer more accurately defines his or her stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

3. **Replace any linking verbs with action verbs.** Linking verbs gives information about the subject, such as a condition or relationship (is, appear, smell, sound), but they do not show any action. The most common linking verb is any forms of the verb to be, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.
  - Working thesis: British Columbian schoolteachers are not paid enough.
  - Revised thesis: The legislature of British Columbia cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.
  - The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word “are.” Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Reading the original thesis statement above, readers might wonder why teachers are not paid enough, but the statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask themselves questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue. For example, the writer could ask: Who is not paying the teachers enough? What is considered “enough”? What is the problem? What are the results?
4. **Omit any general claims that are hard to support.**
  1. Working thesis: Today’s teenage girls are too sexualized.
  2. Revised thesis: Popular media that overly sexualizes women, conditions teenage girls to believe that a woman’s worth depends on her attractiveness to men, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behaviour.
  3. It is true that some young women in today’s society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. Many girls have strict parents, dress conservatively, and do not engage in sexual activity while in middle school and high school. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions: Which teenage girls? What constitutes “too” sexualized? Why are they behaving that way? Where does this behaviour show up? What are the repercussions?

#### Exercise 9.4

Now, on a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement. Identify any weaknesses in this sentence and revise the statement to reflect the elements of a strong thesis statement. Make sure it is specific, precise, arguable, demonstrable, forceful, and confident.

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

### Writing in Process

In your career you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revising to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. The techniques from this chapter would apply to revising that thesis.

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## 10.

### Drafting

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing.

Even professional writers admit that an empty page scares them because they feel they need to come up with something fresh and original every time they open a blank document on their computers. Because you have completed the first two steps in the writing process, you have already recovered from empty page syndrome. You have hours of prewriting and planning already done. You know what will go on that blank page: what you wrote in your outline.

#### Getting Started: Strategies For Drafting

Your objective for this portion of “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?” is to draft the body paragraphs of a standard five-paragraph essay. A five-paragraph essay contains an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can start on paper and then type it before you revise. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking. In this lesson, Mariah does all her work on the computer, but you may use pen and paper or the computer to write a rough draft.

#### Making the Writing Process Work for You

What makes the writing process so beneficial to writers is that it encourages alternatives to standard practices while motivating you to develop your best ideas. For instance, the following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in the writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.** You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader’s interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than the length of an entire double-spaced page.
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.** As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.

- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multipage report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write.
- **Be reasonable with your goals.** If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, for example, you will present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can.

Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

**TIP:** You may want to identify your purpose and audience on an index card that you clip to your paper (or keep next to your computer). On that card, you may want to write notes to yourself—perhaps about what that audience might not know or what it needs to know—so that you will be sure to address those issues when you write. It may be a good idea to also state exactly what you want to explain to that audience, or to inform them of, or to persuade them about.

### Writing in Process

Many of the documents you produce at work target a particular audience for a particular purpose. You may find that it is highly advantageous to know as much as you can about your target audience and to prepare your message to reach that audience, even if the audience is a coworker or your boss. Menu language is a common example. Descriptions like “organic romaine” and “free-range chicken” are intended to appeal to a certain type of customer though perhaps not to the same customer who craves a thick steak. Similarly, mail-order companies research the demographics of the people who buy their merchandise. Successful vendors customize product descriptions in catalogs to appeal to their buyers’ tastes. For example, the product descriptions in a skateboarder catalog will differ from the descriptions in a clothing catalog for mature adults.

### Exercise 10.1

Using the topic for the essay that you outlined in “Outlining”, describe your purpose and your audience as specifically as you can. Use your own sheet of paper to record your responses. Then keep these responses near you during future stages of the writing process.

My purpose:

My audience:

## Setting Goals for Your First Draft

A draft is a complete version of a piece of writing, but it is not the final version. The step in the writing process after drafting, as you may remember, is revising. During revising, you will have the opportunity to make changes to your first draft before you put the finishing touches on it during the editing and proofreading stage. A first draft gives you a working version that you can later improve.

### Writing in Process

Workplace writing in certain environments is done by teams of writers who collaborate on the planning, writing, and revising of documents, such as long reports, technical manuals, and the results of scientific research. Collaborators do not need to be in the same room, the same building, or even the same city. Many collaborations are conducted over the Internet.

In a perfect collaboration, each contributor has the right to add, edit, and delete text. Strong communication skills, in addition to strong writing skills, are important in this kind of writing situation because disagreements over style, content, process, emphasis, and other issues may arise.

The collaborative software, or document management systems, that groups use to work on common projects is sometimes called groupware or workgroup support systems.

The reviewing tool on some word-processing programs also gives you access to a collaborative tool that many smaller workgroups use when they exchange documents. You can also use it to leave comments to yourself.

**TIP:** If you invest some time now to investigate how the reviewing tool in your word processor works, you will be able to use it with confidence during the revision stage of the writing process. Then, when you start to revise, set your reviewing tool to track any changes you make, so you will be able to tinker with text and commit only those final changes you want to keep.

## Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft

If you have been using the information in this chapter step by step to help you develop an assignment, you already have both a formal topic outline and a formal sentence outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- An introduction that piques the audience’s interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.
- A *thesis statement* that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.
- A topic sentence in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement.
- Supporting sentences in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.
- A conclusion that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

These elements follow the standard five-paragraph essay format, which you probably first encountered in high school. This basic format is valid for most essays you will write in college, even much longer ones.

### The Role of Topic Sentences

Topic sentences make the structure of a text and the writer’s basic arguments easy to locate and comprehend. In college writing, using a topic sentence in each paragraph of the essay is the standard rule. However, the topic sentence does not always have to be the first sentence in your paragraph even if it the first item in your formal outline.

**TIP:** When you begin to draft your paragraphs, you should follow your outline fairly closely. After all, you spent valuable time developing those ideas. However, as you begin to express your ideas in complete sentences, it might strike you that the topic sentence might work better at the end of the paragraph or in the middle. Try it. Writing a draft, by its nature, is a good time for experimentation.

The topic sentence can be the first, middle, or final sentence in a paragraph. The assignment’s audience and purpose will often determine where a topic sentence belongs. When the purpose of the assignment is to persuade, for example, the topic sentence should be the first sentence in a paragraph. In a persuasive essay, the writer’s point of view should be clearly expressed at the beginning of each paragraph.

Choosing where to position the topic sentence depends not only on your audience and purpose but also on the essay’s arrangement, or order. When you organize information according to order of importance, the topic sentence may be the final sentence in a paragraph. All the supporting sentences build up to the

topic sentence. Chronological order may also position the topic sentence as the final sentence because the controlling idea of the paragraph may make the most sense at the end of a sequence.

When you organize information according to spatial order, a topic sentence may appear as the middle sentence in a paragraph. An essay arranged by spatial order often contains paragraphs that begin with descriptions. A reader may first need a visual in his or her mind before understanding the development of the paragraph. When the topic sentence is in the middle, it unites the details that come before it with the ones that come after it.

**TIP:** As you read critically throughout the writing process, keep topic sentences in mind. You may discover topic sentences that are not always located at the beginning of a paragraph. For example, fiction writers customarily use topic ideas, either expressed or implied, to move readers through their texts. In nonfiction writing, such as popular magazines, topic sentences are often used when the author thinks it is appropriate (based on the audience and the purpose, of course). A single topic sentence might even control the development of a number of paragraphs. For more information on topic sentences, please see “Writing Paragraphs.”

Developing topic sentences and thinking about their placement in a paragraph will prepare you to write the rest of the paragraph.

## Paragraphs

The paragraph is the main structural component of an essay as well as other forms of writing. Each paragraph of an essay adds another related main idea to support the writer’s thesis, or controlling idea. Each related main idea is supported and developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one main idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis.

### Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph be?

One answer to this important question may be “long enough”—long enough for you to address your points and explain your main idea. To grab attention or to present succinct supporting ideas, a paragraph can be fairly short and consist of two to three sentences. A paragraph in a complex essay about some abstract point in philosophy or archaeology can be three-quarters of a page or more in length. As long as the writer maintains close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable in college-level writing. In general, try to keep the paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than one full page of double-spaced text.

**TIP:** Journalistic style often calls for brief two- or three-sentence paragraphs because of how people read the news, both online and in print. Blogs and other online information sources often adopt this paragraphing style, too. Readers often skim the first paragraphs of a great many articles before settling on the handful of stories they want to read in detail.

You may find that a particular paragraph you write may be longer than one that will hold your audience's interest. In such cases, you should divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a topic statement or some kind of transitional word or phrase at the start of the new paragraph. Transition words or phrases show the connection between the two ideas.

In all cases, however, be guided by what your instructor wants and expects to find in your draft. Many instructors will expect you to develop a mature college-level style as you progress through the semester's assignments.

#### Exercise 10.2

To build your sense of appropriate paragraph length, use the Internet to find examples of the following items. Copy them into a file, identify your sources, and present them to your instructor with your annotations, or notes.

- A news article written in short paragraphs. Take notes on, or annotate, your selection with your observations about the effect of combining paragraphs that develop the same topic idea. Explain how effective those paragraphs would be.
- A long paragraph from a scholarly work that you identify through an academic search engine. Annotate it with your observations about the author's paragraphing style.

## Starting Your First Draft

Now we are finally ready to look over a student's shoulder as she begins to write her essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. As she does, you should have in front of you your outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote earlier in this lesson on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and the student in the proper mind-set to start.

The following is the thesis statement.

Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

Here are the notes that the student wrote to herself to characterize her purpose and audience.

**Purpose:** My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumers don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.

**Audience:** My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I'm writing about. I'll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possible unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.

The student chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised. Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point. You will read her introduction again in "Revising and Editing" when she revises it.

**TIP:** Remember Mariah's other options. She could have started directly with any of the body paragraphs.

You will learn more about writing attention-getting introductions and effective conclusions in "Writing Essays: From Start to Finish".

With her thesis statement and her purpose and audience notes in front of her, the student then looked at her sentence outline. She chose to use that outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is the portion of her outline for the first body paragraph. The roman numeral II identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label subpoints.

## II. E-book readers and the way that people read.

- A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry
  - 1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
  - 2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.
- B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.
  - 1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
  - 2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.
- C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.
  - 1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
  - 2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries.

The student then began to expand the ideas in her outline into a paragraph. Notice how the outline helped her guarantee that all her sentences in the body of the paragraph develop the topic sentence.

E-book readers are changing the way people read, or so e-book developers hope. The main selling point for these handheld devices, which are sort of the size of a paperback book, is that they make books easy to access and carry. Electronic versions of printed books can be downloaded online for a few bucks or directly from your cell phone. These devices can store hundreds of books in memory and, with text-to-speech features, can even read the texts. The market for e-books and e-book readers keep expanding as a lot of companies enter it. Online and traditional booksellers have been the first to market e-book readers to the public, but computer companies, especially the ones already involved in cell phone, online music, and notepad computer technology, will also enter the market. The problem for consumers, however, is which device to choose.

Incompatibility is the norm. E-books can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore, use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restricts the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a real book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?

**TIP:** If you write your first draft on the computer, consider creating a new file folder for each course with a set of subfolders inside the course folders for each assignment you are given. Label the folders clearly with the course names, and label each assignment folder and word processing document with a title that you will easily recognize. The assignment name is a good choice for the document. Then use that subfolder to store all the drafts you create. When you start each new draft, do not just write over the last one. Instead, save the draft with a new tag after the title—draft 1, draft 2, and so on—so that you will have a complete history of drafts in case your instructor wishes you to submit them.

In your documents, observe any formatting requirements—for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters—that your instructor requires.

### Exercise 10.3

Study how the student above made the transition from her sentence outline to her first draft. First, copy her outline onto your own sheet of paper. Leave a few spaces between each part of the outline. Then copy sentences from the student’s paragraph to align each sentence with its corresponding entry in her outline.

## Continuing the First Draft

The student continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. She had supporting details but no numbered subpoints in her outline, so she had to consult her prewriting notes for specific information to include.

**TIP:** If you decide to take a break between finishing your first body paragraph and starting the next one, do

not start writing immediately when you return to your work. Put yourself back in context and in the mood by rereading what you have already written. This is what Mariah did. If she had stopped writing in the middle of writing the paragraph, she could have jotted down some quick notes to herself about what she would write next.

Preceding each body paragraph that the student wrote is the appropriate section of her sentence outline. Notice how she expanded roman numeral III from her outline into a first draft of the second body paragraph. As you read, ask yourself how closely she stayed on purpose and how well she paid attention to the needs of her audience.

III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced by film cameras.

- A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.
  - 1. Compactable digital cameras are light by have fewer megapixels.
  - 2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large and heavy but can be sued for many functions.
  - 3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts an SLRs.
- B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing “megapixel wars.”
- C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.

Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras in amateur photographers' gadget bags. My father took hundreds of slides when his children were growing up, but he had more and more trouble getting them developed. So, he decided to go modern. But, what kind of camera should he buy? The small compact digital cameras could slip right in his pocket, but if he tried to print a photograph larger than an  $8 \times 10$ , the quality would be poor. When he investigated buying a single lens reflex camera, or SLR, he discovered that they were versatile as his old film camera, also an SLR, but they were big and bulky. Then he discovered yet a third type, which combined the smaller size of the compact digital cameras with the zoom lenses available for SLRs. His first though was to buy one of those, but then he realized he had a lot of decisions to make. How many megapixels should the camera be? Five? Ten? What is the advantage of each? Then came the size of the zoom lens. He knew that  $3\times$  was too small, but what about  $25\times$ ? Could he hold a lens that long without causing camera shake? He read hundreds of photography magazines and buying guides, and he still wasn't sure he was right.

The student then began her third and final body paragraph using roman numeral IV from her outline.

IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions

- A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?
- B. In the screen-size war, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?

C. Does every home really need a media centre?

Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions. The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma flat-panel television screens show decent blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints. Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need.

Exercise 10.4

Reread body paragraphs two and three of the essay that the student is writing. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. In body paragraph two, the student decided to develop her paragraph as a nonfiction narrative. Do you agree with her decision? Explain. How else could she have chosen to develop the paragraph? Why is that better?
2. Compare the writing styles of paragraphs two and three. What evidence do you have that the student was getting tired or running out of steam? What advice would you give her? Why?
3. Choose one of these two body paragraphs. Write a version of your own that you think better fits the student's audience and purpose.

## Writing a Title

A writer's best choice for a title is one that alludes to the main point of the entire essay. Like the headline in a newspaper or the big, bold title in a magazine, an essay's title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

**Thesis Statement:** Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specification are often confusing.

**Working Title:** Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?

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## 11.

### Writing Body Paragraphs

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement.

The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

### Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

**TIP:** Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it.

### Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.
- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers

resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.

- **Be detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

## Prewrite to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

Recall that when you prewrite you essentially make a list of examples or reasons why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting, you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

### Exercise 11.1

Choose one of the following working thesis statements. On a separate sheet of paper, write for at least five minutes using one of the prewriting techniques you learned in “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”.

1. Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.
2. Students cheat for many different reasons.
3. Drug use among teens and young adults is a problem.
4. The most important change that should occur at my college or university.

## Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

After you have prewritten about your working thesis statement, you may have generated a lot of information, which may be edited out later. Remember that your primary support must be relevant to your thesis. Remind yourself of your main argument, and delete any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body paragraphs. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

### Exercise 11.2

Refer to the previous exercise and select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis

statement. Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points, and you will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for the body paragraphs.

### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research:

1. **Facts.** Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence “The most populated state in the United States is California” is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.
2. **Judgments.** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
3. **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child’s social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

### Writing in Process

In any job where you devise a plan, you will need to support the steps that you lay out. This is an area in which you would incorporate primary support into your writing. Choosing only the most specific and relevant information to expand upon the steps will ensure that your plan appears well-thought-out and precise.

**TIP:** You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information

from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field.

## Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations.

Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements.

topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)

As you read in “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”, topic sentences indicate the location and main points of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body paragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement. Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.

**TIP:** Unless your teacher instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body paragraphs in your essay. A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for exams and essay assignments.

Consider the following the thesis statement:

Author J.D. Salinger relied primarily on his personal life and belief system as the foundation for the themes in the majority of his works.

The following topic sentence is a primary support point for the thesis. The topic sentence states exactly what the controlling idea of the paragraph is. Later, you will see the writer immediately provide support for the sentence.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced themes in many of his works.

### Exercise 11.3

In Exercise 11.2, you chose three of your most convincing points to support the thesis statement you selected from the list. Take each point and incorporate it into a topic sentence for each body paragraph.

Supporting point 1:

Topic sentence:

Supporting point 2:

Topic sentence:

Supporting point 3:

Topic sentence:

#### **Collaboration**

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

## Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Primary Support Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence.

The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement:

Thesis statement: Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.

Supporting point 1: Dogs can scare cyclists and pedestrians.

Supporting details:

1. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the road.
2. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.
3. People who are walking at night freeze in fear.

Supporting point 2:

Loose dogs are traffic hazards.

Supporting details:

1. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.
2. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.

3. Children coaxing dogs across busy streets create danger.

Supporting point 3: Unleashed dogs damage gardens.

Supporting details:

1. They step on flowers and vegetables.
2. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.
3. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

The following paragraph contains supporting detail sentences for the primary support sentence (the topic sentence), which is underlined.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, “You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live.” His short story “A Perfect Day for a Bananafish” details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short story, “For Esmé – with Love and Squalor,” is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger’s only novel, The Catcher in the Rye, he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

#### Exercise 11.4

Using the three topic sentences you composed for the thesis statement in Exercise 1, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis statement:

Primary supporting point 1:

Supporting details:

Primary supporting point 2:

Supporting details:

Primary supporting point 3:

Supporting details:

**TIP:** You have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways. You can state it at the

beginning of the body paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph, or you do not have to write it at all. This is called an implied topic sentence. An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want to clearly identify the sentences that support your thesis. For more information on the placement of thesis statements and implied topic statements, see “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”.

**TIP:** Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

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## 12.

# Organizing Your Writing

The method of organization you choose for your essay is just as important as its content. Without a clear organizational pattern to follow, your reader could become confused and lose interest. The way you structure your essay helps your readers draw connections between the body and the thesis, and the structure also keeps you focused as you plan and write the essay. Choosing your organizational pattern before you outline ensures that each body paragraph works to support and develop your thesis.

This section covers three ways to organize body paragraphs:

1. Chronological order
2. Order of importance
3. Spatial order

When you begin to draft your essay, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner. Your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas in order to help process and accept them.

A solid organizational pattern gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your draft. Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. Planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research.

## Chronological Order

In “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”, you learned that chronological arrangement has the following purposes:

- To explain the history of an event or a topic
- To tell a story or relate an experience
- To explain how to do or to make something
- To explain the steps in a process

Chronological order is mostly used in expository writing, which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process. When using chronological order, arrange the events in the order that they actually happened, or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as *first*, *second*, *then*, *after that*, *later*, and *finally*. These transition words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis.

For example, if you are writing an essay about the history of the airline industry, you would begin with its conception and detail the essential timeline events up until present day. You would follow the chain of events using words such as *first*, *then*, *next*, and so on.

### Writing in Process

At some point in your career you may have to file a complaint with your human resources department. Using chronological order is a useful tool in describing the events that led up to your filing the grievance. You would logically lay out the events in the order that they occurred using the key transition words. The more logical your complaint, the more likely you will be well received and helped.

### Exercise 12.1

Choose an accomplishment you have achieved in your life. The important moment could be in sports, schooling, or extracurricular activities. On your own sheet of paper, list the steps you took to reach your goal. Try to be as specific as possible with the steps you took. Pay attention to using transition words to focus your writing.

Keep in mind that chronological order is most appropriate for the following purposes:

- Writing essays containing heavy research
- Writing essays with the aim of listing, explaining, or narrating
- Writing essays that analyze literary works such as poems, plays, or books

**TIP:** When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate the information you will cover and in what order, and the introduction should also establish the relevance of the information. Your body paragraphs should then provide clear divisions or steps in chronology. You can divide your paragraphs by time (such as decades, wars, or other historical events) or by the same structure of the work you are examining (such as a line-by-line explication of a poem).

### Exercise 12.2

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that describes a process you are familiar with and can do well.

Assume that your reader is unfamiliar with the procedure. Remember to use the chronological key words, such as *first*, *second*, *then*, and *finally*.

## Order of Importance

Recall from “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?” that order of importance is best used for the following purposes:

- Persuading and convincing
- Ranking items by their importance, benefit, or significance
- Illustrating a situation, problem, or solution

Most essays move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay’s strength. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to begin with your most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading.

For example, if you were supporting your thesis that homework is detrimental to the education of high school students, you would want to present your most convincing argument first, and then move on to the less important points for your case.

Some key transitional words you should use with this method of organization are *most importantly*, *almost as importantly*, *just as importantly*, and *finally*.

### Writing in Process

During your career, you may be required to work on a team that devises a strategy for a specific goal of your company, such as increasing profits. When planning your strategy you should organize your steps in order of importance. This demonstrates the ability to prioritize and plan. Using the order of importance technique also shows that you can create a resolution with logical steps for accomplishing a common goal.

### Exercise 12.3

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that discusses a passion of yours. Your passion could be

music, a particular sport, filmmaking, and so on. Your paragraph should be built upon the reasons why you feel so strongly. Briefly discuss your reasons in the order of least to greatest importance.

## Spatial Order

As stated in “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”, spatial order is best used for the following purposes:

- Helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- Evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
- Writing a descriptive essay

Spatial order means that you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your reader, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you.

The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then guide the reader to follow your eye as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

Pay attention to the following student’s description of her bedroom and how she guides the reader through the viewing process, foot by foot.

Attached to my bedroom wall is a small wooden rack dangling with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as you enter. Just to the right of the rack is my window, framed by billowy white curtains. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, which sits to the right of the window, layered in textbooks, crumpled papers, coffee cups, and an overflowing ashtray. Turning my head to the right, I see a set of two bare windows that frame the trees outside the glass like a 3D painting. Below the windows is an oak chest from which blankets and scarves are protruding. Against the wall opposite the billowy curtains is an antique dresser, on top of which sits a jewelry box and a few picture frames. A tall mirror attached to the dresser takes up most of the wall, which is the colour of lavender.

The paragraph incorporates two objectives you have learned in this chapter: using an implied topic sentence and applying spatial order. Often in a descriptive essay, the two work together.

The following are possible transition words to include when using spatial order:

- Just to the left or just to the right
- Behind
- Between
- On the left or on the right

- Across from
- A little further down
- To the south, to the east, and so on
- A few yards away
- Turning left or turning right

#### Exercise 12.4

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph using spatial order that describes your commute to work, school, or another location you visit often.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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## 13.

### Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis).

Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

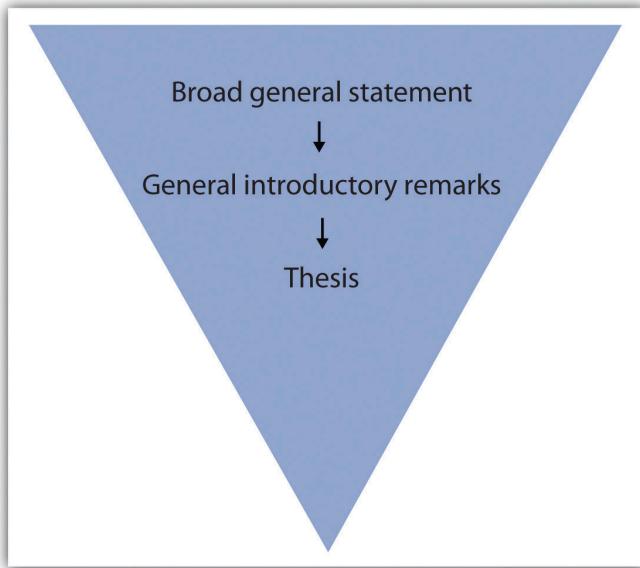
An introduction serves the following purposes:

1. Establishes your voice and tone, or your attitude, toward the subject
2. Introduces the general topic of the essay
3. States the thesis that will be supported in the body paragraphs

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader's mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay.

### Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving smoothly and logically from your introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be achieved using a funnel technique, as illustrated in the diagram in Figure 13.1 "Funnel Technique".

*Figure 13.1*

### Exercise 13.1

On a separate sheet of paper, jot down a few general remarks that you can make about the topic for which you formed a thesis in a previous exercise, or create a new one.

Immediately capturing your readers' interest increases the chances of having them read what you are about to discuss. You can garner curiosity for your essay in a number of ways. Try to get your readers personally involved by doing any of the following:

- Appealing to their emotions
- Using logic
- Beginning with a provocative question or opinion
- Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
- Raising a question or series of questions
- Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
- Opening with a striking image
- Including a personal anecdote

**TIP:** Remember that your diction, or word choice, while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your

discussion. Choose words that create images or express action. For more information on diction, see “Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?”.

In the following introductory paragraph, the thesis statement is underlined:

Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch *Dynasty*? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has digital technology, consumers are bombarded with endless options for how they do most everything—from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled. Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing.

**TIP:** If you have trouble coming up with a provocative statement for your opening, it is a good idea to use a relevant, attention-grabbing quote about your topic. Use a search engine to find statements made by historical or significant figures about your subject.

### Exercise 13.2

Reread each sentence in the above introductory paragraph. Indicate which techniques were used and comment on how each sentence is designed to attract readers’ interest.

## Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

A conclusion that does not correspond to the rest of your essay, has loose ends, or is unorganized can unsettle your readers and raise doubts about the entire essay. However, if you have worked hard to write the introduction and body, your conclusion can often be the most logical part to compose.

## The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay. In order to tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating your

thesis reminds your readers of the major arguments you have been trying to prove and also indicates that your essay is drawing to a close. A strong conclusion also reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic.

The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that in the conclusion you first paraphrase, or state in different words, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable. Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay.

**TIP:** When closing your essay, do not expressly state that you are drawing to a close. Relying on statements such as *in conclusion*, *it is clear that*, *as you can see*, or *in summation* is unnecessary and can be considered trite.

**TIP:** It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

- Introducing new material
- Contradicting your thesis
- Changing your thesis
- Using apologies or disclaimers

Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view.

When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.

By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

### Exercise 13.3

On a separate sheet of a paper, restate your thesis from Exercise 2 of this section and then make some general concluding remarks. Next, compose a final emphatic statement. Finally, incorporate what you have written into a strong conclusion paragraph for your essay.

#### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

The following paragraph incorporates some of these pointers into the conclusion. It has paraphrased the thesis statement in the first sentence.

In a society fixated on the latest and smartest digital technology, a consumer can easily become confused by the countless options and specifications. The ever-changing state of digital technology challenges consumers with its updates and add-ons and expanding markets and incompatible formats and restrictions—a fact that is complicated by salesmen who want to sell them anything. In a world that is increasingly driven by instant gratification, it's easy for people to buy the first thing they see. The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

**TIP:** Make sure your essay is balanced by not having an excessively long or short introduction or conclusion. Check that they match each other in length as closely as possible, and try to mirror the formula you used in each. Parallelism strengthens the message of your essay.

### Writing in Process

On the job you will sometimes give oral presentations based on research you have conducted. A concluding statement to an oral report contains the same elements as a written conclusion. You should wrap up your presentation by restating the purpose of the presentation, reviewing its main points, and emphasizing the importance of the material you presented. A strong conclusion will leave a lasting impression on your audience.

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## 14.

# Revising, Editing, and Peer Review

Revising and editing are the two tasks you undertake to significantly improve your essay. Both are very important elements of the writing process. You may think that a completed first draft means little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers need to improve their drafts and rely on peers during revising and editing. You may know that athletes miss catches, fumble balls, or overshoot goals. Dancers forget steps, turn too slowly, or miss beats. For both athletes and dancers, the more they practice, the stronger their performance will become. Web designers seek better images, a more clever design, or a more appealing background for their web pages. Writing has the same capacity to profit from improvement and revision.

## Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing separately, so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you revise, you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
- When you edit, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words. You fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You improve your writing style. You make your essay into a polished, mature piece of writing, the end product of your best efforts.

**TIP:** How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results.

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

Many people hear the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* and pick up only negative vibes that provoke

feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

## Creating Unity and Coherence

Following your outline closely offers you a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. However, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may become less than they want it to be. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense. When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

**TIP:** Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

## Creating Unity

Sometimes writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Read the following paragraph where a student has crossed out all digressions.

Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ~~You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs.~~ You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. ~~The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions.~~ The ~~other~~ important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ~~But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints.~~ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ by more television than you need!

### Exercise 14.1

Answer the following two questions about the above paragraph:

1. Do you agree with the decision to make the deletions that were made? Did she cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.
2. Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.

### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Now start to revise the first draft of the essay you wrote in “Writing Your Own First Draft”. Reread it to find any statements that affect the unity of your writing. Decide how best to revise.

**TIP:** When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

## Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essays. The list “Common Transitional Words and Phrases” groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

### Common Transitional Words and Phrases

#### Transitions that show sequence or time

- after
- meanwhile
- soon
- before
- as soon as
- at last
- later
- finally
- in the first place
- afterward
- next
- then
- before
- at first
- long
- first, second, third

#### Transitions that show position

- above
- across
- at the bottom

- at the top
- behind
- below
- beside
- beyond
- inside
- near
- next to
- opposite
- to the left, to the right, to the side
- under
- where

### **Transitions that show a conclusion**

- indeed
- hence
- in conclusion
- in the final analysis
- therefore
- thus

### **Transitions that continue a line of thought**

- consequently
- furthermore
- additionally
- because
- besides the fact
- following this idea further
- in addition
- in the same way
- moreover
- looking further
- considering..., it is clear that

### **Transitions that change a line of thought**

- but
- yet
- however
- nevertheless
- on the contrary
- on the other hand

### **Transitions that show importance**

- above all
- best
- especially
- in fact
- more important
- most important
- most
- worst

### **Transitions that introduce the final thoughts in a paragraph or essay**

- finally
- last
- in conclusion
- most of all
- least of all
- last of all

### **All-purpose transitions to open paragraphs or to connect ideas inside paragraphs**

- admittedly
- at this point
- certainly
- granted
- it is true
- generally speaking
- in general
- in this situation
- no doubt
- no one denies
- obviously
- of course
- to be sure
- undoubtedly
- unquestionably

### **Transitions that introduce examples**

- for instance
- for example

### Transitions that clarify the order of events or steps

- first, second, third
- generally, furthermore, finally
- in the first place, also, last
- in the first place, furthermore, finally
- in the first place, likewise, lastly

After the paragraph above was revised for unity, the student next examined their paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. They looked for places where they needed to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the version that follows, they have already deleted the sentences that were off.

Finally, nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDtelevision) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. There's good reason for this confusion: You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. The first big decision is the screen resolution you want. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The second other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't let someone make you buy more television than you need!

### Exercise 14.2

1. Answer the following questions about the above revised paragraph.
  - Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that the student made to her paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.
  - What transition words or phrases did the student add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?
  - What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.
2. Now return to the first draft of the essay you wrote in “Writing Your Own First Draft” and revise it for coherence. Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.

## Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles

match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise.

If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

## Identifying Wordiness

Sometimes writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose. Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft. Eliminating wordiness helps all readers, because it makes your ideas clear, direct, and straightforward.

- **Sentences that begin with *There is* or *There are*.**

**Wordy:** There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.

**Revised:** The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Sentences with unnecessary modifiers.**

**Wordy:** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.

**Revised:** Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.

- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of*, *with a mind to*, *on the subject of*, *as to whether or not*, *more or less*, *as far as...is concerned*, and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.

**Wordy:** As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy.

A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.

**Revised:** As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy.

A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb *to be*.** Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion, because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is

followed by a strong verb. Use strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of *to be*, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can.

**Wordy:** It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

**Revised:** Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

- **Sentences with constructions that can be shortened.**

**Wordy:** The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

My over-sixty uncle bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too.

**Revised:** The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

#### Exercise 14.3

Now return once more to the first draft of the essay you have been revising. Check it for unnecessary words. Try making your sentences as concise as they can be.

## Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most academic essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate. For more information about word choice, see “Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?”.

- **Avoid slang.** Find alternatives to *bummer*, *kewl*, and *rad*.
- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about “men and women” rather than “girls and guys” unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions.** Use *do not* in place of *don’t*, *I am* in place of *I’m*, *have not* in place of *haven’t*, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech.
- **Avoid clichés.** Overused expressions such as *green with envy*, *face the music*, *better late than never*, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may not appeal to your audience.
- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings.** Some examples are *allusion/illusion*, *complement/compliment*, *council/counsel*, *concurrent/concurrent*/

*consecutive, founder/flounder, and historic/historical.* When in doubt, check a dictionary.

- **Choose words with the connotations you want.** Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word *proud* and the negative connotations of *arrogant* and *conceited*.
- **Use specific words rather than overly general words.** Find synonyms for *thing, people, nice, good, bad, interesting*, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions this student made to make they third paragraph clearer and more concise. They have already incorporated the changes they made to improve unity and coherence.

Finally, nothing ~~is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want confuses buyers more than purchasing~~ a new high-definition digital television (HDTV), ~~with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. There's and with~~ good reason. ~~for this confusion: You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions.~~ The first big decision ~~is the involves~~ screen resolution, ~~you want. Screen resolution which~~ means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often expressed as 1080p, or full HD, or ~~as~~ 768p, which is half that. The trouble is that ~~if you have on~~ a smaller ~~screen,~~ 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal ~~screen, viewers will not you won't~~ be able to tell the difference ~~between them~~ with the naked eye. The second other important decision ~~you face as you walk around the sales floor~~ is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show ~~truer deeper~~ blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. ~~Don't let someone make you by more television than you need! Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets.~~

#### Exercise 14.4

1. Answer the following questions about the above revised paragraph:
  - Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected the student’s writing.
  - Do you agree with the changes that the student made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?
  - What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun *you* have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?
2. Now return once more to your essay in progress. Read carefully for problems with word choice. Be sure that your draft is written in formal language and that your word choice is specific and appropriate.

## Completing a Peer Review

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called peer review.

You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The box that follows provides a useful framework for the peer review session.

### Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay:

Date:

Writer's name:

Peer reviewer's name:

1. This essay is about:
2. Your main points in this essay are:
3. What I most liked about this essay is:
4. These three points struck me as your strongest:
  - a. Point:  
Why:
  - b. Point:  
Why:
  - c. Point:  
Why:
5. These places in your essay are not clear to me:
  - a. Where:  
Needs improvement because:
  - b. Where:  
Needs improvement because:

c. Where:  
Needs improvement because:

6. The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is:

#### Exercise 14.5

Exchange essays with a classmate and complete a peer review of each other's draft in progress. Remember to give positive feedback and to be courteous and polite in your responses. Focus on providing one positive comment and one question for more information to the author.

## Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience).

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

## Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might get feedback from more than one reader as you share different stages of your revised draft. In this situation, you may receive feedback from readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it.

You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

1. Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
2. Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

### Exercise 14.6

Work with two partners. Go back to Exercise 4 in this lesson and compare your responses to Activity A, about the student’s paragraph, with your partners’. Recall the student’s purpose for writing and her audience. Then, working individually, list where you agree and where you disagree about revision needs.

## Editing Your Draft

If you have been incorporating each set of revisions as Mariah has, you have produced multiple drafts of your writing. So far, all your changes have been content changes. Perhaps with the help of peer feedback, you have made sure that you sufficiently supported your ideas. You have checked for problems with unity and coherence. You have examined your essay for word choice, revising to cut unnecessary words and to replace weak wording with specific and appropriate wording.

The next step after revising the content is editing. When you edit, you examine the surface features of your text. You examine your spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment.

**TIP:** Editing often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising. Editing and proofreading your writing helps you create a finished work that represents your best efforts. Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they do notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas—unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use there, their, and they’re correctly, but they notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document..

The first section of this book offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help you eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language. Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college’s writing lab. In the meantime, use the checklist 14.1 to help you edit your writing.

### Checklist 14.1 Editing Your Writing

#### Grammar

- Are some sentences actually sentence fragments?
- Are some sentences run-on sentences? How can I correct them?
- Do some sentences need conjunctions between independent clauses?
- Does every verb agree with its subject?
- Is every verb in the correct tense?
- Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
- Have I used subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns correctly?
- Have I used *who* and *whom* correctly?
- Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
- Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- Have I used the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs?
- Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies, or is it a dangling modifier?

#### Sentence Structure

- Are all my sentences simple sentences, or do I vary my sentence structure?
- Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
- Have I created long, overpacked sentences that should be shortened for clarity?
- Do I see any mistakes in parallel structure?

#### Punctuation

- Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
- Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
- Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?
- Have I used quotation marks correctly?

#### Mechanics and Usage

- Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
- Have I used capital letters where they are needed?
- Have I written abbreviations, where allowed, correctly?
- Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as *to/too/two*?

**TIP:** Be careful about relying too much on spelling checkers and grammar checkers. A spelling checker cannot recognize that you meant to write principle but wrote principal instead. A grammar checker often queries constructions that are perfectly correct. The program does not understand your meaning; it makes its check against a general set of formulas that might not apply in each instance. If you use a grammar checker, accept the suggestions that make sense, but consider why the suggestions came up.

**TIP:** Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to read past a mistake. Set your paper aside for at least a few hours, if not a day or more, so your mind will rest. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark.

If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

## Formatting

Remember to use proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included.

To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

### Exercise 14.7

With the help of the checklist 14.1, edit and proofread your essay.

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## 15.

### Writing Essays: Exercises

#### Exercises

1. On a separate sheet of paper, choose one of the examples of a proper thesis statement from this chapter (one that interests you) and form three supporting points for that statement. After you have formed your three points, write a topic sentence for each body paragraph. Make sure that your topic sentences can be backed up with examples and details.
2. **Group activity.** Choose a topic and form a yes-or-no question about that topic. Then, take a survey of the people in your class to find out how they feel about the subject. Using the majority vote, ask those people to write on slips of paper the reasons for their opinion. Using the data you collect, form a thesis statement based on your classmates' perspectives on the topic and their reasons.
3. On a separate sheet of a paper, write an introduction for an essay based on the thesis statement from the group activity using the techniques for introductory paragraphs that you learned in this chapter.
4. Start a journal in which you record "spoken" thesis statements. Start listening closely to the opinions expressed by your teachers, classmates, friends, and family members. Ask them to provide at least three reasons for their opinion and record them in the journal. Use this as material for future essays.
5. Open a magazine and read a lengthy article. See if you can pinpoint the thesis statement as well as the topic sentence for each paragraph and its supporting details.

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IV

## Writing from Research



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## 16.

# The Purpose of Research Writing

- Why was the Great Wall of China built?
- What have scientists learned about the possibility of life on Mars?
- What roles did women play in the American Revolution?
- How does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories?
- Who invented the game of football, and how has it changed over the years?



*Figure 16.1*

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting the library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

Whether you are a scientist, an artist, a paralegal, or a parent, you probably perform research in your everyday life. When your boss, your instructor, or a family member asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, you locate relevant information, analyze your findings, and share your results. Locating, analyzing, and sharing information are key steps in the research process, and in this chapter, you will learn more about each step. By developing your research writing skills, you will prepare yourself to answer any question no matter how challenging.

## Reasons for Research

When you perform research, you are essentially trying to solve a mystery—you want to know how something works or why something happened. In other words, you want to answer a question that you (and other people) have about the world. This is one of the most basic reasons for performing research.

But the research process does not end when you have solved your mystery. Imagine what would happen if a detective collected enough evidence to solve a criminal case, but she never shared her solution with the authorities. Presenting what you have learned from research can be just as important as performing the research. Research results can be presented in a variety of ways, but one of the most popular—and effective—presentation forms is the research paper. A research paper presents an original thesis, or purpose statement, about a topic and develops that thesis with information gathered from a variety of sources.

If you are curious about the possibility of life on Mars, for example, you might choose to research the topic. What will you do, though, when your research is complete? You will need a way to put your

thoughts together in a logical, coherent manner. You may want to use the facts you have learned to create a narrative or to support an argument. And you may want to show the results of your research to your friends, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines and journals. Writing a research paper is an ideal way to organize thoughts, craft narratives or make arguments based on research, and share your newfound knowledge with the world.

#### Exercise 16.1

Write a paragraph about a time when you used research in your everyday life. Did you look for the cheapest way to travel from Houston to Denver? Did you search for a way to remove gum from the bottom of your shoe? In your paragraph, explain what you wanted to research, how you performed the research, and what you learned as a result.

## Research Writing and the Academic Paper

No matter what field of study you are interested in, you will most likely be asked to write a research paper during your academic career. For example, a student in an art history course might write a research paper about an artist's work. Similarly, a student in a psychology course might write a research paper about current findings in childhood development.

Having to write a research paper may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and writing a long paper requires a lot of time, effort, and organization. However, writing a research paper can also be a great opportunity to explore a topic that is particularly interesting to you. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice, and the writing process helps you remember what you have learned and understand it on a deeper level.

#### Writing in Process

Take a few minutes to think about each of the following careers. How might each of these professionals use researching and research writing skills on the job?

- Medical laboratory technician
- Small business owner
- Information technology professional
- Freelance magazine writer

A medical laboratory technician or information technology professional might do research to learn about the latest technological developments in either of these fields. A small business owner might conduct research to

learn about the latest trends in his or her industry. A freelance magazine writer may need to research a given topic to write an informed, up-to-date article.

### Exercise 16.2

Think about the job of your dreams. How might you use research writing skills to perform that job? Create a list of ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job. How might these skills help you obtain that job?

## Steps of the Research Writing Process

How does a research paper grow from a folder of brainstormed notes to a polished final draft? No two projects are identical, but most projects follow a series of six basic steps.

These are the steps in the research writing process:

1. Choose a topic.
2. Plan and schedule time to research and write.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research and ideas.
5. Draft your paper.
6. Revise and edit your paper.

Each of these steps will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For now, though, we will take a brief look at what each step involves.

### Step 1: Choosing a Topic

As you may recall from “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”, to narrow the focus of your topic, you may try freewriting exercises, such as brainstorming. You may also need to ask a specific research question—a broad, open-ended question that will guide your research—as well as propose a possible answer, or a working thesis. You may use your research question and your working thesis to create a research proposal. In a research proposal, you present your main research question, any related subquestions you plan to explore, and your working thesis.

## Step 2: Planning and Scheduling

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your research and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches.

During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule. See “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?”, “Steps in Developing a Research Proposal” for an example of a research schedule.

## Step 3: Conducting Research

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews.

Your sources will include both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, and historical documents are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or magazine articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you will take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You will also evaluate the reliability of each source you find.

## Step 4: Organizing Research and the Writer’s Ideas

When your research is complete, you will organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it supports your thesis, or the focus of your paper. You may decide to adjust your thesis or conduct additional research to ensure that your thesis is well supported.

**TIP:** Remember, your working thesis is not set in stone. You can and should change your working thesis throughout the research writing process if the evidence you find does not support your original thesis. Never try to force evidence to fit your argument. For example, your working thesis is “Mars cannot support life-forms.” Yet, a week into researching your topic, you find an article in the *New York Times* detailing new findings of bacteria under the Martian surface. Instead of trying to argue that bacteria are not life forms, you might instead alter your thesis to “Mars cannot support complex life-forms.”

## Step 5: Drafting Your Paper

Now you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results in a rough draft. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your thesis or purpose statement.

When you cite your reference sources, it is important to pay close attention to standard conventions for

citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, or the practice of using someone else's words without acknowledging the source. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your paper and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

### Step 6: Revising and Editing Your Paper

In the final step of the research writing process, you will revise and polish your paper. You might reorganize your paper's structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper flows into the next logically and naturally. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone.

Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting. When you complete this final step, you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written paper you can be proud of!

#### Exercise 16.3

Review the steps of the research writing process. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. In which steps of the research writing process are you allowed to change your thesis?
2. In step 2, which types of information should you include in your project schedule?
3. What might happen if you eliminated step 4 from the research writing process?

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## 17.

# Steps in Developing a Research Proposal

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although this assignment is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper.

Your first step is to choose a topic and then to develop research questions, a working thesis, and a written research proposal. Set aside adequate time for this part of the process. Fully exploring ideas will help you build a solid foundation for your paper.

## Choosing a Topic

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. Choosing a topic that interests you is also crucial. You instructor may provide a list of suggested topics or ask that you develop a topic on your own. In either case, try to identify topics that genuinely interest you.

After identifying potential topic ideas, you will need to evaluate your ideas and choose one topic to pursue. Will you be able to find enough information about the topic? Can you develop a paper about this topic that presents and supports your original ideas? Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify it so it is more manageable? You will ask these questions during this preliminary phase of the research process.



Figure 17.1

## Identifying Potential Topics

Sometimes, your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics. If so, you may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. It is important to know how to narrow down your ideas into a concise, manageable thesis. You may also use the list as a starting point to help

you identify additional, related topics. Discussing your ideas with your instructor will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment.

In this chapter, you will follow a student, who is studying health care administration, as he prepares a research paper. You will also plan, research, and draft your own research paper.

This student was assigned to write a research paper on health and the media for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, the student had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed a list of possibilities.

#### Possible Topics

- Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in the news
- Sexual education programs
- Hollywood and eating disorders
- Americans' access to public health information
- Media portrayal of health care reform bill
- Depictions of drugs on television
- The effect of the Internet on mental health
- Popularized diets (such as low-carbohydrate diets)
- Fear of pandemics (bird flu, HINI, SARS)
- Electronic entertainment and obesity
- Advertisements for prescription drugs
- Public education and disease prevention

#### Exercise 17.1

Set a timer for five minutes. Use brainstorming or idea mapping to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Do you closely follow the media coverage of a particular website, such as Twitter? Would you like to learn more about a certain industry, such as online dating? Which social networking sites do you and your friends use? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

## Narrowing Your Topic

Once you have a list of potential topics, you will need to choose one as the focus of your essay. You will also need to narrow your topic. Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as the pros and cons of sexual education in kids’ television programs or the physical effects of the South Beach diet, are specific enough to write about without being too narrow to sustain an entire research paper.

A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about it. Narrowing your focus is essential to making your topic manageable. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing, conduct preliminary research, and discuss both the topic and the research with others.

## Exploring Your Topic in Writing

“How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven’t even begun researching yet?” In fact, you may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through freewriting. (For more information about freewriting, see “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”.) Simply taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles.

The student above knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used freewriting to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic. Read the student’s ideas.

Our instructors are always saying that accurate, up-to-date information is crucial in encouraging people to make better choices about their health. I don’t think the media does a very good job of providing that, though. Every time I go on the Internet, I see tons of ads for the latest “miracle food.” One week it’s acai berries, the next week it’s green tea, and then six months later I see a news story saying all the fabulous claims about acai berries and green tea are overblown! Advice about weight loss is even worse. Think about all the diet books that are out there! Some say that a low-fat diet is best; some say you should cut down on carbs; and some make bizarre recommendations like eating half a grapefruit with every meal. I don’t know how anyone is supposed to make an informed decision about what to eat when there’s so much confusing, contradictory information. I bet even doctors, nurses, and dieticians have trouble figuring out what information is reliable and what is just the latest hype.

## Conducting Preliminary Research

Another way writers may focus a topic is to conduct preliminary research. Like freewriting, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web and browsing through newspaper and

magazine articles are good ways to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic on blogs and online discussion groups. Discussing your topic with others can also inspire you. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, your friends, or your instructor.

The student above's freewriting exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of health and the media intersected with a few of his interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects.

The student decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

#### Writing in Process

At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor's prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of reliable sources and take notes on your findings.

**TIP:** The reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory phase of your research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later. However, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea for your paper, be sure to check out other, more reliable sources as well to make sure the idea is worth pursuing.

#### Exercise 17.2

Review the list of topics you created in Exercise 17.1 and identify two or three topics you would like to explore further. For each of these topics, spend five to ten minutes writing about the topic without stopping. Then review your writing to identify possible areas of focus.

Set aside time to conduct preliminary research about your potential topics. Then choose a topic to pursue for your research paper.

#### Collaboration

Please share your topic list with a classmate. Select one or two topics on his or her list that you would like to learn more about and return it to him or her. Discuss why you found the topics interesting, and learn which of your topics your classmate selected and why.

## A Plan for Research

Your freewriting and preliminary research have helped you choose a focused, manageable topic for your research paper. To work with your topic successfully, you will need to determine what exactly you want to learn about it—and later, what you want to say about it. Before you begin conducting in-depth research, you will further define your focus by developing a research question, a working thesis, and a research proposal.

### Formulating a Research Question

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer.

To determine your research question, review the freewriting you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. (You may wish to use the 5WH strategy to help you formulate questions. See “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?” for more information about 5WH questions.) 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 the student will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. The student will need to research his subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

**Topic:** Low-carbohydrate diets

**Main question:** Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

**Subquestions:**

- Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

### Exercise 17.3

Using the topic you selected in Exercise 17.2, write your main research question and at least four to five subquestions. Check that your main research question is appropriately complex for your assignment.

## Constructing a Working Thesis

A working thesis concisely states a writer's initial answer to the main research question. It does not merely state a fact or present a subjective opinion. Instead, it expresses a debatable idea or claim that you hope to prove through additional research. Your working thesis is called a working thesis for a reason—it is subject to change. As you learn more about your topic, you may change your thinking in light of your research findings. Let your working thesis serve as a guide to your research, but do not be afraid to modify it based on what you learn.

The student 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 the student's tentative answer to his research question.

**Main research question:** Are low-carb diets as effective as they have sometimes been portrayed to be by the mass media?

**Working thesis statement:** Low-carb diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them.

**TIP:** One way to determine your working thesis is to consider how you would complete sentences such as *I believe* or *My opinion is*. However, keep in mind that academic writing generally does not use first-person pronouns. These statements are useful starting points, but formal research papers use an objective voice.

### Exercise 17.4

Write a working thesis statement that presents your preliminary answer to the research question you wrote in Exercise 17.3. Check that your working thesis statement presents an idea or claim that could be supported or refuted by evidence from research.

## Creating a Research Proposal

A research proposal is a brief document—no more than one typed page—that summarizes the

preliminary work you have completed. Your purpose in writing it is to formalize your plan for research and present it to your instructor for feedback. In your research proposal, you will present your main research question, related subquestions, and working thesis. You will also briefly discuss the value of researching this topic and indicate how you plan to gather information.

When the student's began drafting his research proposal, he realized that he had already created most of the pieces he needed. However, he knew he also had to explain how his research would be relevant to other future health care professionals. In addition, he wanted to form a general plan for doing the research and identifying potentially useful sources. Read the student's research proposal.

Jorge Ramirez

March 28, 2011

Health care 101

Research Proposal

In recent years, topics related to diet, nutrition, and weight loss have been covered extensively in the popular media. Different experts recommend various, often conflicting strategies for maintaining a healthy weight. One highly recommended approach which forms the basis of many popular diet plans, is to limit consumption of carbohydrates. Yet experts disagree on the effectiveness and health benefits of this approach. What information should consumers consider when evaluating diet plans? In my research, I will explore the claims made by proponents of the “low-carbohydrate lifestyle.” My primary research question is: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective for maintaining a healthy weight as they are portrayed to be? My secondary research questions are:

- Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carb diet?
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

My working thesis is that low-carbohydrate diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them. For this assignment, I will review general-interest and scholarly articles that discuss the relationship between low-carbohydrate diets, weight loss, and long-term health outcomes.

Writing In Process

Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. This type of document is similar to a research proposal. Both

documents define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.

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## 18.

# Managing Your Research Project

The prewriting you have completed so far has helped you begin to plan the content of your research paper—your topic, research questions, and preliminary thesis. It is equally important to plan out the process of researching and writing the paper. Although some types of writing assignments can be completed relatively quickly, developing a good research paper is a complex process that takes time. Breaking it into manageable steps is crucial. Review the steps outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

### Steps to Writing a Research Paper

1. Choose a topic.
2. Schedule and plan time for research and writing.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research
5. Draft your paper.
6. Revise and edit your paper.

You have already completed step 1. In this section, you will complete step 2. The remaining steps fall under two broad categories—the research phase of the project (steps 3 and 4) and the writing phase (steps 5 and 6). Both phases present challenges. Understanding the tasks involved and allowing enough time to complete each task will help you complete your research paper on time with a minimal amount of stress.

## Planning Your Project

Each step of a research project requires time and attention. Careful planning helps ensure that you will keep your project running smoothly and produce your best work. Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. Think about *how* you will complete each step and what project resources you will use.

Resources may include anything from library databases and word-processing software to interview subjects and writing tutors.



Figure 18.1

To develop your schedule, use a calendar and work backward from the date your final draft is due. Generally, it is wise to divide half of the available time on the research phase of the project and half on the writing phase. For example, if you have a month to work, plan for two weeks for each phase. If you

have a full semester, plan to begin research early and to start writing by the middle of the term. You might think that no one really works that far ahead, but try it. You will probably be pleased with the quality of your work and with the reduction in your stress level.

As you plan, break down major steps into smaller tasks if necessary. For example, step 3, conducting research, involves locating potential sources, evaluating their usefulness and reliability, reading, and taking notes. Defining these smaller tasks makes the project more manageable by giving you concrete goals to achieve.

This student had six weeks to complete his research project. Working backward from a due date of May 2, he mapped out a schedule for completing his research by early April so that he would have ample time to write. The student chose to write his schedule in his weekly planner to help keep himself on track.

Review the following schedule. Key target dates are shaded. Note that the student planned times to use available resources by visiting the library and writing center and by meeting with his instructor.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
March 20	21	22 Choose Topic	23 Preliminary research	24 Write research questions and working thesis	25 Write research proposal	26
27	28 Research proposal due	29 Look for sources online	30 Library	31 Evaluate sources; make source cards	April 1 Take notes →	2
3	4	5 Finish note cards	6 Organize notes →	7	8 Write outline →	9
10	11 Outline due	12 Write draft →	13	14	15 <i>Off - Trip to NYC</i>	16 <i>Off - Trip to NYC</i>
17	18 Conference with Prof. Habib 2:00	19 Finish writing draft	20	21 Revise draft →	22	23 Library?
24	25	26 Finish revising draft	27 Edit draft	28 Writing Center 4:30	29 Finish editing draft	30 Create Works Cited page
May 1	2 Final draft due	3	4	5	6	7

Figure 18.2 [Image Description]

### Exercise 18.1

1. Working backward from the date your final draft is due, create a project schedule. You may choose to write a sequential list of tasks or record tasks on a calendar.
2. Check your schedule to be sure that you have broken each step into smaller tasks and assigned a target completion date to each key task.
3. Review your target dates to make sure they are realistic. Always allow a little more time than you think you will actually need.

**TIP:** Plan your schedule realistically, and consider other commitments that may sometimes take precedence. A business trip or family visit may mean that you are unable to work on the research project for a few days. Make the most of the time you have available. Plan for unexpected interruptions, but keep in mind that a short time away from the project may help you come back to it with renewed enthusiasm. Another strategy many writers find helpful is to finish each day's work at a point when the next task is an easy one. That makes it easier to start again.

### Writing in Process

When you create a project schedule at work, you set target dates for completing certain tasks and identify the resources you plan to use on the project. It is important to build in some flexibility. Materials may not be received on time because of a shipping delay. An employee on your team may be called away to work on a higher-priority project. Essential equipment may malfunction. You should always plan for the unexpected.

## Staying Organized

Although setting up a schedule is easy, sticking to one is challenging. Even if you are the rare person who never procrastinates, unforeseen events may interfere with your ability to complete tasks on time. A self-imposed deadline may slip your mind despite your best intentions. Organizational tools—calendars, checklists, note cards, software, and so forth—can help you stay on track.

Throughout your project, organize both your time and your resources systematically. Review your schedule frequently and check your progress. It helps to post your schedule in a place where you will see it every day. Both personal and workplace e-mail systems usually include a calendar feature where you can record tasks, arrange to receive daily reminders, and check off completed tasks. Electronic devices such as smartphones have similar features.

Organize project documents in a binder or electronic folder, and label project documents and folders

clearly. Use note cards or an electronic document to record bibliographical information for each source you plan to use in your paper. Tracking this information throughout the research process can save you hours of time when you create your references page.

#### Exercise 18.2

Revisit the schedule you created in Exercise 18.1. Transfer it into a format that will help you stay on track from day to day. You may wish to input it into your smartphone, write it in a weekly planner, post it by your desk, or have your e-mail account send you daily reminders. Consider setting up a buddy system with a classmate that will help you both stay on track.

**TIP:** Some people enjoy using the most up-to-date technology to help them stay organized. Other people prefer simple methods, such as crossing off items on a checklist. The key to staying organized is finding a system you like enough to use daily. The particulars of the method are not important as long as you are consistent.

## Anticipating Challenges

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? You have identified a book that would be a great resource for your project, but it is currently checked out of the library. You planned to interview a subject matter expert on your topic, but she calls to reschedule your meeting. You have begun writing your draft, but now you realize that you will need to modify your thesis and conduct additional research. Or you have finally completed your draft when your computer crashes, and days of hard work disappear in an instant.

These troubling situations are all too common. No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a glitch or setback. Managing your project effectively means anticipating potential problems, taking steps to minimize them where possible, and allowing time in your schedule to handle any setbacks.

Many times a situation becomes a problem due only to lack of planning. For example, if a book is checked out of your local library, it might be available through interlibrary loan, which usually takes a few days for the library staff to process. Alternatively, you might locate another, equally useful source. If you have allowed enough time for research, a brief delay will not become a major setback.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized and maintaining a take-charge attitude. Take a minute each day to save a backup copy of your work on a portable hard drive. Maintain detailed note cards and source cards as you conduct research—doing so will make citing sources in your draft infinitely easier. If you run into difficulties with your research or your writing, ask your instructor for help, or make an appointment with a writing tutor.

### Exercise 18.3

Identify five potential problems you might encounter in the process of researching and writing your paper. Write them on a separate sheet of paper. For each problem, write at least one strategy for solving the problem or minimizing its effect on your project.

### Writing in Process

In the workplace, documents prepared at the beginning of a project often include a detailed plan for risk management. When you manage a project, it makes sense to anticipate and prepare for potential setbacks. For example, to roll out a new product line, a software development company must strive to complete tasks on a schedule in order to meet the new product release date. The project manager may need to adjust the project plan if one or more tasks fall behind schedule.

### Image Descriptions

**Figure 18.2 Image Description:** A list of dates between March 22 and May 2 with a plan for what tasks for a research paper should be completed on what days. An \* marks key target dates.

#### March

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 22. Tuesday: Choose topic.<br>23. Wednesday: Preliminary research.<br>24. Thursday: Write research questions and working thesis.<br>25. Friday: Write research proposal.<br>26. Saturday: Nothing. | 27. Sunday: Nothing.<br>28. *Monday: Research proposal due.<br>29. Tuesday: Look for sources online.<br>30. Wednesday: Library.<br>31. Thursday: Evaluate sources; make source cards. |
|--|---|

#### April

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Friday: Take notes.<br>2. Saturday: Take notes.<br>3. Sunday: Take notes.<br>4. Monday: Take notes.<br>5. *Tuesday: Finish note cards.<br>6. Wednesday: Organize notes.<br>7. Thursday: Organize notes.<br>8. Friday: Write outline.<br>9. Saturday: Write outline. | 10. Sunday: Nothing.<br>11. *Monday: Outline due.<br>12. Tuesday: Write draft.<br>13. Wednesday: Write draft.<br>14. Thursday: Write draft.<br>15. Friday: Off. Trip to NYC.<br>16. Saturday: Off. Trip to NYC.<br>17. Sunday: Nothing.<br>18. Monday: Conference with Professor Habib at 2pm. |
|--|--|

19. \*Tuesday: Finish writing draft.
20. Wednesday: Nothing.
21. Thursday: Revise draft.
22. Friday: Revise draft.
23. Saturday: Library?
24. Sunday: Nothing.
25. Monday: Nothing.
26. \*Tuesday: Finish revising draft.
27. Wednesday: Edit draft.
28. Thursday: Writing Centre at 4:30.
29. \*Friday: Finish editing draft.
30. Saturday: Create Works Cited page.

## May

1. Sunday: Nothing.
2. \*Monday: Final draft due.

[\[Return to Figure 18.2\]](#)

### Text Attributions

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## 19.

# Strategies for Gathering Reliable Information

Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging. As you read this section, you will learn ways to locate sources efficiently, so you have enough time to read the sources, take notes, and think about how to use the information.

Of course, the technological advances of the past few decades—particularly the rise of online media—mean that, as a twenty-first-century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable? This section will discuss strategies for evaluating sources critically so that you can be a media-savvy researcher.

In this section, you will locate and evaluate resources for your paper and begin taking notes. As you read, begin gathering print and electronic resources, identify at least eight to ten sources by the time you finish the chapter, and begin taking notes on your research findings.



Figure 19.1

## Locating Useful Resources

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research proposal included some general ideas for how to go about your research—for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources. Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative primary and secondary sources.

## Using Primary and Secondary Sources

Writers classify research resources in two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. *Primary sources* are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. For example, if you were writing a paper about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source.

Other primary sources include the following:

- Research articles

- Literary texts
- Historical documents such as diaries or letters
- Autobiographies or other personal accounts

*Secondary sources* discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In researching a paper about the First Amendment, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information.

The following are examples of secondary sources:

- Magazine articles
- Biographical books
- Literary and scientific reviews
- Television documentaries

Your topic and purpose determine whether you must cite both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions. If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Once you have thought about what kinds of sources are most likely to help you answer your research questions, you may begin your search for print and electronic resources. The challenge here is to conduct your search efficiently. Writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful.

## Finding Print Resources

Print resources include a vast array of documents and publications. Regardless of your topic, you will consult some print resources as part of your research. (You will use electronic sources as well, but it is not wise to limit yourself to electronic sources only, because some potentially useful sources may be available only in print form.) Table 19.1 "Library Print Resources" lists different types of print resources available at public and university libraries.



Figure 19.2

**Table 19.1 Library Print Resources**

<b>Resource Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example(s)</b>
Reference works	<p>Reference works provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works. In some cases, reference books may not be checked out of a library.</p> <p>Note that reference works are many steps removed from original primary sources and are often brief, so these should be used only as a starting point when you gather information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2010</i></li> <li>• <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual</i> published by the American Psychiatric Association</li> </ul>
Nonfiction books	Nonfiction books provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books and scientific studies are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Low-Carb Solution: A Slimmer You in 30 Days</i></li> <li>• <i>Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins: Exploring the Relationship Between Macronutrient Ratios and Health Outcomes</i></li> </ul>
Periodicals and news sources	These sources are published at regular intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are examples. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest, while others are more specialized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>New York Times</i></li> <li>• <i>PC Magazine</i></li> <li>• <i>JAMA, The Journal of the American Medical Association</i></li> </ul>
Government publications	Federal, state, and local government agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>Census 2000 Profile</i></li> <li>• <i>The Business Relocation Package</i> published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul>
Business and nonprofit publications	Businesses and nonprofit organizations produce publications designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A company's instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program</li> <li>• A news release published by the Sierra Club</li> </ul>

Some of these resources are also widely available in electronic format. In addition to the resources noted in the table, library holdings may include primary texts such as historical documents, letters, and diaries.

### Writing in Process

Businesses, government organizations, and nonprofit organizations produce published materials that range from brief advertisements and brochures to lengthy, detailed reports. In many cases, producing these publications requires research. A corporation's annual report may include research about economic or industry trends. A charitable organization may use information from research in materials sent to potential donors.

Regardless of the industry you work in, you may be asked to assist in developing materials for publication. Often, incorporating research in these documents can make them more effective in informing or persuading readers.

**TIP:** As you gather information, strive for a balance of accessible, easy-to-read sources and more specialized, challenging sources. Relying solely on lightweight books and articles written for a general audience will drastically limit the range of useful, substantial information. On the other hand, restricting oneself to dense, scholarly works could make the process of researching extremely time-consuming and frustrating.

### Exercise 19.1

Make a list of five types of print resources you could use to find information about your research topic. Include at least one primary source. Be as specific as possible—if you have a particular resource or type of resource in mind, describe it.

To find print resources efficiently, first identify the major concepts and terms you will use to conduct your search—that is, your *keywords*. These, along with the research questions you identified in “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?”, and “Steps in Developing a Research Proposal”, will help you find sources using any of the following methods:

- Using the library’s online catalog or card catalog
- Using periodicals indexes and databases
- Consulting a reference librarian

You probably already have some keywords in mind based on your preliminary research and writing. Another way to identify useful keywords is to visit the [Library of Congress’s website](#). This site allows you to search for a topic and see the related subject headings used by the Library of Congress, including broader terms, narrower terms, and related terms. Other libraries use these terms to classify materials. Knowing the most-used terms will help you speed up your keyword search.

**TIP:** Knowing the right keywords can sometimes make all the difference in conducting a successful search. If you have trouble finding sources on a topic, consult a librarian to see whether you need to modify your search terms.

### Exercise 19.2

Visit the [Library of Congress's website](#) and conduct searches on a few terms related to your topic.

1. Review your search results and identify six to eight additional terms you might use when you conduct your research.
2. Print out the search results or save the results to your research folder on your computer or portable storage device.

## Using Periodicals, Indexes, and Databases

Library catalogs can help you locate book-length sources, as well as some types of nonprint holdings, such as CDs, DVDs, and audio books. To locate shorter sources, such as magazine and journal articles, you will need to use a periodical index or an online periodical database. These tools index the articles that appear in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Like catalogs, they provide publication information about an article and often allow users to access a summary or even the full text of the article.

Print indexes may be available in the periodicals section of your library. Increasingly, libraries use online databases that users can access through the library website. A single library may provide access to multiple periodical databases. These can range from general news databases to specialized databases. Table 19.2 “Commonly Used Indexes and Databases” describes some commonly used indexes and databases.

**Table 19.2 Commonly Used Indexes and Databases**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<i>New York Times Index</i>	Print	Guide to articles published in the <i>New York Times</i>
ProQuest	Online	Database that archives content from newspapers, magazines, and dissertations
Psychlit, PsycINFO	Online	Databases that archive content from journals in psychology and psychiatry
Business Source Complete	Online	Database that archives business-related content from magazines and journals
MEDLINE, PubMed	Online	Databases that archive articles in medicine and health
EBSCOhost	Online	General database that provides access to articles on a wide variety of topics

## Reading Popular and Scholarly Periodicals

When you search for periodicals, be sure to distinguish among different types. Mass-market publications, such as newspapers and popular magazines, differ from scholarly publications in their accessibility, audience, and purpose.

Newspapers and magazines are written for a broader audience than scholarly journals. Their content is usually quite accessible and easy to read. Trade magazines that target readers within a particular industry may presume the reader has background knowledge, but these publications are still reader-friendly for a broader audience. Their purpose is to inform and, often, to entertain or persuade readers as well.

Scholarly or academic journals are written for a much smaller and more expert audience. The creators of these publications assume that most of their readers are already familiar with the main topic of the journal. The target audience is also highly educated. Informing is the primary purpose of a scholarly journal. While a journal article may advance an agenda or advocate a position, the content will still be presented in an objective style and formal tone. Entertaining readers with breezy comments and splashy graphics is not a priority.

Because of these differences, scholarly journals are more challenging to read. That doesn't mean you should avoid them. On the contrary, they can provide in-depth information unavailable elsewhere. Because knowledgeable professionals carefully review the content before publication, scholarly journals are far more reliable than much of the information available in popular media. Seek out academic journals along with other resources. Just be prepared to spend a little more time processing the information.

### Writing in Process

Periodicals databases are not just for students writing research papers. They also provide a valuable service to workers in various fields. The owner of a small business might use a database such as Business Source Premiere to find articles on management, finance, or trends within a particular industry. Health care professionals might consult databases such as MedLine to research a particular disease or medication. Regardless of what career path you plan to pursue, periodicals databases can be a useful tool for researching specific topics and identifying periodicals that will help you keep up with the latest news in your industry.

## Consulting a Reference Librarian

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if it is yielding too many or too few results, you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging, although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian.

Reference librarians are intimately familiar with the systems libraries use to organize and classify information. They can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, and provide tips on how to use databases and other electronic research tools. Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties, ask for help. Many librarians hold virtual office hours and are available for online chatting.



Figure 19.3

### Exercise 19.3

Visit your library's website or consult with a reference librarian to determine what periodicals indexes or databases would be useful for your research. Depending on your topic, you may rely on a general news index, a specialized index for a particular subject area, or both. Search the catalog for your topic and related keywords. Print out or bookmark your search results.

1. Identify at least one to two relevant periodicals, indexes, or databases.
2. Conduct a keyword search to find potentially relevant articles on your topic.
3. Save your search results. If the index you are using provides article summaries, read these to determine how useful the articles are likely to be.
4. Identify at least three to five articles to review more closely. If the full article is available online,

set aside time to read it. If not, plan to visit our library within the next few days to locate the articles you need.

**TIP:** One way to refine your keyword search is to use Boolean operators. These operators allow you to combine keywords, find variations on a word, and otherwise expand or limit your results. Here are some of the ways you can use Boolean operators:

- Combine keywords with **and** or + to limit results to citations that include both keywords—for example, **diet + nutrition**.
- Combine keywords with **not** or – to search for the first word without the second. This can help you eliminate irrelevant results based on words that are similar to your search term. For example, searching for **obesity not childhood** locates materials on obesity but excludes materials on childhood obesity.
- Enclose a phrase in quotation marks to search for an exact phrase, such as “**morbid obesity**.”
- Use parentheses to direct the order of operations in a search string. For example, since Type II diabetes is also known as adult-onset diabetes, you could search **(Type II or adult-onset) and diabetes** to limit your search results to articles on this form of the disease.
- Use a wildcard symbol such as #, ?, or \$ after a word to search for variations on a term. For instance, you might type **diabet#** to search for information on diabetes and diabetics. The specific symbol used varies with different databases.

## Finding and Using Electronic Resources

With the expansion of technology and media over the past few decades, a wealth of information is available to you in electronic format. Some types of resources, such as a television documentary, may only be available electronically. Other resources—for instance, many newspapers and magazines—may be available in both print and electronic form. The following are some of the electronic sources you might consult:

- Online databases
- CD-ROMs
- Popular web search engines
- Websites maintained by businesses, universities, nonprofit organizations, or government agencies
- Newspapers, magazines, and journals published on the web
- E-books
- Audio books

- Industry blogs
- Radio and television programs and other audio and video recordings
- Online discussion groups

The techniques you use to locate print resources can also help you find electronic resources efficiently. Libraries usually include CD-ROMs, audio books, and audio and video recordings among their holdings. You can locate these materials in the catalog using a keyword search. The same Boolean operators used to refine database searches can help you filter your results in popular search engines.

## Using Internet Search Engines Efficiently

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines as their first source of information. Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of related websites—what could be easier? Unfortunately, despite its apparent convenience, this research strategy has the following drawbacks to consider:

- **Results do not always appear in order of reliability.** The first few hits that appear in search results may include sites whose content is not always reliable, such as online encyclopedias that can be edited by any user. Because websites are created by third parties, the search engine cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.
- **Results may be too numerous for you to use.** The amount of information available on the web is far greater than the amount of information housed within a particular library or database. Realistically, if your web search pulls up thousands of hits, you will not be able to visit every site—and the most useful sites may be buried deep within your search results.
- **Search engines are not connected to the results of the search.** Search engines find websites that people visit often and list the results in order of popularity. The search engine, then, is not connected to any of the results. When you cite a source found through a search engine, you do not need to cite the search engine. Only cite the source.

A general web search can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful resources. To get the most out of a search engine, however, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Use multiple keywords and Boolean operators to limit your results. Click on the Advanced Search link on the homepage to find additional options for streamlining your search. Depending on the specific search engine you use, the following options may be available:

- Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame.
- Limit results by language or country.
- Limit results to scholarly works available online.
- Limit results by file type.
- Limit results to a particular domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites, which can often lead to more objective results.

Use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising.

## Using Other Information Sources: Interviews

With so many print and electronic media readily available, it is easy to overlook another valuable information resource: other people. Consider whether you could use a person or group as a primary source. For instance, you might interview a professor who has expertise in a particular subject, a worker within a particular industry, or a representative from a political organization. Interviews can be a great way to get firsthand information.

To get the most out of an interview, you will need to plan ahead. Contact your subject early in the research process and explain your purpose for requesting an interview. Prepare detailed questions. Open-ended questions, rather than questions with simple yes-or-no answers, are more likely to lead to an in-depth discussion. Schedule a time to meet, and be sure to obtain your subject's permission to record the interview. Take careful notes and be ready to ask follow-up questions based on what you learn.

**TIP:** If scheduling an in-person meeting is difficult, consider arranging a telephone interview or asking your subject to respond to your questions via e-mail. Recognize that any of these formats takes time and effort. Be prompt and courteous, avoid going over the allotted interview time, and be flexible if your subject needs to reschedule.

## Evaluating Research Resources

As you gather sources, you will need to examine them with a critical eye. Smart researchers continually ask themselves two questions: “Is this source relevant to my purpose?” and “Is this source reliable?” The first question will help you avoid wasting valuable time reading sources that stray too far from your specific topic and research questions. The second question will help you find accurate, trustworthy sources.

### Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

At this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in checking out books and printing out articles that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Now is a good time to get a little ruthless. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources.

To weed through your stack of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. Table 19.3 “Tips for Skimming Books and Articles” explains how to skim to get a quick sense of what topics are covered. If a book or article is not especially relevant, put it aside. You can always come back to it later if you need to.

**Table 19.3 Tips for Skimming Books and Articles**

Tips for Skimming Books	Tips for Skimming Articles
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the dust jacket and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered.</li> <li>2. Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered.</li> <li>3. Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material.</li> <li>2. Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars.</li> <li>3. Look for keywords related to your topic.</li> <li>4. Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.</li> </ol>

### Determining Whether a Source Is Reliable

All information sources are not created equal. Sources can vary greatly in terms of how carefully they are researched, written, edited, and reviewed for accuracy. Common sense will help you identify obviously questionable sources, such as tabloids that feature tales of alien abductions, or personal websites with glaring typos. Sometimes, however, a source's reliability—or lack of it—is not so obvious. For more information about source reliability, see “Writing a Research Paper”.

To evaluate your research sources, you will use critical thinking skills consciously and deliberately. You will consider criteria such as the type of source, its intended purpose and audience, the author's (or authors') qualifications, the publication's reputation, any indications of bias or hidden agendas, how current the source is, and the overall quality of the writing, thinking, and design.

### Evaluating Types of Sources

The different types of sources you will consult are written for distinct purposes and with different audiences in mind. This accounts for other differences, such as the following:

- How thoroughly the writers cover a given topic
- How carefully the writers research and document facts
- How editors review the work
- What biases or agendas affect the content

A journal article written for an academic audience for the purpose of expanding scholarship in a given field will take an approach quite different from a magazine feature written to inform a general audience. Textbooks, hard news articles, and websites approach a subject from different angles as well. To some extent, the type of source provides clues about its overall depth and reliability. Table 19.4 “Source Rankings” ranks different source types.

**Table 19.4 “Source Rankings**

<b>High-Quality Sources</b>	<p>These sources provide the most in-depth information. They are researched and written by subject matter experts and are carefully reviewed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarly books and articles in scholarly journals.</li> <li>• Trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as <i>Smithsonian Magazine</i> or <i>Nature</i>.</li> <li>• Government documents, such as books, reports, and web pages.</li> <li>• Documents posted online by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes.</li> <li>• Textbooks and reference books, which are usually reliable but may not cover a topic in great depth.</li> </ul>
<b>Varied-Quality Sources</b>	<p>These sources are often useful. However, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Use them with caution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as <i>Newsweek</i> or the Public Broadcasting Service.</li> <li>• Popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked.</li> <li>• Documents published by businesses and nonprofit organizations.</li> </ul>
<b>Questionable Sources</b>	<p>These sources should be avoided. They are often written primarily to attract a large readership or present the author’s opinions and are not subject to careful review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk radio shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms.</li> </ul>

**TIP:** Free online encyclopedias and wikis may seem like a great source of information. They usually appear among the first few results of a web search. They cover thousands of topics, and many articles use an informal, straightforward writing style. Unfortunately, these sites have no control system for researching, writing, and reviewing articles. Instead, they rely on a community of users to police themselves. At best, these sites can be a starting point for finding other, more trustworthy sources. Never use them as final sources.

## Evaluating Credibility and Reputability

Even when you are using a type of source that is generally reliable, you will still need to evaluate the author's credibility and the publication itself on an individual basis. To examine the author's credibility—that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say—examine his or her credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write about this topic?

Keep in mind that expertise in one field is no guarantee of expertise in another, unrelated area. For instance, an author may have an advanced degree in physiology, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.

Just as important as the author's credibility is the publication's overall reputability. Reputability refers to a source's standing and reputation as a respectable, reliable source of information. An established and well-known newspaper, such as the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, is more reputable than a college newspaper put out by comparatively inexperienced students. A website that is maintained by a well-known, respected organization and regularly updated is more reputable than one created by an unknown author or group.

If you are using articles from scholarly journals, you can check databases that keep count of how many times each article has been cited in other articles. This can be a rough indication of the article's quality or, at the very least, of its influence and reputation among other scholars.

## Checking for Biases and Hidden Agendas

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author's or authors' purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, the source's content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas.

Bias refers to favoritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly—or not so subtly—makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone's words, and distort information.

Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animal-rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

## Using Current Sources

Be sure to seek out sources that are current, or up to date. Depending on the topic, sources may become outdated relatively soon after publication, or they may remain useful for years. For instance, online social networking sites have evolved rapidly over the past few years. An article published in 2002 about this topic will not provide current information. On the other hand, a research paper on elementary education practices might refer to studies published decades ago by influential child psychologists.

When using websites for research, check to see when the site was last updated. Many sites publish this information on the homepage, and some, such as news sites, are updated daily or weekly. Many nonfunctioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your professor for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable—or that the most reliable sources are not relevant.

## Evaluating Overall Quality by Asking Questions

When you evaluate a source, you will consider the criteria previously discussed as well as your overall impressions of its quality. Read carefully, and notice how well the author presents and supports his or her statements. Stay actively engaged—do not simply accept an author’s words as truth. Ask questions to determine each source’s value. The checklist 19.1 lists ten questions to ask yourself as a critical reader.

### Checklist 19.1 Source Evaluation

- Is the type of source appropriate for my purpose? Is it a high-quality source or one that needs to be looked at more critically?
- Can I establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?
- Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented? Is the source of the author’s information clear? (When you use secondary sources, look for sources that are not too removed from primary research.)
- Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?
- Does the author leave out any information that I would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?
- Do the author’s conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can I see how the author got from one point to another?
- Is the writing clear and organized, and is it free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords? Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable? (Be on the lookout for extreme, emotionally charged language.)
- Are there any obvious biases or agendas? Based on what I know about the author, are there likely to be any hidden agendas?
- Are graphics informative, useful, and easy to understand? Are websites organized, easy to navigate, and free of clutter like flashing ads and unnecessary sound effects?
- Is the source contradicted by information found in other sources? (If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why. Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts that you cannot confirm elsewhere.)

#### Exercise 19.4

Use a search engine to conduct a web search on your topic. Refer to the tips provided earlier to help you streamline your search. Evaluate your search results critically based on the criteria you have learned. Identify and bookmark one or more websites that are reliable, reputable, and likely to be useful in your research.

## Managing Source Information

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. What matters is that you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

### Keeping Track of Your Sources

Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you've written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left—writing your list of sources.

As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used or the dates you accessed them—information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include separate programs for recording bibliographic information.)

Table 19.5 “Details for Commonly Used Source Types” shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography—a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. You may wish to record information using the formatting system of the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Modern Language Association (MLA), which will save a step later on.

**Table 19.5 “Details for Commonly Used Source Types**

<b>Source Type</b>	<b>Necessary Information</b>
Book	Author(s), title and subtitle, publisher, city of publication, year of publication
Essay or article published in a book	Include all the information you would for any other book. Additionally, record the essay’s or article’s title, author(s), the pages on which it appears, and the name of the book’s editor(s).
Periodical	Author(s), article title, publication title, date of publication, volume and issue number, and page numbers
Online source	Author(s) (if available), article or document title, organization that sponsors the site, database name (if applicable), date of publication, date you accessed the site, and URL
Interview	Name of person interviewed, method of communication, date of interview

Your research may involve less common types of sources not listed in Table 11.5 “Details for Commonly Used Source Types”.

#### Exercise 19.5

Create a working bibliography using the format that is most convenient for you. List at least five sources you plan to use. Continue to add sources to your working bibliography throughout the research process.

**TIP:** To make your working bibliography even more complete, you may wish to record additional details, such as a book’s call number or contact information for a person you interviewed. That way, if you need to locate a source again, you have all the information you need right at your fingertips. You may also wish to assign each source a code number to use when taking notes (1, 2, 3, or a similar system).

### Taking Notes Efficiently

Good researchers stay focused and organized as they gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and think about your goal as a researcher—to find information that will help you answer your research question. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it.

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their notes relate to the questions and ideas they started out with. Remember that you do not need to write down every detail from your reading. Focus on finding and recording details that will help you answer your research questions. The following strategies will help you take notes efficiently.

## Use Headings to Organize Ideas

Whether you use old-fashioned index cards or organize your notes using word-processing software, record just one major point from each source at a time, and use a heading to summarize the information covered. Keep all your notes in one file, digital or otherwise. Doing so will help you identify connections among different pieces of information. It will also help you make connections between your notes and the research questions and subtopics you identified earlier.

## Know When to Summarize, Paraphrase, or Directly Quote a Source

Your notes will fall under three categories—summary notes, paraphrased information, and direct quotations from your sources. Effective researchers make choices about which type of notes is most appropriate for their purpose.

- Summary notes sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.
- Paraphrased notes restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.
- Direct quotations use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. It is a good strategy to copy direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Most of your notes should be paraphrased from the original source. Paraphrasing as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations, because it forces you to think through the information in your source and understand it well enough to restate it. In short, it helps you stay engaged with the material instead of simply copying and pasting. Synthesizing will help you later when you begin planning and drafting your paper. (For detailed guidelines on summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting, see “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?”, “Writing from Research: Exercises”.)

## Maintain Complete, Accurate Notes

Regardless of the format used, any notes you take should include enough information to help you organize ideas and locate them instantly in the original text if you need to review them. Make sure your notes include the following elements:

- Heading summing up the main topic covered
- Author’s name, a source code, or an abbreviated source title
- Page number
- Full URL of any pages buried deep in a website

Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed

each idea to its source. Always include source information so you know exactly which ideas came from which sources. Use quotation marks to set off any words or phrases taken directly from the original text. If you add your own responses and ideas, make sure they are distinct from ideas you quoted or paraphrased.

Finally, make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text. Make sure quoted material is copied verbatim. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission and make sure the omission does not change the author's meaning. Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure that you have restated the author's ideas accurately in your own words.

## Use a System That Works for You

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others—it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choosing the format that works best for you will ensure your notes are organized, complete, and accurate. Consider implementing one of these formats when you begin taking notes:

- **Use index cards.** This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers colour-code their cards to make them still more organized.
- **Use note-taking software.** Word-processing and office software packages often include different types of note-taking software. Although you may need to set aside some time to learn the software, this method combines the speed of typing with the same degree of organization associated with handwritten note cards.
- **Maintain a research notebook.** Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook or electronic folder, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research.
- **Annotate your sources.** This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied. If using electronic sources, you can make comments within the source document. For example, you might add comment boxes to a PDF version of an article. This method works best for experienced researchers who have already thought a great deal about the topic because it can be difficult to organize your notes later when starting your draft.

Choose one of the methods from the list to use for taking notes. Continue gathering sources and taking notes. In the next section, you will learn strategies for organizing and synthesizing the information you have found.

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## 20.

# Critical Thinking and Research Applications

At this point in your project, you are preparing to move from the research phase to the writing phase. You have gathered much of the information you will use, and soon you will be ready to begin writing your draft. This section helps you transition smoothly from one phase to the next.

Beginning writers sometimes attempt to transform a pile of note cards into a formal research paper without any intermediary step. This approach presents problems. The writer's original question and thesis may be buried in a flood of disconnected details taken from research sources. The first draft may present redundant or contradictory information. Worst of all, the writer's ideas and voice may be lost.

An effective research paper focuses on the writer's ideas—from the question that sparked the research process to how the writer answers that question based on the research findings. Before beginning a draft, or even an outline, good writers pause and reflect. They ask themselves questions such as the following:

- How has my thinking changed based on my research? What have I learned?
- Was my working thesis on target? Do I need to rework my thesis based on what I have learned?
- How does the information in my sources mesh with my research questions and help me answer those questions? Have any additional important questions or subtopics come up that I will need to address in my paper?
- How do my sources complement each other? What ideas or facts recur in multiple sources?
- Where do my sources disagree with each other, and why?

In this section, you will reflect on your research and review the information you have gathered. You will determine what you now think about your topic. You will synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions. Finally, you will determine the organizational structure that works best for your paper and begin planning your outline.

### Exercise 20.1

Review the research questions and working thesis you developed in “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?” and “Steps in Developing a Research Proposal.” Set a timer for ten minutes and write about your topic, using your questions and thesis to guide your writing. Complete this exercise without looking over your

notes or sources. Base your writing on the overall impressions and concepts you have absorbed while conducting research. If additional, related questions come to mind, jot them down.

## Selecting Useful Information

At this point in the research process, you have gathered information from a wide variety of sources. Now it is time to think about how you will use this information as a writer.

When you conduct research, you keep an open mind and seek out many promising sources. You take notes on any information that looks like it might help you answer your research questions. Often, new ideas and terms come up in your reading, and these, too, find their way into your notes. You may record facts or quotations that catch your attention even if they did not seem immediately relevant to your research question. By now, you have probably amassed an impressively detailed collection of notes.

You will not use all of your notes in your paper.

Good researchers are thorough. They look at multiple perspectives, facts, and ideas related to their topic, and they gather a great deal of information. Effective writers, however, are selective. They determine which information is most relevant and appropriate for their purpose. They include details that develop or explain their ideas—and they leave out details that do not. The writer, not the pile of notes, is the controlling force. The writer shapes the content of the research paper.

While working through “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?” and “Strategies for Gathering Reliable Information,” you used strategies to filter out unreliable or irrelevant sources and details. Now you will apply your critical-thinking skills to the information you recorded—analyzing how it is relevant, determining how it meshes with your ideas, and finding how it forms connections and patterns.

## Identify Information That Supports Your Thesis

In Exercise 1, you revisited your research questions and working thesis. The process of writing informally helped you see how you might begin to pull together what you have learned from your research. Do not feel anxious, however, if you still have trouble seeing the big picture. Systematically looking through your notes will help you.

Begin by identifying the notes that clearly support your thesis. Mark or group these, either physically or using the cut-and-paste function in your word-processing program. As you identify the crucial details that support your thesis, make sure you analyze them critically. Ask the following questions to focus your thinking:

- **Is this detail from a reliable, high-quality source? Is it appropriate for me to cite this source in an academic paper?** The bulk of the support for your thesis should come from reliable, reputable sources. If most of the details that support your thesis are from less-

reliable sources, you may need to do additional research or modify your thesis.

- **Is the link between this information and my thesis obvious—or will I need to explain it to my readers?** Remember, you have spent more time thinking and reading about this topic than your audience. Some connections might be obvious to both you and your readers. More often, however, you will need to provide the analysis or explanation that shows how the information supports your thesis. As you read through your notes, jot down ideas you have for making those connections clear.
- **What personal biases or experiences might affect the way I interpret this information?** No researcher is 100 percent objective. We all have personal opinions and experiences that influence our reactions to what we read and learn. Good researchers are aware of this human tendency. They keep an open mind when they read opinions or facts that contradict their beliefs.

**TIP:** It can be tempting to ignore information that does not support your thesis or that contradicts it outright. However, such information is important. At the very least, it gives you a sense of what has been written about the issue. More importantly, it can help you question and refine your own thinking so that writing your research paper is a true learning process.

## Find Connections between Your Sources

As you find connections between your ideas and information in your sources, also look for information that connects your sources. Do most sources seem to agree on a particular idea? Are some facts mentioned repeatedly in many different sources? What key terms or major concepts come up in most of your sources regardless of whether the sources agree on the finer points? Identifying these connections will help you identify important ideas to discuss in your paper.

Look for subtler ways your sources complement one another, too. Does one author refer to another's book or article? How do sources that are more recent build upon the ideas developed in earlier sources?

Be aware of any redundancies in your sources. If you have amassed solid support from a reputable source, such as a scholarly journal, there is no need to cite the same facts from an online encyclopedia article that is many steps removed from any primary research. If a given source adds nothing new to your discussion and you can cite a stronger source for the same information, use the stronger source.

Determine how you will address any contradictions found among different sources. For instance, if one source cites a startling fact that you cannot confirm anywhere else, it is safe to dismiss the information as unreliable. However, if you find significant disagreements among reliable sources, you will need to review them and evaluate each source. Which source presents a sounder argument or more solid evidence? It is up to you to determine which source is the most credible and why.

Finally, do not ignore any information simply because it does not support your thesis. Carefully consider how that information fits into the big picture of your research. You may decide that the source

is unreliable or the information is not relevant, or you may decide that it is an important point you need to bring up. What matters is that you give it careful consideration.

## Reevaluate Your Working Thesis

A careful analysis of your notes will help you reevaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your ideas changed based on what you read. Even if your sources generally confirmed your preliminary thinking on the topic, it is still a good idea to tweak the wording of your thesis to incorporate the specific details you learned from research.

The student above realized that his working thesis oversimplified the issues. He still believed that the media was exaggerating the benefits of low-carb diets. However, his research led him to conclude that these diets did have some advantages. Read his revised thesis.

Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

## Synthesizing and Organizing Information

By now your thinking on your topic is taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing information—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing information is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign! It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

## Use Your Research Questions to Synthesize Information

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Analyze how your notes relate to your major research question and the subquestions you identified in “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?” and “Steps in Developing a Research Proposal.” Organize your notes with headings that correspond to those questions. As you proceed, you might identify some important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some questions are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the sources are reliable and whether the connections between ideas are clear.

Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and subquestions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on sticky notes or type and highlight them within an electronic document.

The student above looked back on the list of research questions that he had written down earlier. He changed a few to match his new thesis, and he began a rough outline for his paper.

**Topic:** Low-carbohydrate diets

**Main question:** Are low carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

**Thesis:** Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

**Main points:**

- How do low-carb diets work?
  - Low carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
  - The Atkins diet was created in 1972 by Richard Atkins, but it didn’t gain wide-scale attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a low-carb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
  - They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue to eat protein and fats while dieting.
- What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet?
  - Eating foods high in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.

## Exercise 20.2

Review your research questions and working thesis again. This time, keep them nearby as you review your research notes.

1. Identify information that supports your working thesis.
2. Identify details that call your thesis into question. Determine whether you need to modify your

thesis.

3. Use your research questions to identify key ideas in your paper. Begin categorizing your notes according to which topics are addressed. (You may find yourself adding important topics or deleting unimportant ones as you proceed.)
4. Write out your revised thesis and at least two or three big ideas.

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the two.

Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the relationship between different facts from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

## Plan How to Organize Your Paper

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor's requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose. For more information about the structures used in writing, see "Rhetorical Modes".

The purpose of this student's paper was primarily to persuade. With that in mind, he planned the following outline.

### I. Introduction

#### A. Background

#### B. Thesis

### II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets

#### A. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition guidelines

#### B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines

##### 1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin

##### 2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity

### III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss

- A. Short-term effectiveness for weight-loss
- B. Long-term effectiveness not established

#### IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes

- A. Cholesterol and heart disease
- B. Blood pressure
- C. Diabetes

#### V. Conclusion

### Exercise 20.3

Review the organizational structures discussed in this section and “Rhetorical Modes”. Working with the notes you organized earlier, follow these steps to begin planning how to organize your paper.

1. Create an outline that includes your thesis, major subtopics, and supporting points.
2. The major headings in your outline will become sections or paragraphs in your paper. Remember that your ideas should form the backbone of the paper. For each major section of your outline, write out a topic sentence stating the main point you will make in that section.
3. As you complete step 2, you may find that some points are too complex to explain in a sentence. Consider whether any major sections of your outline need to be broken up and jot down additional topic sentences as needed.
4. Review your notes and determine how the different pieces of information fit into your outline as supporting points.

### Collaboration

Please share the outline you created with a classmate. Examine your classmate’s outline and see if any questions come to mind or if you see any area that would benefit from an additional point or clarification. Return the outlines to each other and compare observations.

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## 21.

### Writing from Research: Exercises

#### Exercises

1. In this chapter, you learned strategies for generating and narrowing a topic for a research paper. Review the following list of five general topics. Use freewriting and preliminary research to narrow three of these topics to manageable size for a five- to seven-page research paper. Save your list of topics in a print or electronic file, and add to it periodically as you identify additional areas of interest.
  - Illegal immigration in the United States
  - Bias in the media
  - The role of religion in educational systems
  - The possibility of life in outer space
  - Modern-day slavery around the world
2. Working with one of the topics you have identified, use the research skills you learned in this chapter to locate three to five potentially useful print or electronic sources of information about the topic. Create a list that includes the following:
  - One subject-specific periodicals database likely to include relevant articles on your topic
  - Two articles about your topic written for an educated general audience
  - At least one article about your topic written for an audience with specialized knowledge
3. Organize your list of resources into primary and secondary sources. What makes them such? Pick one primary source and one secondary source and write a sentence or two summarizing the information that they provide. Then answer these questions:
  - What type of primary source did you choose? Who wrote it, and why? Do you think this source provides accurate information, or is it biased in some way?
  - Where did the information in the secondary source come from? Was the author citing an initial study, piece of literature, or work of art? Where could you find the primary source?

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## Writing a Research Paper



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## 22.

# Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper

At last, you are ready to begin writing the rough draft of your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting. It can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for handling the more challenging aspects of writing a research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding any misuse of your sources.

## The Structure of a Research Paper

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure: an introduction that presents the writer's thesis, a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence, and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research.

Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your introduction and conclusion, as you work to attract your readers' interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length. They focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

### Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should get readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's thesis. Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers' experiences

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know in what direction the paper is headed.

The student we have been following in these Research sections decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the first draft of his introduction. The thesis is

underlined. Note how the student progresses from the opening sentences to background information to his thesis.

### Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb DietsI.

#### Introduction

Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about 20 percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates (Sanders and Katz, 2004; Hirsch, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight, but they also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

#### Exercise 23.1

Write the introductory paragraph of your research paper. Try using one of the techniques listed in this section to write an engaging introduction. Be sure to include background information about the topic that leads to your thesis.

**TIP:** Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research paper. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your paper first. Writing the body sections first will help you clarify your main points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You may have a better sense of how to introduce the paper after you have drafted some or all of the body.

## Writing Your Conclusion

In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the paper, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should sum up your main ideas and revisit your thesis. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as “In this paper, I have demonstrated that....” In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers. An effective writer might conclude a paper by asking

a new question the research inspired, revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives.

#### Writing in Process

If your job involves writing or reading scientific papers, it helps to understand how professional researchers use the structure described in this section. A scientific paper begins with an abstract that briefly summarizes the entire paper. The introduction explains the purpose of the research, briefly summarizes previous research, and presents the researchers' hypothesis. The body provides details about the study, such as who participated in it, what the researchers measured, and what results they recorded. The conclusion presents the researchers' interpretation of the data, or what they learned.

## Using Source Material in Your Paper

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

You have already taken a step in the right direction by writing your introduction. The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. You will use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material.

Earlier you learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting when taking notes. In the next few sections, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to support your ideas. See the previous chapter, “[Introduction Source Evidence](#)” for introductory techniques.

### Summarizing Sources

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers.

Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as

concisely as you can—preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

In his draft, the student above summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and his summary of the article.

### Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets

Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

### Summary

In three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time (Howell, 2010).

**TIP:** A summary restates ideas in your own words—but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Jorge used the term *obese* in his summary because related words such as *heavy* or *overweight* have a different clinical meaning.

### Exercise 23.2

On a separate sheet of paper, practice summarizing by writing a one-sentence summary of the same passage that the student already summarized.

## Paraphrasing Sources

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or

passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them.

Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer’s own language and style.

Read the passage from a website. Then read the student’s initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

#### Source

Dieters nearly always get great results soon after they begin following a low-carbohydrate diet, but these results tend to taper off after the first few months, particularly because many dieters find it difficult to follow a low-carbohydrate diet plan consistently.

#### Summary

People usually see encouraging outcomes shortly after they go on a low-carbohydrate diet, but their progress slows down after a short while, especially because most discover that it is a challenge to adhere to the diet strictly (Heinz, 2009).

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, the student realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

#### Summary

Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009).

### Exercise 23.3

On a separate sheet of paper, follow these steps to practice paraphrasing.

1. Choose an important idea or detail from your notes.
2. Without looking at the original source, restate the idea in your own words.

3. Check your paraphrase against the original text in the source. Make sure both your language and your sentence structure are original.
4. Revise your paraphrase if necessary.

## Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colourful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact.

When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence.
- Use ellipses (...) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [ ] if you need to replace a word or phrase.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

The student above interviewed a dietitian as part of his research, and he decided to quote her words in his paper. Read an excerpt from the interview and the student's use of it, which follows.

Source

Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype about low-carbohydrate miracle diets like Atkins and so on. Sure, for some people, they are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.

### Summary

Registered dietician Dana Kwon (2010) admits, “Personally, I don’t really buy into all of the hype....Sure, for some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.”

Notice how the student smoothly integrated the quoted material by starting the sentence with an introductory phrase. His use of ellipses and brackets did not change the source’s meaning.

## Documenting Source Material

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources. The purpose of doing so is twofold:

1. To give credit to other writers or researchers for their ideas
2. To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired

You will cite sources within the body of your paper and at the end of the paper in your bibliography. For this assignment, you will use the citation format used by the American Psychological Association (also known as APA style). For information on the format used by the Modern Language Association (MLA style), see “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting.”

### Citing Sources in the Body of Your Paper

In-text citations document your sources within the body of your paper. These include two vital pieces of information: the author’s name and the year the source material was published. When quoting a print source, also include in the citation the page number where the quoted material originally appears. The page number will follow the year in the in-text citation. Page numbers are necessary only when content has been directly quoted, not when it has been summarized or paraphrased.

Within a paragraph, this information may appear as part of your introduction to the material or as a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence. Read the examples that follow. For more information about in-text citations for other source types, see “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting.”

### Summary

Leibowitz (2008) found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels.

The introduction to the source material includes the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses.

#### Summary

Low-carbohydrate diets often help subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels (Leibowitz, 2008).

The parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence includes the author's name, a comma, and the year the source was published. The period at the end of the sentence comes after the parentheses.

### Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body text will appear in a references list at the end of your paper. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your references section will include additional publication details. In general, you will include the following information:

- The author's last name followed by his or her first (and sometimes middle) initial
- The year the source was published
- The source title
- For articles in periodicals, the full name of the periodical, along with the volume and issue number and the pages where the article appeared

Additional information may be included for different types of sources, such as online sources. For a detailed guide to APA or MLA citations, see "APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting." A sample reference list is provided with the final draft of Jorge's paper later in this chapter.

### Using Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present a writer's analysis or interpretation of primary source materials. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

## Using Primary Sources Effectively

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a literature course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a political science course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a communications course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a business administration course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flextime policies
- A paper for an elementary education course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including nonprint works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. For example, the interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your reader.

## Using Secondary Sources Effectively

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, you will need to use secondary sources extensively.

As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article presenting the results of the authors' scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as a primary source, but might also cite commentary from critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

**TIP:** Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind

legislation has affected elementary education, a Time magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer's purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.

## Avoiding Plagiarism

Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people's ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism.

### Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

### When to Cite

Any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and the references list. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

### Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward.

Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally

obtaining the copyright holder's permission. Fair use means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

As he worked on his draft, Jorge was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Jorge's revision.

### Summary

Heinz (2009) found that "subjects in the low-carbohydrate group (30% carbohydrates; 40% protein, 30% fat) had a mean weight loss of 10 kg (22 lbs) over a 4-month period." These results were "noticeably better than results for subjects on a low-fat diet (45% carbohydrates, 35% protein, 20% fat)" whose average weight loss was only "7 kg (15.4 lbs) in the same period." From this, it can be concluded that "low-carbohydrate diets obtain more rapid results." Other researchers agree that "at least in the short term, patients following low-carbohydrate diets enjoy greater success" than those who follow alternative plans (Johnson & Crowe, 2010).

After reviewing the paragraph, the student above realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although he had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

### Summary

Low-carbohydrate diets may indeed be superior to other diet plans for short-term weight loss. In a study comparing low-carbohydrate diets and low-fat diets, Heinz (2009) found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate plan (30% of total calories) for 4 months lost, on average, about 3 kilograms more than subjects who followed a low-fat diet for the same time. Heinz concluded that these plans yield quick results, an idea supported by a similar study conducted by Johnson and Crowe (2010). What remains to be seen, however, is whether this initial success can be sustained for longer periods.

As the student revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote these sources directly. Instead, he paraphrased their most important findings. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay.

## Working with Sources Carefully

Disorganization and carelessness sometimes lead to plagiarism. For instance, a writer may be unable to provide a complete, accurate citation if he didn't record bibliographical information. A writer may cut and paste a passage from a website into her paper and later forget where the material came from. A writer who procrastinates may rush through a draft, which easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and

inaccurate quotations. Any of these actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative consequences.

Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. Maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. Check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Allow plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

### Writing in Process

Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For more extensive use of others' work—for instance, requesting permission to link to another company's website on your own corporate website—always follow your employer's established procedures.

## Academic Integrity

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section of “Writing a Research Paper” connect to a larger issue—academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others’ work honestly and by using other people’s work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field.

Academic integrity violations have serious educational and professional consequences. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student’s failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. Students who are found guilty of academic integrity violations face consequences ranging from a failing grade to expulsion from the university. Employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In short, it is never worth the risk.

### Text Attributions

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## 23.

### Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research project, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully.

You may feel like you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable—but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

### Revising Your Paper: Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographical entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper.

A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer’s ideas.

#### Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. Use Checklist 24.1 to help you.

## Checklist 24.1 Revision: Organization

## At the essay level

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

## At the paragraph level

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow of sentences?

Read the following paragraphs twice, the first time without changes, and the second time with them.

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" display prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health – or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carbohydrate bandwagon. Some researchers estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about one-fifth of the population, have attempted to restrict their intake of foods high in carbohydrates (Sandra & Katz, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say they're not only the most effective way to lose weight. They but also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can have many benefits – especially for people who are obese or diabetic – these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

## Exercise 24.1

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper's overall organization.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper.

2. Read your paper paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph.
3. Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented—just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Do not look at the outline you created during prewriting. You may write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper.
4. Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically.
5. Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.
6. Begin to revise your paper to improve organization. Start with any major issues, such as needing to move an entire paragraph. Then proceed to minor revisions, such as adding a transitional phrase or tweaking a topic sentence so it connects ideas more clearly.

### Collaboration

Please share your paper with a classmate. Repeat the six steps and take notes on a separate piece of paper. Share and compare notes.

**TIP:** Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose and avoid overusing the same ones. For an extensive list of transitions, see “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?” and “Revising and Editing.”

### Revise to Improve Cohesion

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly.

In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer’s point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect. Use Checklist 24.2 to review your essay for cohesion.

#### Checklist 24.2 Revision: Cohesion

- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose.

- Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

Read the following paragraph, first without revisions and then with them.

One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low-carbohydrate diet-like any restrictive diet – is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. ~~Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of birthday cake.~~ In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo clinic, 2008). [Registered dietician Dana Kwon \(2010\) comments](#), “For some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan should work just as well” (Kwon, 2010)

#### Exercise 24.2

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper to improve cohesion.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from Exercise 1.
2. Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.
3. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.
4. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.
5. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion.
6. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of the paper.

7. Revise the places you identified in your paper to improve cohesion.

### Collaboration

Please exchange papers with a classmate. Complete step four. On a separate piece of paper, note any areas that would benefit from clarification. Return and compare notes.

## Using a Consistent Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

### Determining an Appropriate Style and Tone

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what they are talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night’s sleep.

A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious. It is generally best to avoid writing in the first person, as this can make your paper seem overly subjective and opinion based. Use Checklist 24.3 on style to review your paper for other issues that affect style and tone. You can check for consistency at the end of the writing process. Checking for consistency is discussed later in this section.

### Checklist 24.3 Style

- My paper avoids excessive wordiness.
- My sentences are varied in length and structure.
- I have avoided using first-person pronouns such as *I* and *we*.

- I have used the active voice whenever possible.
- I have defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.
- I have used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon.
- My paper states my point of view using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful.

## Word Choice

Note that word choice is an especially important aspect of style. In addition to checking the points noted on Checklist 24.3, review your paper to make sure your language is precise, conveys no unintended connotations, and is free of biases. Here are some of the points to check for:

- Vague or imprecise terms
- Slang
- Repetition of the same phrases (“Smith states..., Jones states...”) to introduce quoted and paraphrased material (For a full list of strong verbs to use with in-text citations, see “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting.”)
- Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of *he* or *she*
- Use of language with negative connotations, such as *haughty* or *ridiculous*
- Use of outdated or offensive terms to refer to specific ethnic, racial, or religious groups

**TIP:** Using plural nouns and pronouns or recasting a sentence can help you keep your language gender neutral while avoiding awkwardness. Consider the following examples.

- **Gender-biased:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his paper, he must list it on his references page.
- **Awkward:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his or her paper, he or she must list it on his or her references page.
- **Improved:** Writers must list any sources cited in the body of a paper on the references page.

However, note that “they” can also be used as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun:

- When a writer cites a source in the body of their paper, they must list it on their references page.

## Keeping Your Style Consistent

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for

style after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies you can use include the following:

- **Read your paper aloud.** Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
- **Share your paper with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback.** It is often difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
- **Line-edit your paper slowly, sentence by sentence.** You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

On reviewing his paper, the student above found that he had generally used an appropriately academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped the student maintain a consistent tone. Read his revisions.

#### Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb DietsI. Introduction

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see an overweight man a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" display prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health – or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

#### Exercise 24.3

Using Checklist 24.3, line-edit your paper. You may use either of these techniques:

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from "Exercise 24.1." Read it line by line. Check for the issues noted on Checklist 24.3, as well as any other aspects of your writing style you have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.
2. If you prefer to work with an electronic document, use the menu options in your word-processing program to enlarge the text to 150 or 200 percent of the original size. Make sure the type is large enough that you can focus on only one paragraph at a time. Read the paper line by line as described in step 1. Highlight any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

#### Collaboration

Please exchange papers with a classmate. On a separate piece of paper, note places where the essay does not seem to flow or you have questions about what was written. Return the essay and compare notes.

## Editing Your Paper

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you already have caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free. Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:

1. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling
2. Errors in citing and formatting sources

For in-depth information on these two topics, see “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?” and “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting”.

### Correcting Errors

Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers. Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful—but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past. Use Checklist 24.4 to help you as you edit:

#### Checklist 24.4 Grammar, Mechanics, Punctuation, Usage, and Spelling

- My paper is free of grammatical errors, such as errors in subject-verb agreement and sentence fragments.
- My paper is free of errors in punctuation and mechanics, such as misplaced commas or incorrectly formatted source titles.
- My paper is free of common usage errors, such as *alot* and *alright*.
- My paper is free of spelling errors. I have proofread my paper for spelling in addition to using the spell-checking feature in my word-processing program.
- I have checked my paper for any editing errors that I know I tend to make frequently.

### Checking Citations and Formatting

When editing a research paper, it is also important to check that you have cited sources properly and

formatted your document according to the specified guidelines. There are two reasons for this. First and foremost, citing sources correctly ensures that you have given proper credit to other people for ideas and information that helped you in your work. Second, using correct formatting establishes your paper as one student's contribution to the work developed by and for a larger academic community.

Increasingly, American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines are the standard for many academic fields. Modern Language Association (MLA) is also a standard style in many fields. Use Checklist 24.5 to help you check citations and formatting.

#### Checklist 24.5 Citations and Formatting

- Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source.
- Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, where applicable, the organization name or source title) and year of publication. I have used the correct format of in-text and parenthetical citations.
- Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the references section of my paper.
- My references section includes a heading and double-spaced, alphabetized entries.
- Each entry in my references section is indented on the second line and all subsequent lines.
- Each entry in my references section includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.
- My paper includes a title page.
- My paper includes a running head.
- The margins of my paper are set at one inch. Text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

For detailed guidelines on APA and MLA citation and formatting, see “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting.”

During the process of revising and editing, the student we have been following made changes in the content and style of his paper. He also gave the paper a final review to check for overall correctness and, particularly, correct APA or MLA citations and formatting. Read the final draft of his paper [here](#). (This paper is in APA formatting. English papers will likely be in MLA formatting.)

#### Text Attributions

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## 24.

### Formatting a Research Paper (APA)

In this chapter, you will learn how to use APA style, the documentation and formatting style followed by the American Psychological Association, as well as MLA style, from the Modern Language Association. There are a few major formatting styles used in academic texts, including AMA, Chicago, and Turabian:

- AMA (American Medical Association) for medicine, health, and biological sciences
- APA (American Psychological Association) for education, psychology, and the social sciences
- Chicago—a common style used in everyday publications like magazines, newspapers, and books
- MLA (Modern Language Association) for English, literature, arts, and humanities
- Turabian—another common style designed for its universal application across all subjects and disciplines

While all the formatting and citation styles have their own use and applications, in this chapter we focus our attention on the two styles you are most likely to use in your academic studies: APA and MLA.

If you find that the rules of proper source documentation are difficult to keep straight, you are not alone. Writing a good research paper is, in and of itself, a major intellectual challenge. Having to follow detailed citation and formatting guidelines as well may seem like just one more task to add to an already-too-long list of requirements.

Following these guidelines, however, serves several important purposes. First, it signals to your readers that your paper should be taken seriously as a student's contribution to a given academic or professional field; it is the literary equivalent of wearing a tailored suit to a job interview. Second, it shows that you respect other people's work enough to give them proper credit for it. Finally, it helps your reader find additional materials if they wish to learn more about your topic.

Furthermore, producing a letter-perfect APA-style paper need not be burdensome. Yes, it requires careful attention to detail. However, you can simplify the process if you keep these broad guidelines in mind:

- **Work ahead whenever you can.** keep track of your sources early in the research process, which will save time later on.
- **Get it right the first time.** Apply APA guidelines as you write, so you will not have much to correct during the editing stage. Again, putting in a little extra time early on can save time

later.

- **Use the resources available to you.** In addition to the guidelines provided in this chapter, you may wish to consult the [APA website](#) or the [Purdue University Online Writing lab](#), which regularly updates its online style guidelines.

## General Formatting Guidelines

This chapter provides detailed guidelines for using the citation and formatting conventions developed by the American Psychological Association, or APA. Writers in disciplines as diverse as astrophysics, biology, psychology, and education follow APA style. The major components of a paper written in APA style are listed in the following box.

These are the major components of an APA-style paper:

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Body, which includes the following:
  - Headings and, if necessary, subheadings to organize the content
  - In-text citations of research sources
4. References page

All these components must be saved in one document, not as separate documents.

### Title Page

The title page of your paper includes the following information:

- Title of the paper
- Author's name
- Name of the institution with which the author is affiliated
- Header at the top of the page with the paper title (in capital letters) and the page number (If the title is lengthy, you may use a shortened form of it in the header.)

List the first three elements in the order given in the previous list, centered about one third of the way down from the top of the page. Use the headers and footers tool of your word-processing program to add the header, with the title text at the left and the page number in the upper-right corner. Your title page should look like the following example.



*Figure 25.1*

## Abstract

The next page of your paper provides an abstract, or brief summary of your findings. An abstract does not need to be provided in every paper, but an abstract should be used in papers that include a hypothesis. A good abstract is concise—about one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty words—and is written in an objective, impersonal style. Your writing voice will not be as apparent here as in the body of your paper. When writing the abstract, take a just-the-facts approach, and summarize your research question and your findings in a few sentences.

In “Writing a Research Paper”, you read a paper written by a student, who researched the effectiveness

of low-carbohydrate diets. Read the abstract. Note how it sums up the major ideas in his paper without going into excessive detail.

BEYOND THE HYPE: EVALUATING LOW-CARBOHYDRATE DIETS 2

**Abstract**

Low-carbohydrate diets have become increasingly popular. Supporters claim they are notably more effective than other diets for weight loss and provide other health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels; however, some doctors believe these diets carry potential long-term health risks. A review of the available research literature indicates that low-carbohydrate diets are highly effective for short-term weight loss but that their long-term effectiveness is not significantly greater than other common diet plans. Their long-term effects on cholesterol levels and blood pressure are unknown; research literature suggests some potential for negative health outcomes associated with increased consumption of saturated fat. This conclusion points to the importance of following a balanced, moderate diet appropriate for the individual, as well as the need for further research.

Exercise 25.1

Write an abstract summarizing your paper. Briefly introduce the topic, state your findings, and sum up what conclusions you can draw from your research. Use the word count feature of your word-processing program to make sure your abstract does not exceed one hundred fifty words.

**TIP:** Depending on your field of study, you may sometimes write research papers that present extensive primary research, such as your own experiment or survey. In your abstract, summarize your research question and your findings, and briefly indicate how your study relates to prior research in the field.

### Margins, Pagination, and Headings

APA style requirements also address specific formatting concerns, such as margins, pagination, and heading styles, within the body of the paper. Review the following APA guidelines.

Use these general guidelines to format the paper:

1. Set the top, bottom, and side margins of your paper at 1 inch.
2. Use double-spaced text throughout your paper.
3. Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, in a legible size (10- to 12-point).
4. Use continuous pagination throughout the paper, including the title page and the references

- section. Page numbers appear flush right within your header.
- Section headings and subsection headings within the body of your paper use different types of formatting depending on the level of information you are presenting. Additional details from Jorge's paper are provided.

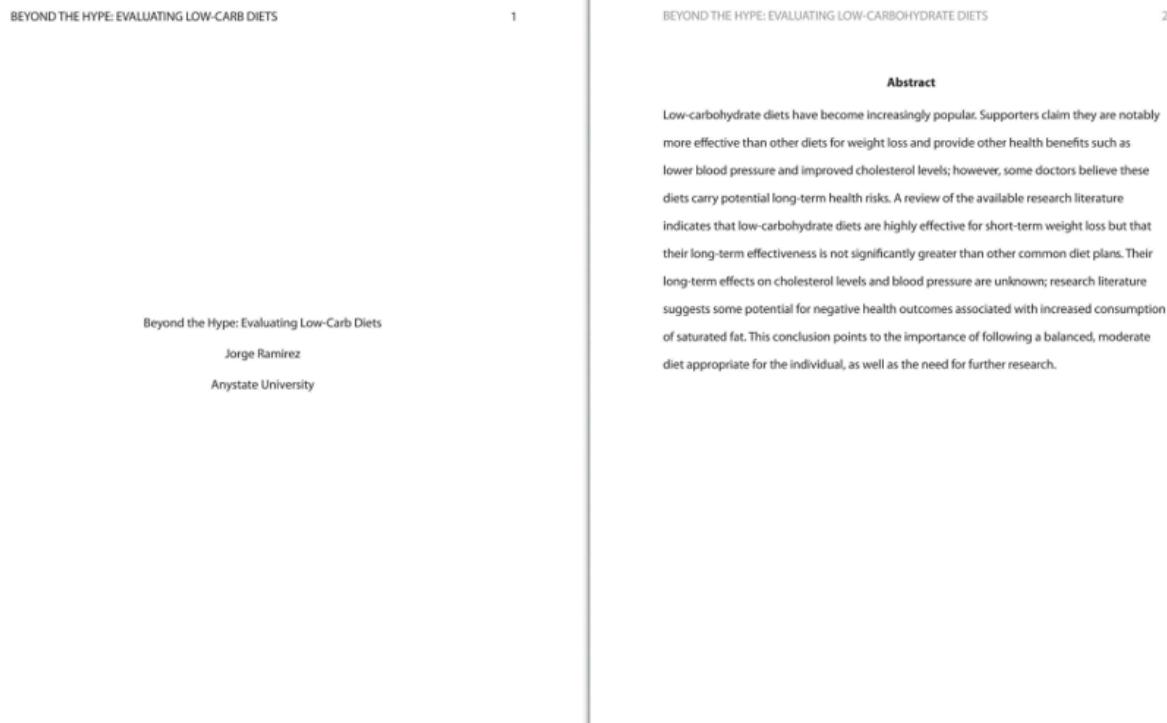


Figure 25.3

## Exercise 25.2

Begin formatting the final draft of your paper according to APA guidelines. You may work with an existing document or set up a new document if you choose. Include the following:

- Your title page
- The abstract you created in Exercise 25.1
- Correct headers and page numbers for your title page and abstract

## Headings

APA style uses section headings to organize information, making it easy for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought and to know immediately what major topics are covered. Depending on the length and complexity of the paper, its major sections may also be divided into subsections, sub-subsections, and so on. These smaller sections, in turn, use different heading styles to indicate different levels of information. In essence, you are using headings to create a hierarchy of information.

The following heading styles used in APA formatting are listed in order of greatest to least importance:

1. Section headings use centered, boldface type. Headings use title case, with important words in the heading capitalized.
2. Subsection headings use left-aligned, boldface type. Headings use title case.
3. The third level uses left-aligned, indented, boldface type. Headings use a capital letter only for the first word, and they end in a period.
4. The fourth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are boldfaced and italicized.
5. The fifth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are italicized and **not** boldfaced.

Level of Information	Text Example
Level 1	<b>Heart Disease</b>
Level 2	<b>Lifestyle Factors That Reduce Heart Disease Risk</b>
Level 3	<b>Exercising regularly.</b>
Level 4	<i>Aerobic exercise.</i>
Level 5	<i>Country line dancing.</i>

Figure 25.4

Visually, the hierarchy of information is organized as indicated in Figure 25.4 “Section Headings”.

A college research paper may not use all the heading levels shown in Figure 25.4 “Section Headings”, but you are likely to encounter them in academic journal articles that use APA style. For a brief paper, you may find that level 1 headings suffice. Longer or more complex papers may need level 2 headings or other lower-level headings to organize information clearly. Use your outline to craft your major section headings and determine whether any subtopics are substantial enough to require additional levels of headings.

### Exercise 25.3

Working with the document you developed in Exercise 25.2, begin setting up the heading structure of the final draft of your research paper according to APA guidelines. Include your title and at least two to three major section headings, and follow the formatting guidelines provided above. If your major sections should be broken into subsections, add those headings as well. Use your outline to help you.

**Table 25.1 Example level 1 headings**

Level of Information	Text Example
Level 1	<b>Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets</b>
Level 1	<b>Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss</b>
Level 1	<b>Other Long-Term Health Outcomes</b>
Level 1	<b>Conclusion</b>

## Citation Guidelines

### In-Text Citations

Throughout the body of your paper, include a citation whenever you quote or paraphrase material from your research sources. The purpose of citations is twofold: to give credit to others for their ideas and to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired. Your in-text citations provide basic information about your source; each source you cite will have a longer entry in the references section that provides more detailed information.

In-text citations must provide the name of the author or authors and the year the source was published. (When a given source does not list an individual author, you may provide the source title or the name of the organization that published the material instead.) When directly quoting a source, it is also required that you include the page number where the quote appears in your citation.

This information may be included within the sentence or in a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence, as in these examples.

Epstein (2010) points out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

Here, the writer names the source author when introducing the quote and provides the publication date in parentheses after the author’s name. The page number appears in parentheses **after** the closing quotation marks and **before** the period that ends the sentence.

Addiction researchers caution that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (Epstein, 2010, p. 137).

Here, the writer provides a parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence that includes the author’s name, the year of publication, and the page number separated by commas. Again, the parenthetical citation is placed **after** the closing quotation marks and **before** the period at the end of the sentence.

As noted in the book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (Epstein, 2010, p. 137), “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive.”

Here, the writer chose to mention the source title in the sentence (an optional piece of information to include) and followed the title with a parenthetical citation. Note that the parenthetical citation is placed **before** the comma that signals the end of the introductory phrase.

David Epstein’s book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (2010) pointed out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

Another variation is to introduce the author and the source title in your sentence and include the publication date and page number in parentheses within the sentence or at the end of the sentence. As long as you have included the essential information, you can choose the option that works best for that particular sentence and source.

Citing a book with a single author is usually a straightforward task. Of course, your research may require that you cite many other types of sources, such as books or articles with more than one author or sources with no individual author listed. You may also need to cite sources available in both print and online and nonprint sources, such as websites and personal interviews.

#### Writing in Process

APA is just one of several different styles with its own guidelines for documentation, formatting, and language usage. Depending on your field of interest, you may be exposed to additional styles, such as the following:

- **MLA style.** Determined by the Modern Languages Association and used for papers in literature, languages, and other disciplines in the humanities.
- **Chicago style.** Outlined in the *Chicago Manual of Style* and sometimes used for papers in the humanities and the sciences; many professional organizations use this style for publications as well.
- **Associated Press (AP) style.** Used by professional journalists.

## References List

The brief citations included in the body of your paper correspond to the more detailed citations provided at the end of the paper in the references section. In-text citations provide basic information—the author’s name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary—while the references section provides more extensive bibliographical information. Again, this information allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if desired.

The specific format of entries in the list of references varies slightly for different source types, but the entries generally include the following information:

- The name(s) of the author(s) or institution that wrote the source
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

The references page is double spaced and lists entries in alphabetical order by the author’s last name. If an entry continues for more than one line, the second line and each subsequent line are indented five spaces. Review the following example:

## References

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## 969#AUTHINFO

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Figure 25.4

**TIP:** In APA style, book and article titles are formatted in sentence case, not title case. Sentence case means that only the first word is capitalized, along with any proper nouns.

## Text Attributions

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## 25.

# Citing and Referencing Techniques

This section covers the details of in-text citations. You will learn how to format citations for different types of source materials, whether you are citing brief quotations, paraphrasing ideas, or quoting longer passages. You will also learn techniques you can use to introduce quoted and paraphrased material effectively. Keep this section handy as a reference to consult while writing the body of your paper.

## Formatting Cited Material: The Basics

As noted in previous sections of this book, in-text citations usually provide the name of the author(s) and the year the source was published. For direct quotations, the page number must also be included. Use past-tense verbs when introducing a quote—"Smith found..." and not "Smith finds...."

### Formatting Brief Quotations

For brief quotations—fewer than forty words—use quotation marks to indicate where the quoted material begins and ends, and cite the name of the author(s), the year of publication, and the page number where the quotation appears in your source. Remember to include commas to separate elements within the parenthetical citation. Also, avoid redundancy. If you name the author(s) in your sentence, do not repeat the name(s) in your parenthetical citation. Review following the examples of different ways to cite direct quotations.

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

The author’s name can be included in the body of the sentence or in the parenthetical citation. Note that when a parenthetical citation appears at the end of the sentence, it comes **after** the closing quotation marks and **before** the period. The elements within parentheses are separated by commas.

*Weight Training for Women* (Chang, 2008) claimed that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

*Weight Training for Women* claimed that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (Chang, 2008, p. 49).

Including the title of a source is optional.

In Chang’s 2008 text *Weight Training for Women*, she asserts, “Engaging in weight-bearing exercise is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

The author’s name, the date, and the title may appear in the body of the text. Include the page number in the parenthetical citation. Also, notice the use of the verb *asserts* to introduce the direct quotation.

“Engaging in weight-bearing exercise,” Chang asserts, “is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (2008, p. 49).

You may begin a sentence with the direct quotation and add the author’s name and a strong verb before continuing the quotation.

### Formatting Paraphrased and Summarized Material

When you paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you follow the same guidelines previously provided, except that you are not required to provide the page number where the ideas are located. If you are summing up the main findings of a research article, simply providing the author’s name and publication year may suffice, but if you are paraphrasing a more specific idea, consider including the page number.

Read the following examples.

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Here, the writer is summarizing a major idea that recurs throughout the source material. No page reference is needed.

Chang (2008) found that weight-bearing exercise could help women maintain or even increase bone density through middle age and beyond, reducing the likelihood that they will develop osteoporosis in later life (p. 86).

Although the writer is not directly quoting the source, this passage paraphrases a specific detail, so the writer chose to include the page number where the information is located.

**TIP:** Although APA style guidelines do not require writers to provide page numbers for material that is not directly quoted, your instructor may wish you to do so when possible.

Check with your instructor about his or her preferences.

## Formatting Longer Quotations

When you quote a longer passage from a source—forty words or more—use a different format to set off the quoted material. Instead of using quotation marks, create a block quotation by starting the quotation on a new line and indented five spaces from the margin. Note that in this case, the parenthetical citation comes **after** the period that ends the sentence. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces women's risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits. (p. 93)

### Exercise 26.1

Review the places in your paper where you cited, quoted, and paraphrased material from a source with a single author. Edit your citations to ensure that

- each citation includes the author's name, the date of publication, and, where appropriate, a page reference;
- parenthetical citations are correctly formatted;
- longer quotations use the block-quotation format.

If you are quoting a passage that continues into a second paragraph, indent five spaces again in the first line of the second paragraph. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces

women's risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits.

It is important to note that swimming cannot be considered a weight-bearing exercise, since the water supports and cushions the swimmer. That doesn't mean swimming isn't great exercise, but it should be considered one part of an integrated fitness program. (p. 93)

**TIP:** Be wary of quoting from sources at length. Remember, your ideas should drive the paper, and quotations should be used to support and enhance your points. Make sure any lengthy quotations that you include serve a clear purpose. Generally, no more than 10–15 percent of a paper should consist of quoted material.

## Introducing Cited Material Effectively

Including an introductory phrase in your text, such as "Jackson wrote" or "Copeland found," often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as "Jones said," "Smith stated," and so on.

Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who "suggests" and one who "claims," one who "questions" and one who "criticizes." You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging. The following list shows some possibilities.

### Strong Verbs for Introducing Cited Material

- ask
- contrast
- measure
- suggest
- propose
- assess
- question
- hypothesize
- evaluate
- explain
- believe
- conclude
- assert
- insist
- study
- claim
- argue
- warn
- recommend
- find
- point out
- compare
- determine
- sum up

### Exercise 26.2

Review the citations in your paper once again. This time, look for places where you introduced source material using a signal phrase in your sentence.

1. Highlight the verbs used in your signal phrases, and make note of any that seem to be overused throughout the paper.
2. Identify at least three places where a stronger verb could be used.
3. Make the edits to your draft.

## Formatting In-Text Citations for Other Source Types

These sections discuss the correct format for various types of in-text citations. Read them through quickly to get a sense of what is covered, and then refer to them again as needed.

### Print Sources

This section covers books, articles, and other print sources with one or more authors.

#### A Work by One Author

For a print work with one author, always include the author's name and year of publication. Include a page reference whenever you quote a source directly. (See also the guidelines presented earlier in this chapter about when to include a page reference for paraphrased material.)

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

#### Two or More Works by the Same Author

At times, your research may include multiple works by the same author. If the works were published in different years, a standard in-text citation will serve to distinguish them. If you are citing multiple works by the same author published in the same year, include a lowercase letter immediately after the year. Rank the sources in the order they appear in your references section. The source listed first includes an *a* after the year, the source listed second includes a *b*, and so on.

Rodriguez (2009a) criticized the nutrition-supplement industry for making unsubstantiated and sometimes misleading claims about the benefits of taking supplements. Additionally, he warned that consumers frequently do not realize the potential harmful effects of some popular supplements (Rodriguez, 2009b).

### Works by Authors with the Same Last Name

If you are citing works by different authors with the same last name, include each author's initials in your citation, whether you mention them in the text or in parentheses. Do so even if the publication years are different.

J. S. Williams (2007) believes nutritional supplements can be a useful part of some diet and fitness regimens. C. D. Williams (2008), however, believes these supplements are overrated.

According to two leading researchers, the rate of childhood obesity exceeds the rate of adult obesity (K. Connelley, 2010; O. Connelley, 2010).

Studies from both A. Wright (2007) and C. A. Wright (2008) confirm the benefits of diet and exercise on weight loss.

### A Work by Two Authors

When two authors are listed for a given work, include both authors' names each time you cite the work. If you are citing their names in parentheses, use an ampersand (&) between them. (Use the word *and*, however, if the names appear in your sentence.)

As Garrison and Gould (2010) pointed out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (p. 101).

As doctors continue to point out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (Garrison & Gould, 2010, p. 101).

### A Work by Three to Five Authors

If the work you are citing has three to five authors, list all the authors' names the first time you cite the source. In subsequent citations, use the first author's name followed by the abbreviation *et al.* (*Et al.* is short for *et alia*, the Latin phrase for "and others.")

Henderson, Davidian, and Degler (2010) surveyed 350 smokers aged 18 to 30.

One survey, conducted among 350 smokers aged 18 to 30, included a detailed questionnaire about participants' motivations for smoking (Henderson, Davidian, & Degler, 2010).

Note that these examples follow the same ampersand conventions as sources with two authors. Again, use the ampersand only when listing authors' names in parentheses.

As Henderson et al. (2010) found, some young people, particularly young women, use smoking as a means of appetite suppression.

Disturbingly, some young women use smoking as a means of appetite suppression (Henderson et al., 2010).

Note how the phrase *et al.* is punctuated. No period comes after *et*, but *al.* gets a period because it is an abbreviation for a longer Latin word. In parenthetical references, include a comma after *et al.* but not before. Remember this rule by mentally translating the citation to English: "Henderson and others, 2010."

### A Work by Six or More Authors

If the work you are citing has six or more authors, list only the first author's name, followed by *et al.*, in your in-text citations. The other authors' names will be listed in your references section.

Researchers have found that outreach work with young people has helped reduce tobacco use in some communities (Costello et al., 2007).

### A Work Authored by an Organization

When citing a work that has no individual author(s) but is published by an organization, use the organization's name in place of the author's name. Lengthy organization names with well-known abbreviations can be abbreviated. In your first citation, use the full name, followed by the abbreviation in square brackets. Subsequent citations may use the abbreviation only.

It is possible for a patient to have a small stroke without even realizing it (American Heart Association [AHA], 2010).

Another cause for concern is that even if patients realize that they have had a stroke and need medical attention, they may not know which nearby facilities are best equipped to treat them (AHA, 2010).

**Exercise 26.3**

1. Review the places in your paper where you cited material from a source with multiple authors or with an organization as the author. Edit your citations to ensure that each citation follows APA guidelines for the inclusion of the authors' names, the use of ampersands and *et al.*, the date of publication, and, where appropriate, a page reference.
2. Mark any additional citations within your paper that you are not sure how to format based on the guidelines provided so far. You will revisit these citations after reading the next few sections.

**A Work with No Listed Author**

If no author is listed and the source cannot be attributed to an organization, use the title in place of the author's name. You may use the full title in your sentence or use the first few words—enough to convey the key ideas—in a parenthetical reference. Follow standard conventions for using italics or quotation marks with titles:

- Use italics for titles of books or reports.
- Use quotation marks for titles of articles or chapters.

“Living With Diabetes: Managing Your Health” (2009) recommends regular exercise for patients with diabetes.

Regular exercise can benefit patients with diabetes (“Living with Diabetes,” 2009).

Rosenhan (1973) had mentally healthy study participants claim to be experiencing hallucinations so they would be admitted to psychiatric hospitals.

**A Work Cited within Another Work**

To cite a source that is referred to within another secondary source, name the first source in your sentence. Then, in parentheses, use the phrase *as cited in* and the name of the second source author.

Rosenhan’s study “On Being Sane in Insane Places” (as cited in Spitzer, 1975) found that psychiatrists diagnosed schizophrenia in people who claimed to be experiencing hallucinations and sought treatment—even though these patients were, in fact, imposters.

## Two or More Works Cited in One Reference

At times, you may provide more than one citation in a parenthetical reference, such as when you are discussing related works or studies with similar results. List the citations in the same order they appear in your references section, and separate the citations with a semicolon.

Some researchers have found serious flaws in the way Rosenhan's study was conducted (Dawes, 2001; Spitzer, 1975).

Both of these researchers authored works that support the point being made in this sentence, so it makes sense to include both in the same citation.

## A Famous Text Published in Multiple Editions

In some cases, you may need to cite an extremely well-known work that has been repeatedly republished or translated. Many works of literature and sacred texts, as well as some classic nonfiction texts, fall into this category. For these works, the original date of publication may be unavailable. If so, include the year of publication or translation for your edition. Refer to specific parts or chapters if you need to cite a specific section. Discuss with your instructor whether they would like you to cite page numbers in this particular instance.

In *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud explains that the “manifest content” of a dream—what literally takes place—is separate from its “latent content,” or hidden meaning (trans. 1965, lecture XXIX).

Here, the student is citing a classic work of psychology, originally written in German and later translated to English. Since the book is a collection of Freud’s lectures, the student cites the lecture number rather than a page number.

## An Introduction, Foreword, Preface, or Afterword

To cite an introduction, foreword, preface, or afterword, cite the author of the material and the year, following the same format used for other print materials.

## Electronic Sources

Whenever possible, cite electronic sources as you would print sources, using the author, the date, and where appropriate, a page number. For some types of electronic sources—for instance, many online articles—this information is easily available. Other times, however, you will need to vary the format to reflect the differences in online media.

## Online Sources without Page Numbers

If an online source has no page numbers but you want to refer to a specific portion of the source, try to locate other information you can use to direct your reader to the information cited. Some websites number paragraphs within published articles; if so, include the paragraph number in your citation. Precede the paragraph number with the abbreviation for the word *paragraph* and the number of the paragraph (e.g., para. 4).

As researchers have explained, “Incorporating fresh fruits and vegetables into one’s diet can be a challenge for residents of areas where there are few or no easily accessible supermarkets” (Smith & Jones, 2006, para. 4).

Even if a source does not have numbered paragraphs, it is likely to have headings that organize the content. In your citation, name the section where your cited information appears, followed by a paragraph number.

The American Lung Association (2010) noted, “After smoking, radon exposure is the second most common cause of lung cancer” (What Causes Lung Cancer? section, para. 2).

This student cited the appropriate section heading within the website and then counted to find the specific paragraph where the cited information was located.

If an online source has no listed author and no date, use the source title and the abbreviation *n.d.* in your parenthetical reference.

It has been suggested that electromagnetic radiation from cellular telephones may pose a risk for developing certain cancers (“Cell Phones and Cancer,” n.d.).

## Personal Communication

For personal communications, such as interviews, letters, and e-mails, cite the name of the person involved, clarify that the material is from a personal communication, and provide the specific date the communication took place. Note that while in-text citations correspond to entries in the references section, personal communications are an exception to this rule. They are cited only in the body text of your paper.

J. H. Yardley, M.D., believes that available information on the relationship between cell phone use and cancer is inconclusive (personal communication, May 1, 2009).

#### Exercise 26.4

Revisit the problem citations you identified in Exercise 26.3—for instance, sources with no listed author or other oddities. Review the guidelines provided in this section and edit your citations for these kinds of sources according to APA guidelines.

#### Text Attributions

- This chapter was adapted from “[Citing and Referencing Techniques](#)” in *Writing for Success* by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution (and republished by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing). Adapted by Allison Kilgannon. [CC BY-NC-SA](#).



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## 26.

### Creating a References Section (APA)

This section provides detailed information about how to create the references section of your paper. You will review basic formatting guidelines and learn how to format bibliographical entries for various types of sources.

#### Formatting the References Section: The Basics

At this stage in the writing process, you may already have begun setting up your references section. This section may consist of a single page for a brief research paper or may extend for many pages in professional journal articles. As you create this section of your paper, follow the guidelines provided here.

#### Formatting the References Section

To set up your references section, use the insert page break feature of your word-processing program to begin a new page. Note that the header and margins will be the same as in the body of your paper, and pagination continues from the body of your paper. (In other words, if you set up the body of your paper correctly, the correct header and page number should appear automatically in your references section.) See additional guidelines below.

#### Formatting Reference Entries

Reference entries should include the following information:

- The name of the author(s)
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

See the following examples for how to format a book or journal article with a single author.

## Sample Book Entry

- Use author's last name and initials followed by periods.
- Use a single space between parts of the entry. Include periods and other punctuation as indicated.
- Use sentence case for book titles.
- Use standard postal abbreviations for the state where the source was published
- Use a colon between the city of publication, and the publisher.

Atkins, R.C. (2002). *Dr. Atkin's diet revolution*. New York, NY: M. Evans and Company.

## Sample Journal Article Entry

- Use sentence case for article titles. Do not use quotation marks around the title.
- Use title case for journal titles and italicize the title.
- Include the volume number in italics followed by the issue number in parentheses, with no space between them.
- Include commas after the journal title and issue number.
- Include the page number(s) where the article appears. Use an en dash between page numbers.

Bass, D. N. (2010). Frad in the lunchroom? *Education Next*, 10(1), 67-71.

The following box provides general guidelines for formatting the reference page. For the remainder of this chapter, you will learn about how to format bibliographical entries for different source types, including multiauthor and electronic sources.

## Formatting the References Section: APA General Guidelines

1. Include the heading *References*, centered at the top of the page. The heading should not be boldfaced, italicized, or underlined.
2. Use double-spaced type throughout the references section, as in the body of your paper.

3. Use hanging indentation for each entry. The first line should be flush with the left margin, while any lines that follow should be indented five spaces. Note that hanging indentation is the opposite of normal indenting rules for paragraphs.
4. List entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. For a work with multiple authors, use the last name of the first author listed.
5. List authors' names using this format: Smith, J. C.
6. For a work with no individual author(s), use the name of the organization that published the work or, if this is unavailable, the title of the work in place of the author's name.
7. For works with multiple authors, follow these guidelines:
  - For works with up to seven authors, list the last name and initials for each author.
  - For works with more than seven authors, list the first six names, followed by ellipses, and then the name of the last author listed.
  - Use an ampersand before the name of the last author listed.
8. Use title case for journal titles. Capitalize all important words in the title.
9. Use sentence case for all other titles—books, articles, web pages, and other source titles. Capitalize the first word of the title. Do not capitalize any other words in the title except for the following:
  - Proper nouns
  - First word of a subtitle
  - First word after a colon or dash
10. Use italics for book and journal titles. Do not use italics, underlining, or quotation marks for titles of shorter works, such as articles.

### Exercise 27.1

Set up the first page of your references section and begin adding entries, following the APA formatting guidelines provided in this section.

1. If there are any simple entries that you can format completely using the general guidelines, do so at this time.
2. For entries you are unsure of how to format, type in as much information as you can, and highlight the entries so you can return to them later.

## Formatting Reference Entries for Different Source Types

As is the case for in-text citations, formatting reference entries becomes more complicated when you are citing a source with multiple authors, citing various types of online media, or citing sources for which you must provide additional information beyond the basics listed in the general guidelines. The following guidelines show how to format reference entries for these different situations.

### Print Sources: Books

For book-length sources and shorter works that appear in a book, follow the guidelines that best describes your source.

#### A book by two or more authors

List the authors' names in the order they appear on the book's title page. Use an ampersand before the last author's name.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

#### An edited book with no author

List the editor or editors' names in place of the author's name, followed by *Ed.* or *Eds.* in parentheses.

Myers, C., & Reamer, D. (Eds.). (2009). *2009 nutrition index*. San Francisco, CA: HealthSource, Inc.

#### An edited book with an author

List the author's name first, followed by the title and the editor or editors. Note that when the editor is listed after the title, you list the initials before the last name.

Dickinson, E. (1959). *Selected poems & letters of Emily Dickinson*. R. N. Linscott.(Ed.). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

\*Capitalize "Ed." when the abbreviation refers to an editor.

**TIP:** The previous example shows the format used for an edited book with one author—for instance, a collection of a famous person's letters that has been edited. This type of source is different from an anthology, which is a collection of articles or essays by different authors. For citing works in anthologies, see the guidelines later in this section.

### A translated book

Include the translator's name after the title, and at the end of the citation, list the date the original work was published. Note that for the translator's name, you list the initials before the last name.

Freud, S. (1965). *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis* (J. Strachey, Trans.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1933).

### A book published in multiple editions

If you are using any edition other than the first edition, include the edition number in parentheses after the title.

Berk, L. (2001). *Development through the lifespan* (2nd ed.). Needham Height, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

\*Do not capitalize "ed." when the abbreviation refers to an edition of a book.

### A chapter in an edited book

List the name of the author(s) who wrote the chapter, followed by the chapter title. Then list the names of the book editor(s) and the title of the book, followed by the page numbers for the chapter and the usual information about the book's publisher.

Hughes, J.R., & Pierattini, R. A. (1992). An introduction to pharmacotherapy for mental disorders. In J. Grabowski & G. Vandenberg (Eds.), *Psychopharmacology* (pp. 97 -125). Washington, DC: American Psychology Association.

\*Include the abbreviation "pp." when listing the pages where a chapter or article appear in a book.

### A work that appears in an anthology

Follow the same process you would use to cite a book chapter, substituting the article or essay title for the chapter title.

Beck, A. T., & Young, J. (1986). College blues. In D. Goleman & D. Heller (Eds.), *The pleasures of psychology* (pp. 309-323). New York, NY: New American Library.

\*Include the abbreviation "pp." when listing the pages where a chapter or article appears in a book.

### An article in a reference book

List the author's name if available; if no author is listed, provide the title of the entry where the author's name would normally be listed. If the book lists the name of the editor(s), include it in your citation. Indicate the volume number (if applicable) and page numbers in parentheses after the article title.

The census. (2006). In J.W. Wright (Ed.), *The New York Times 2006 almanac* (pp. 268-275). New York, NY: Penguin.

\*Capitalize proper nouns that appear in a book title.

### Two or more books by the same author

List the entries in order of their publication year, beginning with the work published first.

Swedan, N. (2001). *Women's sports medicine and rehabilitation*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers. Swedan, N. (2003). *The active woman's health and fitness handbook*. New York, NY: Perigee.

If two books have multiple authors, and the first author is the same but the others are different, alphabetize by the second author's last name (or the third or fourth, if necessary).

Carroll, D., & Aaronson, F. (2008). *Managing type II diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press. Carroll, D., & Zuckerman, N. (2008). *Gestational diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press.

### Books by different authors with the same last name

Alphabetize entries by the authors' first initial.

Smith, I. K. (2008). *The 4-day diet*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Smith, S. (2008). *The complete guide to Navy Seal fitness: Updated for today's warrior elite* (3rd ed.). Long Island City, NY: Hatherleigh Press.

\*Capitalize the first word of a subtitle.

### A book authored by an organization

Treat the organization name as you would an author's name. For the purposes of alphabetizing, ignore

words like *The* in the organization's name. (That is, a book published by the American Heart Association would be listed with other entries whose authors' names begin with A.)

American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders DSM-IV* (4th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

#### A book-length report

Format technical and research reports as you would format other book-length sources. If the organization that issued the report assigned it a number, include the number in parentheses after the title. (See also the guidelines provided for citing works produced by government agencies.)

Jameson, R., & Dewey, J. (2009). *Preliminary findings from an evaluation of the president's physical fitness program in Pleasantville school district*. Pleasantville, WA: Pleasantville Board of Education.

#### A book authored by a government agency

Treat these as you would a book published by a nongovernment organization, but be aware that these works may have an identification number listed. If so, include it in parentheses after the publication year.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2002). *The decennial censuses from 1790 to 2000* (Publication No. POL/02-MA). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Offices.

#### Exercise 27.2

Revisit the references section you began to compile in Exercise 27.1. Use the guidelines provided to format any entries for book-length print sources that you were unable to finish earlier.

Review how Jorge formatted these book-length print sources:

- Atkins, R. C. (2002). *Dr. Atkins' diet revolution*. New York, NY: M. Evans and Company.
- Agatson, A. (2003). *The South Beach diet*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.

## Print Sources: Periodicals

### An article in a scholarly journal

Include the following information:

- Author or authors' names
- Publication year
- Article title (in sentence case, without quotation marks or italics)
- Journal title (in title case and in italics)
- Volume number (in italics)
- Issue number (in parentheses)
- Page number(s) where the article appears

DeMarco, R. F. (2010). Palliative care and African American women living with HIV. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 49(5), 1–4.

### An article in a journal paginated by volume

In these types of journals, page numbers for one volume continue across all the issues in that volume. For instance, the winter issue may begin with page 1, and in the spring issue that follows, the page numbers pick up where the previous issue left off. (If you have ever wondered why a print journal did not begin on page 1, or wondered why the page numbers of a journal extend into four digits, this is why.) Omit the issue number from your reference entry.

Wagner, J. (2009). Rethinking school lunches: A review of recent literature. *American School Nurses' Journal*, 47, 1123–1127.

### An abstract of a scholarly article

At times you may need to cite an abstract—the summary that appears at the beginning—of a published article. If you are citing the abstract only, and it was published separately from the article, provide the following information:

- Publication information for the article
- Information about where the abstract was published (for instance, another journal or a collection of abstracts)

Romano, S. (2005). Parental involvement in raising standardized test scores. [Abstract]. *Elementary Education Abstracts*, 19, 36.

\*Use this format for abstracts published in a collection of abstracts.

Simpson, M. J. (2008) Assessing educational progress: Beyond standardized testing. *Journal of the Association for School Administrative Professionals*, 35(4), 32-40. Abstract obtained from Assessment in Education, 2009, 73(6), Abstract No. 537892.

\*Use this format for abstracts published in another journal.

#### A journal article with two to seven authors

List all the authors' names in the order they appear in the article. Use an ampersand before the last name listed.

Barker, E. T., & Bornstein, M. H. (2010). Global self-esteem, appearance satisfaction, and self-reported dieting in early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 30(2), 205–224.

Tremblay, M. S., Shields, M., Laviolette, M., Craig, C. L., Janssen, I., & Gorber, S. C. (2010). Fitness of Canadian children and youth: Results from the 2007–2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey. *Health Reports*, 21(1), 7–20.

#### A journal article with more than seven authors

List the first six authors' names, followed by a comma, an ellipsis, and the name of the last author listed. The article in the following example has sixteen listed authors; the reference entry lists the first six authors and the sixteenth, omitting the seventh through the fifteenth.

Straznicky, N.E., Lambert, E.A., Nestel, P. J., McGrane, M. T., Dawood, T., Schlaich, M. P., ... Lambert, G. W. (2010). Sympathetic neural adaptation to hypocaloric diet with or without exercise training in obese metabolic syndrome subjects. *Diabetes*, 59(1), 71-79.

\*Because some names are omitted, use a comma and ellipsis, rather than an ampersand, before the final name listed.

#### Writing at work

The idea of an eight-page article with sixteen authors may seem strange to you—especially if you are in the midst of writing a ten-page research paper on your own. More often than not, articles in scholarly

journals list multiple authors. Sometimes, the authors actually did collaborate on writing and editing the published article. In other instances, some of the authors listed may have contributed to the research in some way while being only minimally involved in the process of writing the article. Whenever you collaborate with colleagues to produce a written product, follow your profession's conventions for giving everyone proper credit for their contribution.

#### A magazine article

After the publication year, list the issue date. Otherwise, treat these as you would journal articles. List the volume and issue number if both are available.

Marano, H. E. (2010, March/April). Keen cuisine: Dairy queen. *Psychology Today*, 43(2), 58.

\*List the month after the year. For weekly magazines, list the full date. e.g. "March 8, 2010."

#### A newspaper article

Treat these as you would magazine and journal articles, with one important difference: precede the page number(s) with the abbreviation *p.* (for a single-page article) or *pp.* (for a multipage article). For articles whose pagination is not continuous, list all the pages included in the article. For example, an article that begins on page A1 and continues on pages A4 would have the page reference A1, A4. An article that begins on page A1 and continues on pages A4 and A5 would have the page reference A1, A4–A5.

Corwin, C. (2009, January 24). School board votes to remove soda machines from county schools. *Rockwood Gazette*, pp. A1-A2.

\*Include this section in your page reference.

#### A letter to the editor

After the title, indicate in brackets that the work is a letter to the editor.

Jones, J. (2009, January 31). Food police in our schools [Letter to the editor]. *Rockwood Gazette*, p. A8.

#### A review

After the title, indicate in brackets that the work is a review and state the name of the work being reviewed. (Note that even if the title of the review is the same as the title of the book being reviewed, as in the following example, you should treat it as an article title. Do not italicize it.)

Penhollow, T.M., & Jackson, M.A. (2009). Drug abuse: Concept, prevention, and cessation [Review of the book *Drug abuse: Concepts, prevention, and cessation*]. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 33(5), 620-622.

\*Italicize the title of the reviewed book only where it appears in brackets.

### Exercise 27.3

Revisit the references section you began to compile in Exercise 27.1. Use the guidelines provided above to format any entries for periodicals and other shorter print sources that you were unable to finish earlier.

## Electronic Sources

### Citing articles from online periodicals: URLs and Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)

Whenever you cite online sources, it is important to provide the most up-to-date information available to help readers locate the source. In some cases, this means providing an article's URL, or web address. (The letters *URL* stand for uniform resource locator.) Always provide the most complete URL possible. Provide a link to the specific article used, rather than a link to the publication's homepage.

As you know, web addresses are not always stable. If a website is updated or reorganized, the article you accessed in April may move to a different location in May. The URL you provided may become a dead link. For this reason, many online periodicals, especially scholarly publications, now rely on DOIs rather than URLs to keep track of articles.

A DOI is a Digital Object Identifier—an identification code provided for some online documents, typically articles in scholarly journals. Like a URL, its purpose is to help readers locate an article. However, a DOI is more stable than a URL, so it makes sense to include it in your reference entry when possible. Follow these guidelines:

- If you are citing an online article with a DOI, list the DOI at the end of the reference entry.
- If the article appears in print as well as online, you do not need to provide the URL. However, include the words *Electronic version* after the title in brackets.
- In other respects, treat the article as you would a print article. Include the volume number and issue number if available. (Note, however, that these may not be available for some online periodicals).

### An article from an online periodical with a DOI

List the DOI if one is provided. There is no need to include the URL if you have listed the DOI.

Bell, J. R. (2006). Low-carb beats low-fat diet for early losses but not long term. *OBGYN News*, 41(12), 32. doi:10.1016/S0029-7437(06)71905-X

#### An article from an online periodical with no DOI

List the URL. Include the volume and issue number for the periodical if this information is available. (For some online periodicals, it may not be.)

Laufer-Cahana, A. (2010, March 15). Lactose intolerance do's and don'ts. *Salon*. Retrieved from [http://www.salon.com/food/feature/2010/03/15/lactose\\_intolerance\\_ayala](http://www.salon.com/food/feature/2010/03/15/lactose_intolerance_ayala)

\*Used the words “Retrieved from” before the URL

\*\*This publication is online-only, so a URL must be included in the citation.

\*\*\*Do not include a period after the URL.

Note that if the article appears in a print version of the publication, you do not need to list the URL, but do indicate that you accessed the electronic version.

Robbins, K. (2010, March/April). Nature's bounty: A heady feast [Electronic version]. *Psychology Today*, 43(2), 58.

#### A newspaper article

Provide the URL of the article.

McNeil, D. G. (2010, May 3). Maternal health: A new study challenges benefits of vitamin A for women and babies. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/04/health/04glob.html?ref=health>

#### An article accessed through a database

Cite these articles as you would normally cite a print article. Provide database information only if the article is difficult to locate.

**TIP:** APA style does not require writers to provide the item number or accession number for articles retrieved from databases. You may choose to do so if the article is difficult to locate or the database is an obscure one. Check with your professor to see if this is something they would like you to include.

### An abstract of an article

Format these as you would an article citation, but add the word *Abstract* in brackets after the title.

Bradley, U., Spence, M., Courtney, C. H., McKinley, M. C., Ennis, C. N., McCance, D. R....Hunter, S. J. (2009). Low-fat versus low-carbohydrate weight reduction diets: Effects on weight loss, insulin resistance, and cardiovascular risk: A randomized control trial [Abstract]. *Diabetes*, 58(12), 2741–2748.  
<http://diabetes.diabetesjournals.org/content/early/2009/08/23/db00098.abstract>

### A nonperiodical web document

The ways you cite different nonperiodical web documents may vary slightly from source to source, depending on the information that is available. In your citation, include as much of the following information as you can:

- Name of the author(s), whether an individual or organization
- Date of publication (Use *n.d.* if no date is available.)
- Title of the document
- Address where you retrieved the document

If the document consists of more than one web page within the site, link to the homepage or the entry page for the document.

American Heart Association. (2010). *Heart attack, stroke, and cardiac arrest warning signs*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3053>

### An entry from an online encyclopedia or dictionary

Because these sources often do not include authors' names, you may list the title of the entry at the beginning of the citation. Provide the URL for the specific entry.

Addiction. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addiction>

### Data sets

If you cite raw data compiled by an organization, such as statistical data, provide the URL where you retrieved the information. Provide the name of the organization that sponsors the site.

US Food and Drug Administration. (2009). *Nationwide evaluation of X-ray trends: NEXT surveys performed* [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://www.fda.gov/Radiation-EmittingProducts/RadiationSafety/NationwideEvaluationofX-RayTrendsNEXT/ucm116508.htm>

### Graphic data

When citing graphic data—such as maps, pie charts, bar graphs, and so on—include the name of the organization that compiled the information, along with the publication date. Briefly describe the contents in brackets. Provide the URL where you retrieved the information. (If the graphic is associated with a specific project or document, list it after your bracketed description of the contents.)

US Food and Drug Administration. (2009). [Pie charts showing the percentage breakdown of the FDA's budget for fiscal year 2005]. *2005 FDA budget summary*. Retrieved from <http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/ReportsManualsForms/Reports/BudgetReports/2005FDABudgetSummary/ucm117231.htm>

### An online interview (audio file or transcript)

List the interviewer, interviewee, and date. After the title, include bracketed text describing the interview as an “Interview transcript” or “Interview audio file,” depending on the format of the interview you accessed. List the name of the website and the URL where you retrieved the information. Use the following format.

Davies, D. (Interviewer), & Pollan, M. (Interviewee). (2008). *Michael Pollan offers president food for thought* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from National Public Radio website: <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=100755362>

### An electronic book

Electronic books may include books available as text files online or audiobooks. If an electronic book is easily available in print, cite it as you would a print source. If it is unavailable in print (or extremely difficult to find), use the format in the example. (Use the words *Available from* in your citation if the book must be purchased or is not available directly.)

Chisholm, L. (n.d.). *Celtic tales*. Retrieved from [http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookReader?bookid=chicelt\\_00150014&twoPage=false&route=text&size=0&fullscreen=false&pnum1=1&lang=English&ilang=English](http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookReader?bookid=chicelt_00150014&twoPage=false&route=text&size=0&fullscreen=false&pnum1=1&lang=English&ilang=English)

**A chapter from an online book or a chapter or section of a web document**

These are treated similarly to their print counterparts with the addition of retrieval information. Include the chapter or section number in parentheses after the book title.

Hart, A. M. (1895). Restoratives—Coffee, cocoa, chocolate. In *Diet in sickness and in health* (VI). Retrieved from <http://www.archive.org/details/dietinsicknessin00hartrich>

**A dissertation or thesis from a database**

Provide the author, date of publication, title, and retrieval information. If the work is numbered within the database, include the number in parentheses at the end of the citation.

Coleman, M.D. (2004). *Effect of a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet on bone mineral density, biomarkers of bone turnover, and calcium metabolism in healthy premenopausal females*. Retrieved from Virginia Tech Digital Library & Archives: Electronic Theses and Dissertations. (etd-07282004-174858)

\*Italicize the titles of theses and dissertations.

**Computer software**

For commonly used office software and programming languages, it is not necessary to provide a citation. Cite software only when you are using a specialized program, such as the nutrition tracking software in the following example. If you download software from a website, provide the version and the year if available.

Internet Brands, Inc. (2009). FitDay PC (Version 2) [Software]. Available from <http://www.fitday.com/Pc/PcHome.html?gcid=14>

**A post on a blog or video blog**

Citation guidelines for these sources are similar to those used for discussion forum postings. Briefly describe the type of source in brackets after the title.

Fazio, M. (2010, April 5). Exercising in my eighth month of pregnancy [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://somanyblogs.com/~faziom/postID=67>

\*Do not italicize the titles of blog or video blog postings.

### A television or radio broadcast

Include the name of the producer or executive producer; the date, title, and type of broadcast; and the associated company and location.

West, Ty. (Executive producer). (2009, September 24). *PBS special report: Health care reform* [Television broadcast]. New York, NY, and Washington, DC: Public Broadcasting Service.

### A television or radio series or episode

Include the producer and the type of series if you are citing an entire television or radio series.

Couture, D., Nabors, S., Pinkard, S., Robertson, N., & Smith, J. (Producers). (1979). *The Diane Rehm show* [Radio series]. Washington, DC: National Public Radio.

To cite a specific episode of a radio or television series, list the name of the writer or writers (if available), the date the episode aired, its title, and the type of series, along with general information about the series.

Bernanke, J., & Wade, C. (2010, January 10). Hummingbirds: Magic in the air [Television series episode]. In F. Kaufman (Executive producer), *Nature*. New York, NY: WNET.

### A motion picture

Name the director or producer (or both), year of release, title, country of origin, and studio.

Spurlock, M. (Director/producer), Morley, J. (Executive producer), & Winters, H. M. (Executive producer). (2004). *Super size me*. United States: Kathbur Pictures in association with Studio on Hudson.

### A recording

Name the primary contributors and list their role. Include the recording medium in brackets after the title. Then list the location and the label.

Smith, L. W. (Speaker). (1999). *Meditation and relaxation* [CD]. New York, NY: Earth, Wind, & Sky Productions.

Székely, I. (Pianist), Budapest Symphony Orchestra (Performers), & Németh, G. (Conductor). (1988). *Chopin piano concertos no. 1 and 2* [CD]. Hong Kong: Naxos.

### A podcast

Provide as much information as possible about the writer, director, and producer; the date the podcast aired; its title; any organization or series with which it is associated; and where you retrieved the podcast.

Kelsey, A. R. (Writer), Garcia, J. (Director), & Kim, S. C. (Producer). (2010, May 7). Lies food labels tell us. *Savvy consumer podcasts* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <http://www.savvyconsumer.org/podcasts/050710>

### Exercise 27.4

Revisit the references section you began to compile in Exercise 27.1.

1. Use the APA guidelines provided in this section to format any entries for electronic sources that you were unable to finish earlier.
2. If your sources include a form of media not covered in the APA guidelines here, consult with a writing tutor or review a print or online reference book. You may wish to visit the website of the [American Psychological Association](#) or the [Purdue University Online Writing lab](#), which regularly updates its online style guidelines.
3. Give your paper a final edit to check the references section.



your citations for these kinds of sources according to APA guidelines.

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## 27.

### Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Style

MLA style is often used in the liberal arts and humanities. It provides a uniform framework for consistency across a document in several areas. MLA style provides a format for the manuscript text and parenthetical citations, or in-text citations. It also provides the framework for the works cited area for references at the end of the essay. MLA style emphasizes brevity and clarity. As a student writer, it is to your advantage to be familiar with both major styles, and this section will outline the main points of MLA as well as offer specific examples of commonly used references. Remember that your writing represents you in your absence. The correct use of a citation style demonstrates your attention to detail and ability to produce a scholarly work in an acceptable style, and it can help prevent the appearance or accusations of plagiarism.

If you are taking an English, art history, or music appreciation class, chances are that you will be asked to write an essay in MLA format. One common question goes something like “What’s the difference?” referring to APA and MLA style, and it deserves our consideration. The liberal arts and humanities often reflect works of creativity that come from individual and group effort, but they may adapt, change, or build on previous creative works. The inspiration to create something new, from a song to a music video, may contain elements of previous works. Drawing on your fellow artists and authors is part of the creative process, and so is giving credit where credit is due.

A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be aware of the works that you used to create it. Readers want to examine your sources to see if you know your subject, to see if you missed anything, or if you offer anything new and interesting. Your new or up-to-date sources may offer the reader additional insight on the subject being considered. It also demonstrates that you, as the author, are up-to-date on what is happening in the field or on the subject. Giving credit where it is due enhances your credibility, and the MLA style offers a clear format to use.

Uncredited work that is incorporated into your own writing is considered plagiarism. In the professional world, plagiarism results in loss of credibility and often compensation, including future opportunities. In a classroom setting, plagiarism results in a range of sanctions, from loss of a grade to expulsion from a school or university. In both professional and academic settings, the penalties are severe. MLA offers artists and authors a systematic style of reference, again giving credit where credit is due, to protect MLA users from accusations of plagiarism.

MLA style uses a citation in the body of the essay that links to the works cited page at the end. The in-text citation is offset with parentheses, clearly calling attention to itself for the reader. The reference to the author or title is like a signal to the reader that information was incorporated from a separate source. It also provides the reader with information to then turn to the works cited section of your essay (at the end) where they can find the complete reference. If you follow the MLA style, and indicate your source both in your essay and in the works cited section, you will prevent the possibility of plagiarism. If you follow the MLA guidelines, pay attention to detail, and clearly indicate your sources, then this

approach to formatting and citation offers a proven way to demonstrate your respect for other authors and artists.

#### Five Reasons to Use MLA Style

1. To demonstrate your ability to present a professional, academic essay in the correct style
2. To gain credibility and authenticity for your work
3. To enhance the ability of the reader to locate information discussed in your essay
4. To give credit where credit is due and prevent plagiarism
5. To get a good grade or demonstrate excellence in your writing

Before we transition to specifics, please consider one word of caution: consistency. If you are instructed to use the MLA style and need to indicate a date, you have options. For example, you could use an international or a US style:

- **International style:** 18 May 1980 (day/month/year)
- **US style:** May 18, 1980 (month/day/year)

If you are going to the US style, be consistent in its use. You'll find you have the option on page 83 of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th edition. You have many options when writing in English as the language itself has several conventions, or acceptable ways of writing particular parts of speech or information. For example, on the next page our *MLA Handbook* addresses the question:

Which convention is preferred in MLA style:

- a. twentieth century
- b. Twentieth Century
- c. 20th century
- d. 20th Century

\* (a) is the correct answer to the question at the beginning of this section. The *MLA Handbook* prefers “twentieth century.”

You are welcome to look in the *MLA Handbook* and see there is one preferred style or convention (you will also find the answer at end of this section marked by an asterisk [\*]). Now you may say to yourself that you won't write that term and it may be true, but you will come to a term or word that has more than one way it can be written. In that case, what convention is acceptable in MLA style? This is where the *MLA Handbook* serves as an invaluable resource. Again, your attention to detail and the professional presentation of your work are aspects of learning to write in an academic setting.

Now let's transition from a general discussion on the advantages of MLA style to what we are required to do to write a standard academic essay. We will first examine a general "to do" list, then review a few "do not" suggestions, and finally take a tour through a sample of MLA features. Links to sample MLA papers are located at the end of this section.

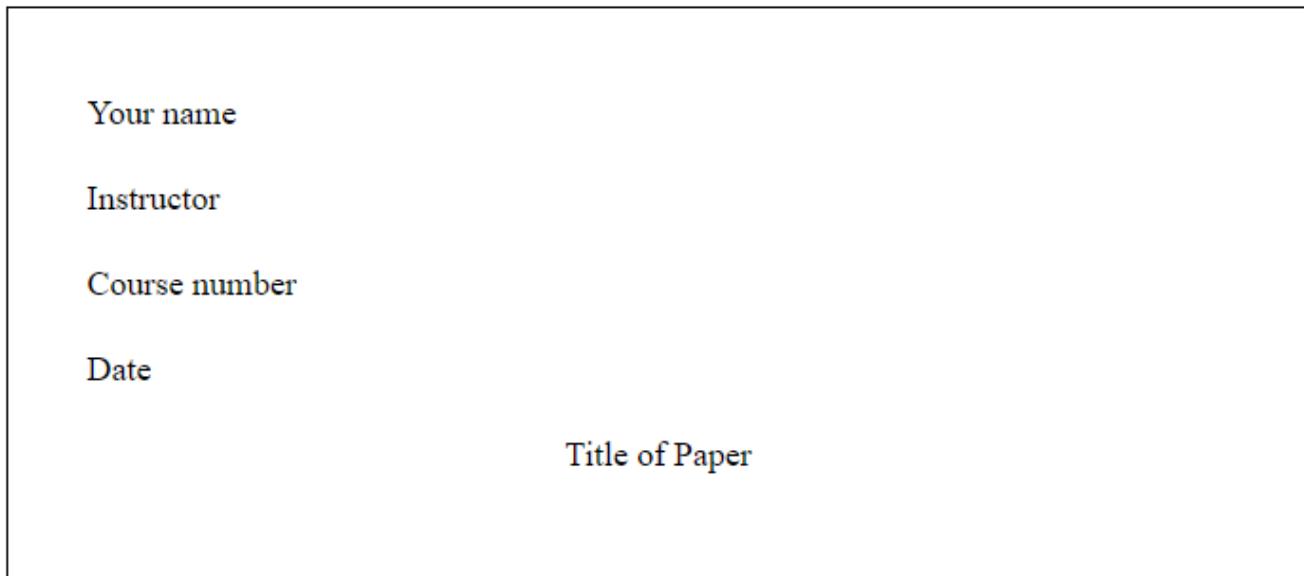
## General MLA List

1. Use standard white paper (8.5 × 11 inches).
2. Double space the essay and quotes.
3. Use Times New Roman 12-point font.
4. Use one-inch margins on all sides
5. Indent paragraphs (five spaces or 1.5 inches).
6. Include consecutive page numbers in the upper-right corner.
7. Use italics to indicate a title, as in *Provincial English*.
8. On the first page, place your name, course, date, and instructor's name in the upper-left corner.
9. On the first page, place the title centered on the page, with no bold or italics and all words capitalized.
10. On all pages, place the header, student's name + one space + page number, 1.5 inches from the top, aligned on the right.

**TIP:** Depending on your field of study, you may sometimes write research papers in either APA or MLA style. Recognize that each has its advantages and preferred use in fields and disciplines. Learn to write and reference in both styles with proficiency.

## Title Block Format

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, and your title block (not a separate title page; just a section at the top of the first page) makes an impression on the reader. If correctly formatted with each element of information in its proper place, form, and format, it says to the reader that you mean business, that you are a professional, and that you take your work seriously, so it should, in turn, be seriously considered. Your title block in MLA style contributes to your credibility. Remember that your writing represents you in your absence, and the title block is the tailored suit or outfit that represents you best. That said, sometimes a separate title page is necessary, but it is best both to know how to properly format a title block or page in MLA style and to ask your instructor if it is included as part of the assignment.

*Figure 28.1*

## Paragraphs and Indentation

Make sure you indent five spaces (from the left margin). You'll see that the indent offsets the beginning of a new paragraph. We use paragraphs to express single ideas or topics that reinforce our central purpose or thesis statement. Paragraphs include topic sentences, supporting sentences, and conclusion or transitional sentences that link paragraphs together to support the main focus of the essay.

## Tables and Illustrations

Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the text they reinforce or complement. Here's an example of a table in MLA.

Table 28.1 Sample Table in MLA	
Sales Figures by Year	Sales Amount (\$)
2007	100,000
2008	125,000
2009	185,000
2010	215,000

As we can see in Table 28.1, we have experienced significant growth since 2008.

This example demonstrates that the words that you write and the tables, figures, illustrations, or images that you include should be next to each other in your paper.

## Parenthetical Citations

You must cite your sources as you use them. In the same way that a table or figure should be located right next to the sentence that discusses it (see the previous example), parenthetical citations, or citations enclosed in parenthesis that appear in the text, are required. You need to cite all your information. If someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to cite it. The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge. For example, if you search online for MLA resources, and specifically MLA sample papers, you will find many similar discussions on MLA style. MLA is a style and cannot be copyrighted because it is a style, but the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook* can be copyright protected. If you reference a specific page in that handbook, you need to indicate it. If you write about a general MLA style issue that is commonly covered or addressed in multiple sources, you do not. When in doubt, reference the specific resource you used to write your essay.

Your in-text, or parenthetical, citations should do the following:

- Clearly indicate the specific sources also referenced in the works cited
- Specifically identify the location of the information that you used
- Keep the citation clear and concise, always confirming its accuracy

## Works Cited Page

After the body of your paper comes the works cited page. It features the reference sources used in your essay. List the sources alphabetically by last name, or list them by title if the author is not known as is often the case of web-based articles. You will find links to examples of the works cited page in several of the sample MLA essays at the end of this section.

As a point of reference and comparison to our APA examples, let's examine the following three citations and the order of the information needed.

**Table 28.2 MLA vs. APA Style**

Citation Type	MLA Style	APA Style
Website	Author's Last Name, First Name. Title of the website. Publication Date. Name of Organization (if applicable). Date you accessed the website. <URL>.	Author's Last Name, First Initial. (Date of publication). <i>Title of document</i> . Retrieved from URL
Online article	Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Title of the website. Date of publication. Organization that provides the website. Date you accessed the website.	Author's Last name, First Initial. (Date of publication). Title of article. <i>Title of Journal, Volume(Issue)</i> . Retrieved from URL
Book	Author's Last Name, First Name. <i>Title of the Book</i> . Place of Publication: Publishing Company, Date of publication.	Author's Last Name, First Initial. (Date of publication). <i>Title of the book</i> . Place of Publication: Publishing Company.

Note: The items listed include proper punctuation and capitalization according to the style's guidelines.

#### Exercise 28.1

After reviewing this section and exploring the resources linked at the end of the section (including California State University–Sacramento's clear example of a paper in MLA format), please convert your paper to MLA style using the formatting and citation guidelines. You may find it helpful to use online applications that quickly, easily, and at no cost convert your citations to MLA format.

#### Exercise 28.2

Please convert the APA-style citations to MLA style. You may find that online applications can quickly, easily, and at no cost convert your citations to MLA format. There are several websites and applications available free (or as a free trial) that will allow you to input the information and will produce a correct citation in the style of your choice. Consider these two sites:

- [NoodleTools](#)
- [Citation Machine](#)

Hint: You may need access to the Internet to find any missing information required to correctly cite in MLA style. This demonstrates an important difference between APA and MLA style—the information provided to the reader.

1. Brent, D. A., Poling, K. D., & Goldstein, T. R. (2010). *Treating depressed and suicidal adolescents: A clinician's guide*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

2. Dewan, S. (2007, September 17). Using crayons to exorcise Katrina. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/17/arts/design/17ther.html>
3. Freud, S. (1955). Beyond the pleasure principle. In *The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*. (Vol. XVII, pp. 3–66). London, England: Hogarth.
4. Henley, D. (2007). Naming the enemy: An art therapy intervention for children with bipolar and comorbid disorders. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 24(3), 104–110.
5. Isis, P. D., Bus, J., Siegel, C. A., & Ventura, Y. (2010). Empowering students through creativity: Art therapy in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 27(2), 56–61.
6. Isis, P. D., Bus, J., Siegel, C. A., & Ventura, Y. (2010). Empowering students through creativity: Art therapy in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 27(2), 56–61.
7. Johnson, D. (1987). The role of the creative arts therapies in the diagnosis and treatment of psychological trauma. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 14, 7–13.
8. Malchiodi, C. (2006). *Art therapy sourcebook*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
9. Markel, R. (Producer). (2010). *I'm an artist* [Motion picture]. United States: Red Pepper Films.
10. Kelley, S. J. (1984). The use of art therapy with sexually abused children. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health*, 22(12), 12–28.
11. Pifalo, T. (2008). Why art therapy? *Darkness to light: Confronting child abuse with courage*. Retrieved from [http://www.darkness2light.org/KnowAbout/articles\\_art\\_therapy.asp](http://www.darkness2light.org/KnowAbout/articles_art_therapy.asp)
12. Rubin, J. A. (2005). *Child art therapy* (25th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.
13. Schimek, J. (1975). A critical re-examination of Freud's concept of unconscious mental representation. *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 2, 171–187.
14. Strauss, M. B. (1999). *No talk therapy for children and adolescents*. New York, NY: Norton.
15. Thompson, T. (2008). *Freedom from meltdowns: Dr. Thompson's solutions for children with autism*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

## Useful Sources of Examples of MLA Style

- Arizona State University Libraries offers an [excellent resource with clear examples](#).
- Purdue Online Writing Lab includes [sample pages and works cited](#).
- California State University–Sacramento's Online Writing Lab has an excellent [visual description and example](#) of an MLA paper.
- Cornell University Library provides comprehensive MLA information on its [Citation Management website](#).
- [The University of Kansas Writing Center](#) is an excellent resource.

## Checklist 28.1 MLA Checklist

1. Is the heading in the upper left-hand corner of the first page?
2. Does the heading include:
  - Your name?
  - Your instructor’s name?
  - The course name?
  - The date?
3. Does the paper have an original title (other than something like “Final Paper”)?
  - Is the title presented without being bolded, italicized, or placed in quotation marks
4. Does the paper have 1-inch margins on all sides?
5. Is the paper written in Times New Roman (or another standard font your professor allows) and in 12-pt. font?
6. Is everything double-spaced (including any notes and the works cited page)?
7. Are your last name and the page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page (0.5-inches from the top, or inserted using the “header” function in Word)?
8. If you’ve used outside sources, do you have a works cited page? Is it titled “Works Cited” (without the quotation marks)? Does it have a page number (that follows the last page of your paper) and your last name?
9. Are the entries in your list of works cited in alphabetical order by the author’s last name?
  - Does each source have an entry on the works cited page?
  - Are all direct quotes in quotation marks?
  - Do all paraphrases and summaries clearly indicate that they come from other sources?
  - Does each in-text reference include a parenthetical citation that includes the author’s last name (unless it is obvious from the context of the sentence who you are referencing) and the page number from which the information was taken?
  - If a quotation is 4 lines or more, is it block-quoted? (i.e. double-spaced, indented 1 inch from the left margin)
  - Have you clearly indicated where you found all information you did not previously know?
  - Does your works cited page conform to MLA format?

understand economics. He also asserts that economic literacy is important because "each person needs to be his or her own economist because it is not possible to depend completely on the advice or help from experts" (Walstad, 304). That is because we are not always going to be able to go to an economist and ask what solution is right. We need to be able to make our own decisions regarding the economy. Those decisions range from changes in minimum wage and



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other government programs, and for people to make informed decisions they need to know how their decisions will affect the economy. When people are more economically literate they will be able to make informed decisions.

Economics literacy is an issue affecting not only the state of Florida, but the nation as a

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/provincialenglishabe/?p=101>

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## 28.

### Writing a Research Paper: Exercises

#### Exercise 29.1

1. In this chapter, you learned strategies for generating and narrowing a topic for a research paper. Brainstorm to create a list of five general topics of personal or professional interest to you that you would like to research. Then use freewriting and preliminary research to narrow three of these topics to manageable size for a five- to seven-page research paper. Save your list of topics in a print or electronic file and add to it periodically as you identify additional areas of interest. Use your topic list as a starting point the next time a research paper is assigned.
2. Working with one of the topics you just identified, use the research skills you learned in this chapter to locate three to five potentially useful print or electronic sources of information about the topic. Create a list that includes the following:
  - One subject-specific periodicals database likely to include relevant articles on your topic
  - Two articles about your topic written for an educated general audience
  - At least one article about your topic written for an audience with specialized knowledge
3. In real-life and work-related contexts, people consult a wide range of different information sources every day, without always making conscious judgments about whether the source is reliable and why. Identify one media source of information you use at least once a week—for instance, a website you visit regularly, or a newspaper or magazine to which you subscribe. Write two paragraphs explaining the following:
  - What topics you learn about by reading or viewing this source
  - Whether you consider this source reliable and why

In addressing the latter point, be sure to consider details that help you evaluate the source's credibility and reputability, as well as the presence or absence of bias.

4. Different professional communities develop their own standards about the writing style people in that community use when creating documents to share with others. In some cases, these standards may apply to a very broad group of professionals—for example, researchers in many different social sciences use APA style in academic writing. MLA style is commonly used in the humanities, including English classes. In other cases, style guidelines are specific to a particular company or organization. Find a document, such as a newsletter or brochure, that was produced by an organization to which you belong. (Make sure it is a document you have permission to

share.) Review the document and answer the following questions:

- What are the purpose, intended audience, and message of this document?
- How does the writing style function to fulfill the purpose, appeal to a particular audience, and convey a message? Consider elements of style, such as word choice, the use of active or passive voice, sentence length, and sentence structure. If your document includes graphics, consider their effectiveness as well.
- Are there any places where the style is inconsistent?
- Is the writing style of this document effective for achieving the document’s purpose? Why or why not? If it is not effective, explain why.

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## Literature



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## 29.

### Genre: Tragedy

#### Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE)

##### A. Elements of Tragedy

1. Serious and important plot
2. Turns out disastrously for the main character
3. Should arouse pity and fear in the audience

##### B. Tragic Hero

1. Neither an all good nor all bad person
2. “better than we are” (higher moral worth)
3. Suffers a change in fortune (from happiness to misery)

##### C. Tragic Flaw

1. Error in judgment
2. Disregards a warning or moral law (hubris)
3. We can recognize similar errors in our own lives

#### Text Attributions

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## 30.

### Genre: Romance

From the French *roman* 12C.

#### A. Elements of Romance

1. Setting is in epic scale—may be worldwide or even larger
2. Suspends audience's expectations based on everyday experiences
3. Extraordinary deeds in battle
4. Gods or supernatural beings (or important figures) take an interest in the action
5. Emphasis on adventure

#### B. Romantic Hero/Characters

1. Figure of great national or even cosmic importance
2. Characters are sharply distinguished as heroes or villains, masters or victims
3. Protagonist is often solitary or relatively isolated from society
4. Men escape to an unspoiled natural environment, free from women, to undergo test of virility

#### C. Romantic Themes

1. Quest undertaken by a knight in order to regain a lady's favour
2. Quest for an ideal
3. Pursuit of an enemy
4. Symbolize the primal desires, hopes, and terrors in the depths of the human mind



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## 31.

### Genre: Satire

#### Aristophanes (450-c. – 385 B.C.)

##### A. Satire

1. Attacks deviations from the social order
2. Shows how ridiculous violators of moral standards or manners are
3. Diminishes or derogates a subject
4. Limits ridicule to the failing, not the person—limits to corrigible faults and those not of the person's responsibility

##### B. Satiric Characters

1. Greedy but intelligent rascally swindlers vs. greedy but gullible victims
2. \*Narrator is urbane, witty, and tolerant—points out failings in wry and humorous way \*OR\* Narrator is serious and dignified moralist who evokes contempt and indignation for subject
3. Characters make themselves ridiculous and obnoxious by what they think, say, and do

##### C. Satiric Themes

1. Laughter is used as a weapon against something outside of the work itself, ex. individual, type of person, class, institution, nation, all of the human race
2. Corrective of human vice and folly... Alexander Pope: "Those who are ashamed of nothing else are so of being ridiculous."
3. "black humour" points out situations of social cruelty, inanity, or chaos



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## 32.

### Genre: Comedy

#### Old Comedy: Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE)

##### A. Elements of Comedy

1. Ludicrous & non-threatening plot
2. Turns out well for the main character(s)
3. Should arouse feelings of sympathy & ridicule
4. Should be mimetic (imitate society)

##### B. Comedic Hero

1. Both a comedic & ironic person
2. ..."will get his triumph whether what he has done is sensible or silly, honest or rascally" (Frye)
3. 'lower' than we are in social standing or moral worth

##### C. Comedic Themes

1. Hero begins by escaping society to an idyllic place
2. He then tries to fit back into society (plot = probation)
3. Ends with 'salvation' – higher social standing or worth

#### New Comedy: Frye (1912-1991)

##### A. Shakespearean Comedy

1. Sexual desire/ erotic intrigue
2. The social order rebukes or rejects the hero(s)
3. Should arouse feelings of sympathy & ridicule
4. Highly mimetic (social commentary)

##### B. Comedic Hero(s)

1. Often many characters involved (silly confusion)
2. ..."will get his triumph whether what he has done is sensible or silly, honest or rascally" (Frye)

3. Humorous characters; “but socially attractive” (Frye)

### C. Comedic Themes

1. Struggle between the repressive and desirable societies: *ours* vs. *idyllic*
2. Paternal/ societal “block” preventing sexual fulfillment
3. Ends with: Hero becomes wealthy;
4. Heroine becomes respectable

### Text Attributions

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## 33.

# Approaching Poetry

## Introduction

This reading is designed to develop the analytical skills you need for a more in-depth study of literary texts. You will learn about rhythm, alliteration, rhyme, poetic inversion, voice and line lengths and endings. You will examine poems that do not rhyme and learn how to compare and contrast poetry.

By the end of this reading you should be able to:

- have an awareness of the role of analysis to inform appreciation and understanding of poetry;
- be able to identify and discuss the main analytical concepts used in analyzing poetry.

a	quick	delirious	description
of	whisper	s	
and	a	summer	rose

Figure 36.1

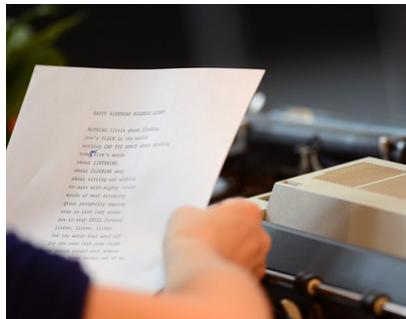


Figure 36.2

What is the point of analyzing poetry? One simple answer is that the more we know about anything the more interesting it becomes: listening to music or looking at paintings with someone who can tell us a little about what we hear or see – or what we’re reading – is one way of increasing our understanding and pleasure. That may mean learning something about the people who produced the writing, music, painting that we are interested in, and why they produced it. But it may also mean understanding why one particular form was chosen rather than another: why, for example, did the poet choose to write a sonnet rather than an ode, a ballad, or a villanelle? To appreciate the appropriateness of one form, we need to be aware of a

range of options available to that particular writer at that particular time. In the same way, we also need to pay attention to word choice. Why was this particular word chosen from a whole range of words that might have said much the same? Looking at manuscript drafts can be really enlightening, showing how much effort was expended in order to find the most appropriate or most evocative expression.

Think about this first stanza of Thomas Hardy’s ‘Neutral Tones’ (1867):

We stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;

—They had fallen from an ash, and were gray. (Gibson, 1976, p. 12)

Notice that, in the last line, ‘oak’ or ‘elm’ would work just as well as far as the rhythm or music of the line is concerned, but ‘ash’ has extra connotations of grayness, of something burnt out, dead, finished (‘ashes to ashes’, too, perhaps?), all of which contribute to the mood that Hardy conveys in a way that ‘oak’ or ‘elm’ wouldn’t.

To return to my original question then, ‘what is the point of analyzing poetry?’, one answer is that only an analytical approach can help us arrive at an informed appreciation and understanding of the poem. Whether we like a poem or not, we should be able to recognize the craftsmanship that has gone into making it, the ways in which stylistic techniques and devices have worked to create meaning. General readers may be entirely happy to find a poem pleasing, or unsatisfactory, without stopping to ask why. But *studying* poetry is a different matter and requires some background understanding of what those stylistic techniques might be, as well as an awareness of constraints and conventions within which poets have written throughout different periods of history.

You may write poetry yourself. If so, you probably know only too well how difficult it is to produce something you feel really expresses what you want to convey. Writing an essay presents enough problems – a poem is a different matter, but certainly no easier. Thinking of poetry as a discipline and a craft which, to some extent, can be learned, is another useful way of approaching analysis. After all, how successful are emotional outpourings on paper?

Words one might scribble down in the heat of an intense moment may have some validity in conveying that intensity, but in general might they not be more satisfactory if they were later revised? My own feeling is that a remark Wordsworth made 200 years ago has become responsible for a number of misconceptions about what poetry should do. In the Preface to a volume of poems called *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) he wrote that ‘all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ (Owens and Johnson, 1998, p.85, ll.105–6). The second time he uses the same phrase he says something that I think is often forgotten today: ‘poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion *recollected in tranquillity*’ (my italics) (*ibid.*, p. 95, ll.557–8). Notice the significant time lapse implied there – the idea that, however powerful or spontaneous the emotion, it needs to be carefully considered before you start writing. He goes on:

The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually reproduced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins.

You don’t have to agree with Wordsworth about what poetry is or how best to achieve it. (Would you always want a poem to express powerful emotion, for example? I referred to Hardy’s ‘Neutral Tones’ above, where the whole point is that neither of the two characters described feels anything much at all.) But the idea of contemplation is a useful and important one: it implies distance, perhaps detachment, but above all re-creation, not the thing itself. And if we try to re-create something, we must choose our methods and our words carefully in order to convey what we experienced as closely as possible. A word of warning though: writers do not always aim to express personal experiences; often a persona is created.

The poet Ezra Pound offered this advice to other poets in an essay written in 1913: ‘Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something’ (Gray, 1990, p. 56). And in the 1950s William

Carlos Williams advised, ‘cut and cut again whatever you write’. In his opinion, the ‘test of the artist is to be able to revise without showing a seam’ (loc. cit.). That sewing image he uses appeals to me particularly because it stresses the notion of skilled craftsmanship. Pound and Williams were American, writing long after Wordsworth, but, as you can see, like countless other poets they too reflected very seriously on their own poetic practice. I hope this helps convince you that as students we owe it to the poems we read to give them close analytical attention.

## Note About Organization

In what follows, section headings like ‘Rhyme’, ‘Rhythm’, ‘Line lengths and line endings’, ‘Alliteration’, and so on, are intended to act as signposts to help you (if terms are unfamiliar, look them up in the glossary at the end). But these headings indicate only the *main* technique being discussed. While it is something we need to attempt, it is very difficult to try to isolate devices in this way – to separate out, for example, the effects of rhythm from rhyme. This doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t look for particular techniques at work in a poem, but we need to be aware that they will be interdependent and the end product effective or not because of the way such elements work together.

As you work through this reading, don’t be discouraged if your response to exercises differs from mine. Remember that I had the advantage of choosing my own examples and that I’ve long been familiar with the poems I’ve used. On a daily basis, we probably read much less poetry than we do prose. This is perhaps one reason why many people say they find poetry difficult – unfamiliarity and lack of practice. But, like anything else, the more effort we put in, the wider the range of experiences we have to draw on. I hope that when you come across an unfamiliar extract in the discussions that follow you might decide to look up the whole poem on your own account, widening your own experience and enjoying it too.

Remember that language changes over the years. I’ve deliberately chosen to discuss poems from different periods, and given dates of first publication. Do keep this in mind, especially as you may find some examples more accessible than others. The idiom and register of a poem written in the eighteenth century will usually be quite different from one written in the twentieth. Different verse forms are popular at different times: while sonnets have been written for centuries, they were especially fashionable in Elizabethan times, for example. Don’t expect to find free verse written much before the twentieth century.

If you are working on a poem, it can be a good idea to print it, maybe even enlarge it, and then write anything you find particularly striking in the margins. Use highlighters or coloured pens to underline repetitions and link rhyme words. Patterns may well emerge that will help you understand the way the poem develops. Make the poems your own in this way, and then, if you are the kind of person who doesn’t mind writing in books, you can insert notes in a more restrained way in the margins of your book.

If you prefer to work on your computer, you can do a similar thing by using an annotation tool on your word processor.



Figure 36.3

Whatever you do, always ask yourself what the effect of a particular technique that you identify is. Noticing an unusual choice of words, a particular rhyme scheme or use of alliteration is an important first step, but you need to take another one. Unless you go on to say why what you have noticed is effective, what it contributes to the rest of the poem, how it endorses or changes things, then you are doing less than half the job. Get into the habit of asking yourself questions, even if you can't always answer them satisfactorily.

## Rhythm

All speech has rhythm because we naturally stress some words or syllables more than others. The rhythm can sometimes be very regular and pronounced, as in a children's nursery rhyme – 'JACK and JILL went UP the HILL' – but even in the most ordinary sentence the important words are given more stress. In poetry, rhythm is extremely important: patterns are deliberately created and repeated for varying effects. The rhythmical pattern of a poem is called its meter, and we can analyze, or 'scan' lines of poetry to identify stressed and unstressed syllables. In marking the text to show this, the mark '/' is used to indicate a stressed syllable, and 'x' to indicate an unstressed syllable. Each complete unit of stressed and unstressed syllables is called a 'foot', which usually has one stressed and one or two unstressed syllables.

The most common foot in English is known as the iamb, which is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one (x /). Many words in English are iambic: a simple example is the word 'forgot'. When we say this, the stresses naturally fall in the sequence:

x /  
'forgot'.

Iambic rhythm is in fact the basic sound pattern in ordinary English speech. If you say the following line aloud you will hear what I mean:

x / x / x / x / x / x /  
I went across the road and bought a pair of shoes.

The next most common foot is the trochee, a stressed syllable (or 'beat', if you like) followed by an unstressed one (/x), as in the word

/ x  
'mountain'.

Both the iamb and the trochee have two syllables, the iamb being a 'rising' rhythm and the trochee a 'falling' rhythm. Another two-syllable foot known as the spondee has two equally stressed beats (/ /), as in

/ /  
'blue spurt'.

Other important feet have three syllables. The most common are the anapest (x x /) and the dactyl (/ x x), which are triple rhythms, rising and falling respectively, as in the words

x x / / x x  
'unimpressed' and 'probably'.

Here are some fairly regular examples of the four main kinds of meter used in poetry. (I have separated the feet by using a vertical slash.) You should say the lines aloud, listening for the stress patterns and noting how the ‘beats’ fall on particular syllables or words.

### Iambic meter

x / x / x / x / x /  
The cur- | few tolls | the knell | of part- | ing day

### Trochaic meter

/ x / x / x /  
Tiger | tiger | burning | bright

### Anapestic meter

x x / x x / x x / x x /  
She is far | from the land | where her young | hero sleeps

### Dactylic meter

/ x x / x x / x x / x x /  
Woman much | missed how you | call to me, | call to me

The other technical point that you need to know about is the way the lengths of lines of verse are described. This is done according to the number of feet they contain, and the names given to different lengths of lines are as follows:

**Table 36.1 Length of Lines**

Name	Length of the line
monometer	a line of one foot
dimeter	a line of two feet
trimeter	a line of three feet
tetrameter	a line of four feet
pentameter	a line of five feet
hexameter	a line of six feet
heptameter	a line of seven feet
octameter	a line of eight feet.

By far the most widely used of these are the tetrameter and the pentameter. If you look back at the four lines of poetry given as examples above, you can count the feet. You will see that the first one has five feet, so it is an iambic pentameter line; the second one has four feet, so it is a trochaic tetrameter line; the fourth and fifth also have four feet, so are anapestic and dactylic tetrameter lines respectively. Lines do not always have exactly the ‘right’ number of beats. Sometimes a pentameter line will have an extra ‘beat’, as in the famous line from *Hamlet*, ‘To be or not to be: that is the question’, where the ‘tion’ of

question is an eleventh, unstressed beat. (It is worth asking yourself why Shakespeare wrote the line like this. Why did he not write what would have been a perfectly regular ten-syllable line, such as ‘The question is, to be or not to be’?)

Having outlined some of the basic meters of English poetry, it is important to say at once that very few poems would ever conform to a perfectly regular metrical pattern. The effect of that would be very boring indeed: imagine being restricted to using only iambic words, or trying to keep up a regular trochaic rhythm. Poets therefore often include trochaic or anapestic or dactylic words or phrases within what are basically iambic lines, in order to make them more interesting and suggestive, and to retain normal pronunciation. Here is a brief example from Shakespeare to show you what I mean. I have chosen a couple of lines spoken by Rosalind in

*As You Like It*, Act 1, scene 2, and have marked this first version to show you the basic iambic meter:

x / x / x / x / x /  
 My fa- | ther loved | Sir Row- | land as | his soul,  
 x / x / x / x / x /  
 And all | the world | was of | my fa | ther's mind.

If you say the lines out loud in this regular way you can hear that the effect is very unnatural. Here is one way the lines might be scanned to show how the stresses would fall in speech (though there are other ways of scanning them):

/ / x / x x x x x /  
 My father loved Sir Rowland as his soul,  
 x / x / x x x / x /  
 And all the world was of my father's mind.

It must be emphasized that there is no need to feel that you must try to remember all the technical terms I have been introducing here. The purpose has been to help you to become aware of the importance of rhythmic effects in poetry, and it can be just as effective to try to describe these in your own words. The thing to hang on to when writing about the rhythm of a poem is that, as Ezra Pound put it, ‘Rhythm MUST have meaning’: ‘It can’t be merely a careless dash off with no grip and no real hold to the words and sense, a tumty tum tumpty tum tum ta’ (quoted in Gray, 1990, p. 56). There are occasions, of course, when a tum-ty-ty-tum rhythm may be appropriate, and ‘have meaning’. When Tennyson wrote ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’, he recreated the sound, pace, and movement of horses thundering along with the emphatic dactyls of ‘Half a league, half a league, half a league onward / Into the valley of death rode the six hundred’. But for a very different example we might take a short two-line poem by Pound himself. This time there is no fixed meter: like much twentieth-century poetry, this poem is in ‘free verse’. Its title is ‘In a Station of the Metro’ (the Metro being the Paris underground railway), and it was written in 1916:

x x x x x x / / x x /  
 The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
 / x x x / / /  
 Petals on a wet, black bough.

Here you can see that the rhythm plays a subtle part in conveying the meaning. The poem is comparing the faces of people in a crowded underground to petals that have fallen on to a wet bough. The rhythm

not only highlights the key words in each line, but produces much of the emotional feeling of the poem by slowing down the middle words of the first line and the final three words of the second.

## Alliteration



Figure 36.4

Alliteration is the term used to describe successive words beginning with the same sound – usually, then, with the same letter.

To illustrate this I would like to use a stanza from Arthur Hugh Clough's poem, 'Natura naturans'. There is not enough space to quote the whole poem, but to give you some idea of the context of this stanza so that you can more fully appreciate what Clough is doing, it is worth explaining that 'Natura naturans' describes the sexual tension between a young man and woman who sit next to each other

in a railway carriage. They have not been introduced, and they neither speak nor exchange so much as a glance. The subject matter and its treatment is unusual and also extraordinarily frank for the time of writing (about 1849), but you need to know what is being described in order to appreciate the physicality of the lines I quote.

## Rhyme

If a poem rhymes, then considering how the rhyme works is always important.

Rhyme schemes can be simple or highly intricate and complex; it will always be worth considering why a particular rhyme pattern was chosen and trying to assess its effects.

### Poetic inversion

Poetic inversion, or changing the usual word order of speech, is often linked to the need to maintain a rhythm or to find a rhyme. We noticed Pope's poetic inversion in *An Essay on Criticism* and saw how the rhyme was intimately linked to the rhythm of the verse. The song 'Dancing in the Street', first recorded by Martha and the Vandellas in the 1960s, does violence to word order in the interests of rhyme – 'There'll be dancing in the street/ A chance new folk to meet' – but, because the words are sung to a driving rhythm, we are unlikely to notice how awkward they are. There's a convention that we recognise, however unconsciously, that prevents us from mentally re-writing the line as 'a chance to meet new people'. ('People' rather than 'folk' would be more usual usage for me, but, as with the Pope example, this would mean that the rhythm too would be lost.)

### Poems that don't rhyme

Are poems that don't rhyme prose? Not necessarily. Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), a novelist rather than a poet, and T.S. Eliot (1888–1965), known particularly for his poetry, both wrote descriptive pieces best described as 'prose poems'. These look like short prose passages since there is no attention to line lengths or layout on the page, as there was, for example, in 'Mariana'. When you study Shakespeare

you will come across blank verse. ‘Blank’ here means ‘not rhyming’, but the term ‘blank verse’ is used specifically to describe verse in unrhyming iambic pentameters.

Although iambic pentameters resemble our normal speech patterns, in ordinary life we speak in prose. You’ll notice if you look through Shakespeare’s plays that blank verse is reserved for kings, nobles, heroes and heroines. They may *also* speak in prose, as lesser characters do, but commoners don’t ever have speeches in blank verse. Shakespeare – and other playwrights like him – used the form to indicate status. It is important to recognise this convention, which would have been understood by his contemporaries – writers, readers, and audiences alike. So choosing to write a poem in blank verse is an important decision: it will elevate the subject. One such example is Milton’s epic *Paradise Lost* (1667), a long poem in twelve Books describing Creation, Adam and Eve’s temptation, disobedience and expulsion from Paradise. It sets out to justify the ways of God to man, so blank verse is entirely appropriate.

## Voice

Is the speaker in a poem one and the same as the writer? Stop and consider this for a few moments. Can you think of any poems you have read where a writer has created a character, or persona, whose voice we hear when we read?

Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* was written as an autobiographical poem, but there are many instances where it is obvious that poet and persona are different. Charlotte Mew’s poem, ‘The Farmer’s Bride’ (1916) begins like this:

*Three summers since I chose a maid,  
Too young maybe – but more’s to do  
At harvest-time than bide and woo.  
When us was wed she turned afraid  
Of love and me and all things human;*

(Warner, 1981, pp. 1–2)



Figure 36.5

## Line Lengths and Line Endings

Read the following prose extract taken from Walter Pater’s discussion of the *Mona Lisa*, written in 1893, and then complete the activity:

She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands.

### Exercise 36.1

When W.B. Yeats was asked to edit The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892–1935 (1936), he chose to begin with this passage from Pater, but he set it out quite differently on the page. Before you read his version, write out the extract as a poem yourself. The exercise is designed to make you think about line lengths, where to start a new line and where to end it when there is no rhyme to give you a clue. There is no regular rhythm either, though I’m sure you will discover rhythms in the words, as well as repeated patterns. How can you best bring out these poetic features?

#### Discussion

Of course, there is no right answer to this exercise, but you should compare your version to Yeats’s, printed below, to see if you made similar decisions.

*She is older than the rocks among which she sits;  
 Like the Vampire,  
 She has been dead many times,  
 And learned the secrets of the grave;  
 And has been a diver in deep seas,  
 And keeps their fallen day about her;  
 And trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants;  
 And, as Leda,  
 Was the mother of Helen of Troy,  
 And, as St Anne,  
 Was the mother of Mary;  
 And all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes,  
 And lives  
 Only in the delicacy  
 With which it has moulded the changing lineaments,  
 And tinged the eyelids and the hands.*

## Comparing and Contrasting

Often you will find that an assignment asks you to ‘compare and contrast’ poems. There’s a very good reason for this, for often it is only by considering different treatments of similar subjects that we become aware of a range of possibilities, and begin to understand why particular choices have been made.

## Glossary

- Alliteration: repetition of sounds, usually the first letters of successive words, or words that are close together. Alliteration usually applies only to consonants.
- Anapest: *see under foot*.
- Assonance: repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds.

- Ballad: originally a song which tells a story, often involving dialogue. Characteristically, the storyteller's own feelings are not expressed.
- Caesura: strong pause in a line of verse, usually appearing in the middle of a line and marked with a comma, semi-colon, or a full stop.
- Couplet: pair of rhymed lines, often used as a way of rounding off a sonnet; hence the term 'closing couplet'.
- Dactyl: *see under* foot.
- Dialogue: spoken exchange between characters, usually in drama and fiction but also sometimes in poetry.
- Diction: writer's choice of words. Poetic diction might be described, for instance, as formal or informal, elevated or colloquial.
- Elegy: poem of loss, usually mourning the death of a public figure, or someone close to the poet.
- Ellipsis: omission of words from a sentence to achieve brevity and compression.
- Enjambment: the use of run-on lines in poetry. Instead of stopping or pausing at the end of a line of poetry, we have to carry on reading until we complete the meaning in a later line. The term comes from the French for 'striding'.
- Epic: a long narrative poem dealing with events on a grand scale, often with a hero above average in qualities and exploits.
- Epigram: witty, condensed expression. The closing couplet in some of Shakespeare's sonnets is often described as an epigram.
- Foot: a unit of meter with a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. In the examples that follow, a stressed syllable is indicated by '/', and an unstressed syllable by 'x': anapest: xx/; dactyl: /xx; iamb: x/; spondee: //; trochee: /x
- Heroic couplet: iambic pentameter lines rhyming in pairs, most commonly used for satiric or didactic poetry, and particularly favoured in the eighteenth century.
- Iamb: *see under* foot.
- Iambic pentameter: a line consisting of five iambs.
- Imagery: special use of language in a way that evokes sense impressions (usually visual). Many poetic images function as mental pictures that give shape and appeal to something otherwise vague and abstract; for example, 'yonder before us lie/Deserts of vast Eternity'. Simile and metaphor are two types of imagery.
- Metaphor: image in which one thing is substituted for another, or the quality of one object is identified with another. The sun, for Shakespeare, becomes 'the eye of heaven'.
- Meter: (from the Greek *metron*, 'measure') measurement of a line of poetry, including its length and its pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. There are different meter in poetry. Most sonnets, for example, written in English are divided into lines of ten syllables with five stresses – a measure known as pentameter (from the Greek *pente* for 'five'). The sonnet also tends to use a line (known as the iambic line) in which an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed one, as in this line: 'If I should die, think only this of me'. Most sonnets, then are

written in iambic pentameters.

- Narrative: the telling of a series of events (either true or fictitious). The person relating these events is the narrator. However, it is often more usual in poetry to refer to ‘the speaker’.
- Octave: group of eight lines of poetry, often forming the first part of a sonnet.
- Ode: a poem on a serious subject, usually written in an elevated formal style; often written to commemorate public events.
- Onomatopoeia: a word that seems to imitate the sound or sounds associated with the object or action, for example, ‘cuckoo’.
- Ottava rima: a poem in eight-line stanzas, rhyming a b a b a b c c.
- Personification: writing about something not human as if it were a person, for example ‘Busy old fool, unruly Sun,/Why dost thou thus,/Through windows and through curtains call onus?’.
- Poetic inversion: reversing the order of normal speech in order to make the words fit a particular rhythm, or rhyme, or both.
- Pun: double meaning or ambiguity in a word, often employed in a witty way. Puns are often associated with wordplay.
- Quatrain: group of four lines of poetry, usually rhymed.
- Refrain: a line or phrase repeated throughout a poem, sometimes with variations, often at the end of each stanza.
- Rhyme: echo of a similar sound, usually at the end of a line of poetry. Occasionally, internal rhymes can be found, as in: ‘Sister, my sister, O *fleet, sweet* swallow’.
- Rhyme scheme: pattern of rhymes established in a poem. The pattern of rhymes in a quatrain, for instance, might be ‘a b a b’ or ‘a b b a’.
- Rhythm: the pattern of beats or stresses in a line creating a sense of movement. Sestet: group of six lines of poetry, often forming the second part of a sonnet.
- Simile: image in which one thing is likened to another. The similarity is usually pointed out with the word ‘like’ or ‘as’: ‘My love is like a red, red rose’.
- Sonnet: fourteen iambic pentameter lines with varying rhyme schemes.
- Spondee: *see under foot*.
- Syllable: single unit of pronunciation. ‘Sun’ is one syllable; ‘sunshine’ is two syllables.
- Tercet: group of three lines in poetry, sometimes referred to as a triplet.
- Trochée: *see under foot*.
- Turn: distinctive movement of change in mood or thought or feeling. In the sonnet, the turn usually occurs between the octave and the sestet, though the closing couplet in Shakespeare’s sonnets often constitutes the turn.
- Villanelle: an intricate French verse form with some lines repeated, and only two rhyme sounds throughout the five three-line stanzas and the final four-line stanza.

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## Rhetorical Modes

Rhetorical modes are the ways we can effectively communicate through language.

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

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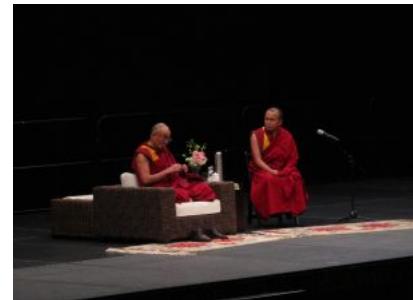


Figure. “Dalai Lama”



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## 34.

### Critique

In this chapter, you will develop your critical thinking and analysis skills through examining a critique. The chapter will also provide guiding questions to help you formulate the elements to include in a critique. The self-practice exercises will provide you opportunities to examine more in depth what critiquing entails, and you will have the opportunity to proceed through the stages to develop your own critique.

#### What is a Critique?

A **critique** is a written work critically analyzing or evaluating another piece of writing; also known as a review or critical response.

When you see the word *critique*, the first thing you may think of is *to criticize*. In actuality, critiques do not need to look only at the negative aspects of a source; they can also focus on the positive components or even have a mix of the positive and negative elements. They are **critical response** papers analyzing and evaluating an **original source**, such as the academic journal article you are being asked to use for this assignment.

#### Exercise 37.1

Read the following short critique, and then come up with a list of elements you believe make this a critique as opposed to an expository paper.

Vetter and Perlstein's work on terrorism and its future is an excellent basis for evaluating views and attitudes to terrorism before the tragic events of 9/11. Written in 1991, the book provides an objective (but more theoretical) view on what terrorism is, how it can be categorized, and to what ideology it can be linked. Perspectives on Terrorism is a multifaceted review of numerous factors that impact and influence the global development of terrorism; those studying sociology or criminal justice might find ample information regarding the ideological roots and typology of terrorism as a phenomenon and as a specific type of violent ideology that has gradually turned into a dominant force of political change.

Vetter and Perlstein (1991) begin their work with the words "it has almost become pro forma for writers on terrorism to begin by pointing out how hard it is to define the term terrorism." However, the authors do not waste their time trying to define what terrorism is; rather, they are trying to look at terrorism through the prism of its separate elements, and objectively evaluate the concept of public acceptability of terrorism as a notion. Trying to answer the two critical questions "why surrogate the war?" and "who sponsors terrorism?" Vetter and Perlstein (1991) evaluate terrorism as an unjustifiable method of violence for the sake of unachievable goals, tying the notion of terrorism to the notion of morality.

To define terrorism in its present form it is not enough to determine the roots and the consequences of particular terrorist act; nor is it enough to evaluate the roots and the social implications of particular behavioural characteristics beyond morality. On the contrary, it is essential to tie terrorism to particular political conditions, in which these terrorist acts take place. In other words, whether the specific political act is terrorist or non-terrorist depends on the thorough examination of the social factors beyond morality and law. In this context, even without an opportunity to find the most relevant definition of terrorism, the authors thoroughly analyze the most important factors and sociological perspectives of terrorism, including the notion of threat, violence, publicity, and fear.

Typology of terrorism is the integral component of our current understanding of what terrorism is, what form it may take, and how we can prepare ourselves to facing the challenges of terrorist threats. Vetter and Perlstein (1991) state that “finding similarities and differences among objects and events is the first step toward determining their composition, functions, and causes.” Trying to evaluate the usefulness of various theoretical perspectives in terrorism, the authors offer a detailed review of psychological, sociological, and political elements that form several different typologies of terrorism. For example, Vetter and Perlstein (1991) refer to the psychiatrist Frederick Hacker, who classifies terrorists into crazies, criminals, and crusaders. Later throughout the book, Vetter and Perlstein provide a detailed analysis of both the criminal and the crazy types of terrorists, paying special attention to who crusaders are and what role they play in the development and expansion of contemporary terrorist ideology. Vetter and Perlstein recognize that it is almost impossible to encounter an ideal type of terrorist, but the basic knowledge of terrorist typology may shed the light onto the motivation and psychological mechanisms that push criminals (and particularly crusaders) to committing the acts of political violence.

Perspectives on Terrorism pays special attention to the politics of terrorism, and the role, which ideology plays in the development of terrorist attitudes in society. “Violence or terrorism can be used both by those who seek to change or destroy the existing government or social order and those who seek to maintain the status quo” (Vetter & Perlstein, 1991). In other words, the authors suggest that political ideology is integrally linked to the notion of terrorism. With ideology being the central element of political change, it necessarily impacts the quality of the political authority within the state; as a result, the image of terrorism is gradually transformed into a critical triangle with political authority, power, and violence at its ends. In their book, Vetter and Perlstein (1991) use this triangle as the basis for analyzing the political assumptions, which are usually made in terms of terrorism, as well as the extent to which political authority may make violence (and as a result, terrorism) legally permissible. The long sociological theme of terrorism that is stretched from the very beginning to the very end of the book makes it particularly useful to those who seek the roots of terrorism in the distorted political ideology and blame the state as the source and the reason of terrorist violence.

**Reference:** Vetter, H.J. & Perlstein, G.R. (1991). [Perspectives on terrorism \(Contemporary issues in crime and justice\)](#). Pacific Grove, CA, USA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

#### What makes this a critique?

1. List three to five elements you think make this a critique.
2. Please share with a classmate.

### Critique Is Different from Expository Essay

A critique is different from an expository essay, which is a discussion revolving around a topic with multiple sources to support the discussion points. As you can see in Exercise 37.1, depending on the type of critique you are writing, your reference page could include one source only. However, as you may discuss topical ideas within the original source, you may also want to include secondary sources to which you can compare and contrast the original source’s ideas, but you need to always connect your discussion points back to the original source. Figure 37.1: Critiquing versus Other Essay Forms shows visual representations of what a critique structure could look in comparison to another essay, such as one that is expository or persuasive in purpose.

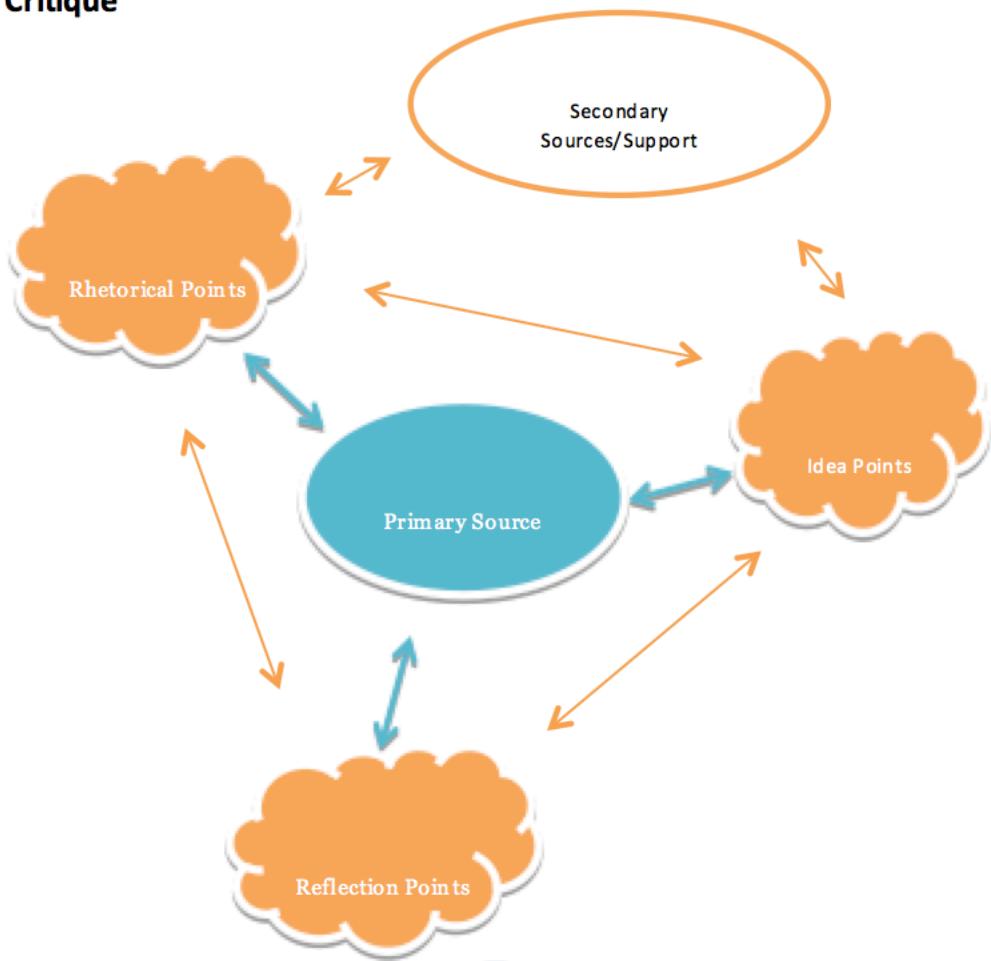
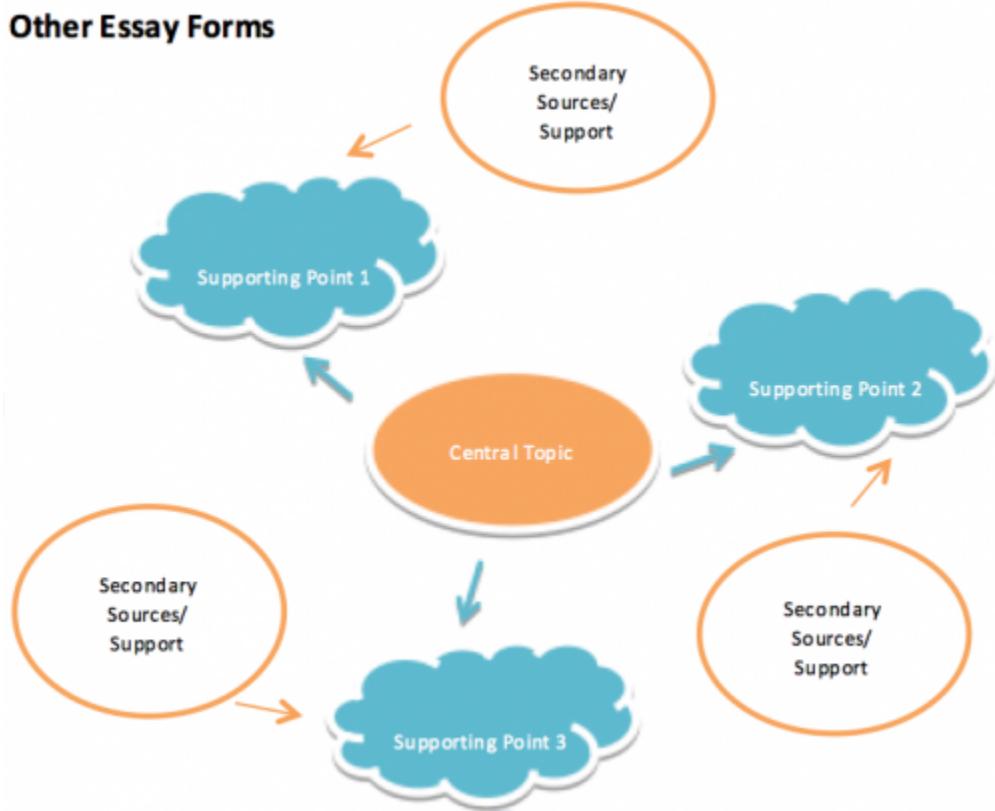
**Critique**

Figure 37.1

*Figure 37.2*

If you look at the mind map for the critique, you can see how all of the discussion points stem from and relate back to the original article and how all of the discussion points can be interconnected. Also, the bubble labelled Secondary Sources/Support shows you can integrate secondary sources to compare and contrast when discussing either rhetorical or idea points. In the second diagram, you can see that the supporting ideas relate to the central topic, but they are extensions of the topic each with their own supporting forms of evidence. There is less emphasis placed on synthesis of ideas, although this is something you can still do when composing this type of essay.

### The Purpose of Critiquing

In an academic environment, your instructors will expect you to demonstrate critical thinking skills that go beyond simply taking another person's ideas and spitting out facts. They will want you to show your ability to assess and analyze any type of information you use; they will also want to see that you have used sources to develop ideas of your own.

Critiquing, or critical analysis, demonstrates you are able to connect ideas, arrive at your own conclusions, and develop new directions for discussion. You are also showing you have strong background knowledge on the topic in order to provide feedback on another person's discussion on the issue.

## Elements of a Critique

Often people go online for to read reviews of services or products. They sometimes make personal choices based on those reviews, such as what movie to go to or which restaurant to eat at. When you ask for a recommendation, the person you are asking will usually give you a brief summary of the experience then break his or her opinion down into smaller aspects—good and bad. For example, imagine you want to visit a new restaurant, and you ask your friend to recommend a place. Here is a sample response:

There is an amazing Japanese restaurant called Mega Sushi at the corner of Main and 12th. The food, atmosphere, and service are great. The food is always excellent, and they have a lot of original creations or spins on traditional Japanese food, but it still tastes authentic. The ingredients are always incredibly fresh, and you never have to worry about ordering the sashimi. The decor is also very authentic and classic, and the entire place is incredibly clean.

The service is generally very good—they even bring you a free sample roll while you wait for your food—but it can be a little slow during the dinner rush because it is such a popular place. Also, the prices are a little high because an average roll costs \$15, but for the amazing food you get, it is totally worth it! I love this place!

When you break this example into sections, you can see the first and second sentences give the reviewer's general opinion of the restaurant; they also summarize the main components the reviewer will cover. The review is then broken into smaller categories or points.

Notice that not all the points covered are positive: while the food and atmosphere are good, the service has both positive and negative aspects but is overall good. Also, the prices are high, but the writer states that people who eat there get good value for their money. Providing a generalized description first, the reviewer introduced the topic to the audience; she then analyzed individual aspects or components of the experience with examples to help convince the audience of her perspective.

Not everyone may have the same positive experience, of course. What if it was someone's first time at this particular restaurant, and she arrived during the dinner rush feeling very hungry and had to wait a long time for a table? Not knowing how good the food is and that it is worth the wait, she may just leave, so her general impression of the restaurant would probably not be favourable. Whether the experience would be positive or negative would depend on an individual's personal experience and situation.

Any critique, no matter if it is of a book, an article, or a movie, needs to contain the following elements:

- A thesis: usually a general view of a source.
  - Example: In Smith's (2009) article, he effectively argues his case for the reinstatement of capital punishment in Canada.
- A summary: highlighting the main points presented.
  - This would be the same as if you were writing a summary of any source you read.

- Critiquing points: elements the reader (you) have a reaction to when reading the source.
  - You will decide on these points based on your reactions and personal preferences using the guiding questions for each of the forms below as suggestions.

## Getting Started on Your Critique

### Before You Begin Critiquing

As with any source you examine, you need to make sure you have a solid grasp on the ideas presented by the author. Before you start analyzing your source, it is helpful to compose a summary to confirm you understand what the source is all about and that you do not leave out any important points. Remember that if your audience does not have a strong understanding of the overall picture of the source, they may have difficulty following your critique.

Often what we share verbally when summarizing a source highlights the main points of our impression of the material; we capture all the necessary points, but we do so concisely. For Exercise 37.2, you will need to work with a partner to compose a succinct summary of your article.

#### Exercise 37.2

##### **Part A: Do individually**

Scan your article's abstract (if there is one), introduction, headings, topic sentences, and conclusion.

Read the article in its entirety. Briefly make note of any area you struggle with or have a reaction to. (This will help you later.)

Make notes on what you think the main ideas are.

Compose a short paragraph summarizing your article (75 to 100 words).

##### **Part B: Collaboration—Please complete with a classmate.**

1. Put your summary aside and do not refer to it for this next part.
2. *Verbally* summarize your article for your partner in 30 to 60 seconds.
3. Your partner will need to take very brief notes of the verbal summary you give.
4. Switch roles.

Once you have both summarized verbally and taken notes for each other, show the summary paragraph you wrote in Part A to your partner.

1. Read the summary paragraph and compare it to the notes you took from the verbal summary.
2. Prepare feedback based on the following questions:
  - What were the differences between the verbal and written summaries?

- Did the written summary contain anything unnecessary or miss anything important?
  - Which one was organized more logically?
  - Give both the notes and summary back to your partner, and read your own, asking for clarification if necessary.
3. Revise your summary, so you will have a composed paragraph you can insert into your critique later.
  4. Come up with a working thesis for your paper. What was your overall impression? (You may change or add to this later when you learn more about what to look for when critiquing.)

Later, you will need to decide on one of two formulas to follow when composing your critique. If you choose to use Formula 1, you will need to include an independent summary paragraph, which you have now already completed and may only require a little fine tuning. If you choose Formula 2, you will not include the summary as its own paragraph, but you will need to break it apart when you introduce the points you are going to discuss within the critique.

The following sections will discuss the different critiquing forms and what you can look for when deciding what points you would like to discuss in your critique.

## Critiquing Forms and Formulas

### Critiquing Forms

Again, critiquing does not mean you are looking only for the negative points in a source; you can also discuss elements you like or agree with in the article. Also, you may generally get a positive impression from the source but have some issues with some aspects for which you can provide constructive criticism—perhaps what the author could have done better, in your opinion, to make a stronger and more effective impact.

There are four critiquing forms on which you can structure your analysis of a source. These are:

1. Rhetorical
2. Ideas
3. Reflection
4. Blended

The critiquing elements you will be required to apply to each assignment will vary depending on your instructor's directions, the purpose of the assignment, and the writer (you).

#### **Guiding questions: rhetorical**

Focusing on the rhetorical elements when critiquing means you are looking at the construction elements of a source. Use the following questions as a reference point when you are going through your

article to provide you with some focus and help you generate ideas for your paper (not all may be relevant to your article).

- What is the author's purpose?
- For whom is the author writing? Who is the audience?
- What type of language does the author use? Technical? Straightforward? Too informal?
- How appropriate is the language, sentence structure, and complexity for the intended audience?
- What is the genre, and how has it impacted the writing style?
- How logical/reasonable is the argument?
- What kind of evidence does the author use to support? Is it reputable, relevant, or current, and is there enough?
- To what degree did the author engage or interest the reader in the topic?
- How much bias does the author show, or is the argument presenting multiple points of view?
- How convinced are you by the presentation of ideas?
- Is there anything the author could have done differently to convince you more completely?
- Is there anything about the technical writing style you did or did not like?
- How was the source organized? How may that affect the reader?

**A note of warning when using these questions:** you should not use more than two of these in your short critique. For this assignment, choose only one or two to develop thoroughly. If you include brief answers to all of the questions, you will have not have space to develop your ideas or show you really engaged with the content.

### Exercise 37.3

In Exercise 37.1, you read your article and were asked to make notations wherever you got caught up by something within the source. Now, look back at those notations, decide which if any relate to the rhetorical guiding questions above, and make brief notes of the relevant rhetorical points in the space below.

If none of your notations matched the questions, read the questions (and your article) again, and then try to answer the questions briefly. At this point you may identify more than two questions; later you will have the opportunity to assess which are your strongest points.

#### Guiding questions: ideas

**Ideas:** When discussing the ideas of a source, you are examining the topic presented in the source. You

explore how the author's ideas mesh with your own and state whether you agree or disagree; you are essentially joining the discussion on that topic.

You may find you agree with some parts of the discussion but not others, or you may completely agree or disagree, or you may think the author has great points but does not develop them adequately.

Also, you may want to provide differing points of view from other sources to show you have not just accepted what the first author wrote; you have explored the topic further and will present a thorough discussion in your own critique.

- On which points do I agree or disagree with the author? (Remember, you do not always have to only agree or disagree on all points)
- What new ideas has the author introduced on the topic? How has the author contributed to the field?
- What could the author have done differently to provide a stronger discussion?
- How narrow or broad was the author's discussion? Did the author consider multiple points of view? Is there anything the author overlooked?
- How do other experts approach a discussion on this topic?

#### Exercise 37.4

Just as you did in Exercise 37.3, look back to Exercise 37.1 where you made notations whenever you got caught up by something within the source. Decide which if any relate to the idea guiding questions above, and make brief notes of the relevant idea points in the space below.

If none of your notations matched the questions, read the questions (and your article) again and then try to answer the questions briefly. At this point you may identify more than two questions; later you will have the opportunity to assess which are your strongest points.

#### Guiding questions: reflection

**Reflection:** By providing a personal reflection on the source, you are being introspective and showing you have thought about how the source affects you personally and connects to your personal experiences, beliefs, and values. In this case, you can give personal observations and experiences as your own forms of supporting evidence; however, you do not want your paper to solely use this type of support because you need more factual evidence to convince your reader. Also, remember to check with your instructor if this is a form you are required to use.

- How does this source connect to your personal experiences or memories?
- What challenges does the source raise when you consider your own personal values and beliefs?
- How does the source confirm your personal values and beliefs?

- What new ideas or insight did the source raise for you?
- How did the source inspire you to do more research on the topic?

#### Exercise 37.5

Just as you did in Exercises 37.3 and 37.4, look back to Exercise 37.1 where you made notations whenever you got caught up by something within the source. Decide which if any relate to the reflection guiding questions above, and make brief notes of the relevant reflection points in the space below.

If none of your notations matched the questions, read the questions (and your article) again then try to answer the questions briefly. At this point you may identify more than two questions; later you will have the opportunity to assess which are your strongest points.

#### Guiding questions: blended

**Blended:** In a blended form, your critique pretty much evolves however you want it to. You can take certain elements from each of the three previous forms: whichever questions are the easiest for you to discuss and are maybe the most interesting for you.

This shows how paying attention to your reactions when you initially read the source is helpful; once you have made note of where and what you reacted to, you can go back each list of guiding questions and decide which best relate to each of your notations.

There are no guiding questions for the blended form because you mix and match the questions already provided in the earlier sections.

In a blended critique, you demonstrate an extremely high level of critical thinking ability because you are not only synthesize your ideas with external sources, you also connect personally to one source, external sources, *and* different forms or aspects of analyzing written works.

#### Exercise 37.6

Look back at the points you came up with in Exercises 37.3, 37.4, and 37.5. You now need to select the points—at least one from each category—that you feel you can discuss the most thoroughly.

#### Collaboration

With a classmate, share your points and how you would expand on them.

Ask your partner for any other ways they think you could expand on those points.

## Blended Critique: Two Formulas

Once you have chosen a source and used the guiding questions to help generate points to discuss in your critique, you will need to decide how to best organize your ideas. There are two formulas you can apply as a framework when organizing your critique ideas. Remember that although the formulas below show each section as an individual paragraph, you may actually need to create more than one paragraph to fully develop your ideas.

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### Formula 1

Organizing your critique following this model is fairly straightforward as there is not much overlap between the sections. You may want to choose this formula if you are feeling a little unsure of how to organize your ideas and prefer a more guided structure.

#### 1. Introduction

- Attention getter
- Background
- Thesis + author’s last name, publication date, and title of source
- Signposts (including that the next paragraph will be a summary)

#### 2. Summary

- Restate author’s name, publication date, and title of source (provides a citation for the paragraph).
- This needs to be brief and include only the points significant to your later discussion.
- If you include too much here, you may end up repeating yourself later.

#### 3. Rhetorical

- Give topic sentence explain this paragraph/section will cover rhetorical points
- State point
- Give explanations
- Give examples and make connections relating directly back to section(s) of original source + citations
- Provide concluding statement summarizing rhetorical element discussion

#### 4. Ideas

- Give topic sentence explain this paragraph/section will cover idea points
- State point

- Give explanations
- Give examples and make connections relating directly back to section(s) of original source + citations
- Provide concluding statement summarizing idea or topic element discussion

## 5. Reflection

- Give topic sentence explain this paragraph/section will cover reflection points
- State point
- Give explanations
- Give examples and make connections relating directly back to section(s) of original source + citations
- Provide concluding statement summarizing reflection element discussion

## 6. Conclusion

- Restate author’s last name, publication date, and source’s title
- Summarize your discussion points
- Restate your thesis

## **Formula 2**

This model is a little more challenging to stay organized and to not go off on a tangent when you are critiquing; however, it allows you to have much more freedom in how you piece your ideas together.

When you use this formula, it is important to remember to keep referring to the outline you created before writing and to thoroughly develop ideas by connecting one critiquing form to another.

This model differs from Formula 1 because the summary is briefly included in the introduction section, and the discussion points are not divided by critiquing points but rather by topic. That is, multiple critiquing forms are used to develop one topic point. Because this formula is a little more complicated to explain, an example outline is provided for you after the template.

### 1. Introduction

- Attention getter
- Thesis + author’s last name, publication date, and title of source
- Background (this includes the briefest of summaries of the source: one to two sentences only)
- Signposts

### 2. Point 1: A

- Choose one topic to focus on using the guiding questions (one of three forms)
- Give a topic sentence introducing the point
- Restate author’s name, publication date, and title of source (provides a citation for the paragraph)
- Develop point making connections relating directly back to section(s) of original source + citations
- Provide brief concluding sentence for paragraph

3. Point 1: B

- Give topic sentence explaining that this paragraph/section connects to or expands on previous paragraph (different form used in previous paragraph)
- Restate author’s name and publication date (provides a citation for the paragraph)
- Develop point making connections relating directly back to section(s) of original source + citations *and* to previous paragraph
- Provide concluding statement summarizing entire discussion of point 1

4. Point 2: A

- Choose one topic to focus on using the guiding questions (one of three forms)
- Give a topic sentence introducing the point
- Restate author’s name and publication date (provides a citation for the paragraph)
- Develop point making connections relating directly back to section(s) of original source + citations
- Provide brief concluding sentence for paragraph

5. Point 2: B

- Give topic sentence explaining this paragraph/section connects to or expands on previous paragraph (different form used in previous paragraph)
- Restate author’s name and publication date (provides a citation for the paragraph)
- Develop point making connections relating directly back to section(s) of original source + citations *and* to previous paragraph
- Provide concluding statement summarizing entire discussion of point 2

6. Conclusion

- Restate author’s last name, publication date, and source’s title
- Restate your thesis
- Summarize your discussion points

**Formula 2: example****1. Introduction**

- Attention getter
- Thesis + author’s last name, publication date, and title of source
- Background (this includes the briefest of summaries of the source: one-two sentences only)
- Signposts

**2. Point 1: Language + Audience (**Rhetorical**)**

- Restate author’s name, publication date, and title of source (provides a citation for the paragraph)
- Give a topic sentence introducing the point
- Develop and explain complexity of language + perhaps: the language is too difficult for the average reader—forcing audience to have to constantly look up words in dictionary
- Explain impact = distracting + annoying
- Use specific examples from source (with citations)

**3. Point 1: Language + Audience (**Reflection**)**

- Give topic sentence explaining this paragraph/section relates to previous paragraph
- Explain whether or not you are member of intended audience—know this from impact language had on you personally
- Had to look up words; give examples (with citations)
- Could not understand author’s point; give examples (with citations)
- Clearly not part of target audience
- Concluding statement summarizing point discussion from both paragraphs

**4. Point 2: Topic: Capital punishment (**Ideas**)**

- Give topic sentence explaining this paragraph/section will cover idea point
- State point
- Give explanations
- Give examples relating directly back to section(s) of original source

**5. Point 2: Topic: Capital punishment (**Reflection**)**

- Give topic sentence explaining this paragraph/section will cover reflection point in relation to your own point of view—maybe personal experience—and topic

sentence needs to connect this to previous paragraph

- State point
- Give explanations
- Give examples relating directly back to section(s) of original source
- Concluding statement summarizing point discussion from both paragraphs

## 6. Conclusion

- Restate author’s last name, publication date, and source’s title
- Summarize your discussion points
- Restate your thesis

Hopefully this example helps you to see how Formula 2 allows a lot more flexibility in organizing the discussion points. You can probably also see how easy it would be for the writer to get off topic. The key is to connect the ideas together. This formula definitely shows a greater complexity of thought development and synthesis of ideas, both of which your instructor will appreciate. However, you need to make sure you have a solid formal sentence outline before you begin the writing process, or you may confuse your reader too much for him or her to follow your development.

### Exercise 37.7

Choose one of the formulas above and integrate the points you came up with in Exercise 37.6. Narrow those points down—to three or four at most—to help you stay focused and develop those points (as opposed to just giving answers to many of the guiding questions without developing them).

Compose an informal topic outline following which formula above you have chosen to follow.

### Exercise 37.8

Now expand on the informal topic outline you created in Exercise 37.7. If you have chosen to use Formula 1, you can insert the summary you composed in Exercise 37.2. If you have chosen to use Formula 2, you will need to separate the summary you composed in Exercise 37.2 into topical discussion points for each paragraph. You will then use these separate points to provide context for each discussion point.

Remember to start integrating specific examples from your source. Make sure you note the page numbers for later when you need to add citations (you will learn this next week).

### Text Attributions

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## 35.

### Persuasion

#### The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

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

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



Figure 38.1

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

#### The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

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

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of claim
4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

## Creating an Introduction and Thesis

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

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

## Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

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

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

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

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

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

## Phrases of Concession

- although
- granted
- that
- of course
- still
- though
- yet

### Exercise 38.1

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

- Foreign policy
- Television and advertising
- Stereotypes and prejudice
- Gender roles and the workplace
- Driving and cell phones

### Collaboration

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

## Bias in Writing

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

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

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are

invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.

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

## The Use of *I* in Writing

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

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

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

Smoking is bad.

I think smoking is bad.

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

### Checklist 38.1 Developing Sound Arguments

Does my essay contain the following elements?

- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that is able to be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources

- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

## Fact and Opinion

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

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

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

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

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

### Exercise 38.2

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

**Exercise 38.3**

Using the evidence you provided in support of the three theses in Exercise 38.2, come up with at least one counterargument to each. Then write a concession statement, expressing the limits to each of your three arguments.

## Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

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

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

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

## Writing a Persuasive Essay

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

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

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

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

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

#### Exercise 38.4

Choose one of the topics you have been working on throughout this section. Use the thesis, evidence, opposing argument, and concessionary statement as the basis for writing a full persuasive essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, clear explanations of all the evidence you present, and a strong conclusion.

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## 36.

# Developing a Convincing Argument

## The Controversy

A **controversial topic** is one on which people have strong views.

Imagine the type of discussion that can become really heated, usually when the subject is something people are passionate about. But a person who is passionate about a particular issue does not necessarily mean they recognize the merits of the other view (although that often happens); it just means that the person has collected evidence (from a variety of sources) and synthesized those ideas to arrive at a particular point of view.



Figure 39.1

When you are trying to choose your topic for your persuasive paper, it is easier if you choose a topic about which you feel very strongly. You probably have realized by this point that when you are writing, it is a lot easier to write about a topic you already have some background knowledge on, and something you are extremely interested in. This helps to engage you and keep you interested in the writing process.

No matter the topic you eventually decide to discuss, there are a few things you need to think about before you begin the writing process.

You will need to make sure your subject is:

- **Significant.** Is a discussion of this topic one that has the potential to contribute to a field of study? Will it make an impact? This does not mean every discussion has to change lives, but it needs to be something relatively important. For example, a significant topic would be to convince your reader that eating at fast-food restaurants is detrimental to people's cardiovascular system. A less significant discussion would be if you were to try to convince your reader why one fast-food restaurant is better than another.
- **Singular.** This means you need to focus on one subject. Using the fast-food restaurant example, if you were to focus on both the effects on the cardiovascular *and* endocrine system, the discussion would lose that singular focus and there would be too much for you to cover.
- **Specific.** Similar to the point above, your topic needs to be narrow enough to allow for you to really discuss the topic within the essay parameters (i.e., word count). Many writers are afraid of getting too specific because they feel they will run out of things to say. If you develop the idea completely and give thorough explanations and plenty of examples, the specificity

should not be a problem.

- **Supportable.** Does evidence for what you want to discuss actually exist? There is probably some form of evidence out there even for the most obscure topics or points of view. However, you need to remember you should use credible sources. Someone's opinions posted on a blog about why one fast-food restaurant is the best does not count as credible support for your ideas.

#### Exercise 39.1

**In previous chapters, you learned strategies for generating and narrowing a topic for a research paper. Review the list of general topics below. Also, think about which topics you feel very strongly. Freewrite for five minutes on one of the topics below. Remember, you will need to focus your ideas to a manageable size for a five- to seven-page research paper.**

You are also welcome to choose another topic; you may want to double-check with your instructor if it is suitable. It is important to remember that you want your paper to be unique and stand out from others'; writing on overly common topics may not help with this. Since we have already discussed *the death penalty* as a form of punishment in the last chapter and already developed ideas, you should probably not choose this topic because your instructor wants you to demonstrate you have applied the process of critical thinking on another topic.

**Identify the key words you will use in the next self-practice exercise to preliminary research to narrow down your topic.**

Some appropriate controversial topics are:

- Illegal immigration in Canada
- Bias in the media
- The role of religion in educational systems
- The possibility of life in outer space
- Modern day slavery around the world, ie. Human trafficking
- Foreign policy
- Television and advertising
- Stereotypes and prejudice
- Gender roles and the workplace
- Driving and cell phones

## Formulating a Research Question

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper, but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put

together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer.

To determine your research question, review the freewriting you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. (You may wish to use the 5WH strategy to help you formulate questions.) Include simple, factual questions and more complex questions that 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 that main question.

Here is an example of research questions a student used to focus research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. He will need to research his sub questions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

**Topic:** low-carbohydrate diets

**Main question:** are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

**Subquestions:**

- Who can benefit from following a low carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

### Exercise 39.2

Using the ideas you came up with in Exercise 39.1, create a research question you would like to find the answer to through your research and persuasive paper development. This is something you will use to help guide you in your writing and to check back with to make sure you are answering that question along the way.

#### Collaboration

Share your questions with a partner. Describe your topic and point of view and ask your partner if that question connects to that topic and point of view.

### Exercise 39.3

Working with the topic you have identified, use the research skills you learned in previous chapters to locate approximately five potentially useful print or electronic sources of information about the topic.

Create a list that includes the following:

- One subject-specific periodicals database likely to include relevant articles on your topic
- Two articles about your topic written for an educated general audience
- At least one article about your topic written for an audience with specialized knowledge

Organize your list of resources into primary and secondary sources. What makes them either primary or secondary? Pick one primary source and one secondary source and write a sentence or two summarizing the information that each provides.

Then answer these questions:

- What type of primary source did you choose? Who wrote it, and why? Do you think this source provides accurate information, or is it biased in some way?
- Where did the information in the secondary source come from? Was the author citing an initial study, piece of literature, or work of art? Where could you find the primary source?

### Exercise 39.4

With the topic from Exercise 39.1 and the preliminary research you conducted in Exercise 3, develop a working thesis and scratch outline.

## How to Be Really Convincing

Sometimes it can be very challenging to convince someone of your ideas and that your point of view is valid. If your reader has strong contrary views or has had emotional experiences in the past connected to that topic, your job in persuading will be more challenging. However, if you consider your audience and tone, you will be better able to predict possible objections your reader may have to your argument and address those accordingly.

It will also help you make recognize how much and what kind of background information you need to provide your reader with context for your discussion.

### Checklist 39.1 Who Is My Audience?

- Who are my readers?
- What do they already know on the subject?
- What are they likely to be interested in?
- How impartial or biased are they?
- Is the subject one that may challenge their ethical or moral beliefs?
- What values do we share?
- What types of evidence will be most effective?

### Exercise 39.5

With a partner, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each example. Look at the credibility, tone, appropriateness to audience, and completeness of the ideas presented.

#### **Collaboration**

With your partner, discuss how you could make each of these arguments stronger.

## Dialectics

A strong persuasive essay will respectfully identify and discuss perspectives of the same topic. When you do this, you are presenting a well-rounded and complete discussion to your reader that shows you have critically thought about the topic and have been selective in choosing your points. As a result, there is a higher probability that you will convince your reader. The process of looking at multiple sides of a topic is called **dialectics**.

Dialectics is the act of using logical reasoning to combine, juxtapose, or synthesize opposing ideas to arrive at a strong conclusion.

### The Components of Dialectics

To begin the dialectic process, you first need to come up with an idea of what topic will be discussed; this is the **thesis** behind the discussion.

Once you have determined your thesis, through various methods (the easiest being discussion with someone else), you will explore opposing sides to the topic, eventually discovering at least one

**antithesis.** Combining those two perspectives, you can then make your own conclusions. Maybe this process will result in you standing by the original thesis, or maybe the antithesis is incredibly convincing and you will switch sides of the argument, or maybe you still believe the original thesis but accept there are other conditions that have credibility as well.

This end result is called the **synthesis:** the blending of ideas. Essentially, the process would look like this:



Figure 39.2

Considering both your thesis and the discovered antithetical perspectives will help you to arrive at a wider view of a topic: one that has more credibility. Looking back to the persuasive essay samples you read in [38. Persuasion](#) and discussed in **Exercise 38.5**, consider to what degree the authors acknowledged opposing views.

- How did they justify their opinions?
- Consider how integrating dialectics into each of those arguments to a greater degree would have strengthened their points of view, ultimately making their arguments more convincing.

#### Exercise 39.6

Based on the thesis “Governments use capital punishment as an effective tool for deterring violent crime,” answer the following questions and complete the table. What is your stance on this statement? To what extent do you agree/disagree?

Complete the table considering the thesis statement given above.

First come up with ideas supporting the point of view you described in early questions.

Then, challenge yourself to come up with ideas (you may need to do a little bit of research) that would support the other side of the discussion.

Supporting the statement:

Against the statement:

**Collaboration**

Discuss your answers with a partner. Do you both have the same ideas, or can you add to your list based on what your partner has come up with.

After coming up with and considering the other perspective, has your point of view changed at all?

Do you still stick by your same point of view 100 percent? Or do you concede that there are valid points from the other perspective?

### Exercise 39.7

Using both the scratch outline and the working thesis you created in Exercise 40.4, create a table like the one you used in Exercise 39.6, only filling in the side with information that supports your thesis. Once you have created that table with your thesis given, share your table and thesis with a classmate.

**Collaborate:** Conduct a dialectic discussion on your topic and possible for and against the working thesis you presented. Add any points to your original table.

Remember to be aware of the process of synthesis you have gone through. Did your original point of view change at all? Is there anything you can make concessions on being valid? This may impact your thesis.

Using one or two of the opposing ideas your partner helped you come up with, revise your scratch outline from Exercise 39.4.

## Organizing Your Ideas

### Creating an Introduction and Thesis

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

### Re-evaluate Your Working Thesis

A careful analysis of your notes will help you re-evaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your ideas changed based on what you read. Even if your sources generally confirmed your preliminary thinking on the topic, it is still a good idea to tweak the wording of your thesis to incorporate the specific details you learned from research.

Read this revised thesis.

Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best

option for everyone who works to lose weight or improve their health.

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

#### Exercise 39.8

On a sheet of paper, use your working thesis and the revised outline from Exercise 7 and list the types of evidence you might use in support of that thesis. Essentially, you are expanding your outline to include more source information.

## Synthesizing and Organizing Information

By now, your thinking on your topic is taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing information—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing information is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign! It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

### Synthesizing Information

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Organize your notes with headings that correspond to points and subpoints you came up with through dialectics and compiled in your outline, which you presented to your instructor. As you proceed, you might identify some more important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some points are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the sources are reliable and whether the connections between ideas are clear.

Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and

subquestions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on sticky notes or type and highlight them within an electronic document.

Here is a rough outline for a paper.

**Topic:** Low-carbohydrate diets

**Main question:** Are low carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

**Thesis:** Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

**Main points:**

- How do low-carb diets work?
  - Low carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
  - The Atkins diet was created in 1972 by Richard Atkins, but it didn’t gain wide-scale attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a low-carb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
  - They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue to eat protein and fats while dieting.
- What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet?
  - Eating foods high in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the two.

Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the relationship between different facts from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

## Plan How to Organize Your Paper

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor’s requirements. For instance, if you are

asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose.

The purpose of the following paper is primarily to persuade. With that in mind, look at the following outline.

- I. Introduction
  - A. Background
  - B. Thesis
- II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets
  - A. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition guidelines
  - B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines
    - 1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin
    - 2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity
- III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss
  - A. Short-term effectiveness for weight-loss
  - B. Long-term effectiveness not established
- IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes
  - A. Cholesterol and heart disease
  - B. Blood pressure
  - C. Diabetes
- V. Conclusion

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VIII

## **Creating Presentations: Sharing Your Ideas**



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## 37.

# Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation

Good communication is a multisensory experience. Children first learning how to read often gravitate toward books with engaging pictures. As adults, we graduate to denser books without pictures, yet we still visualize ideas to help us understand the text. Advertisers favor visual media—television, magazines, and billboards—because they are the best way to hook an audience. Websites rely on colour, graphics, icons, and a clear system of visual organization to engage Internet surfers.

Bringing visuals into a presentation adds colour, literally and figuratively. There is an art to doing it well. This section covers how to use different kinds of visual aids effectively.

## Using Visual Aids: The Basics

Good writers make conscious choices. They understand their purpose and audience. Every decision they make on the page, from organizing an essay to choosing a word with just the right connotations, is made with their purpose and audience in mind.

The same principle applies to visual communication. As a presenter, you choose the following:

- When to show images or video for maximum impact
- Which images will best produce the effect you want
- When to present information using a table, chart, or other graphic
- How much text to include in slides or informational graphics
- How to organize graphics so they present information clearly

Your goal is to use visual media to support and enhance your presentation. At the same time, you must make sure these media do not distract your audience or interfere with getting your point across. Your ideas, not your visuals, should be the focus.

As you develop the visual side of your presentation, you will follow a process much like the process you follow when you write. You will brainstorm ideas, form an organizational plan, develop drafts, and then refine and edit your work. The following sections provide guidelines to help you make good decisions throughout the process.

## What Makes Visual Aids Effective?

To help you get a sense of what makes visual media work, think about what does not work. Try to recall occasions when you have witnessed the following visual media failures:

- Websites crammed with so many images, flashing phrases, and clashing colours that they are almost unreadable
- Assembly instructions with illustrations or diagrams that are impossible to follow
- Photographs that are obviously (and badly) altered with photo-editing software
- Distracting typos or other errors in signs, advertisements, or headlines
- Tables, charts, or graphs with tiny, dense text or missing labels

In each case, the problem is that the media creator did not think carefully enough about the purpose and audience. The purpose of images, colour, or flashing text on a website is to attract attention. Overusing these elements defeats the purpose because the viewer may become overwhelmed or distracted. Tables, charts, and graphs are intended to simplify complex information, but without clear labels and legible text, they will confuse the audience.

In contrast, effective visual elements are chosen or created with the purpose and audience in mind. Although a photo shoot for a magazine article might result in dozens of images, editors choose those few that work best with the article. Web designers and video game creators have an audience test their products before they are released, to ensure that people will understand how to use them. Understanding the function of different visual aids will help you use them with purpose.

## Types of Visual Aids

Visual aids fall into two main categories—images and informational graphics. Images include photographs, illustrations and clip art, and video footage. Informational graphics include tables, charts, bar graphs, and line graphs.

These visual aids serve two purposes: to add emotional impact to your presentation and to organize information more clearly. With that in mind, read to find out how specific types of visual aids achieve those purposes.

### Photographs

A striking photograph can capture your audience's attention far more successfully than words can. Consider including photographs at the beginning or end of your presentation to emphasize your main ideas or to accompany a particularly important point in the body of your presentation. Remember that, as with other types of graphics, less is often more. Two or three well-chosen photographs are more effective than a dozen mediocre ones.

When you choose photographs, ask yourself these questions:

- What purpose does this image serve? Will it surprise the audience? Will it provoke a strong emotional response? Does it support an important point?
- Will this photograph be more effective if shown with only a caption, or does it need additional text?
- Will the audience understand what is happening in the photograph? Is the meaning immediately evident, or does the photo need some context?
- Would editing the image make it more effective? Consider using image-editing software to crop the photo, change the brightness, or make other cosmetic changes. (Do not go overboard, though. A slightly imperfect but authentic image is preferable to one that has been obviously altered.)

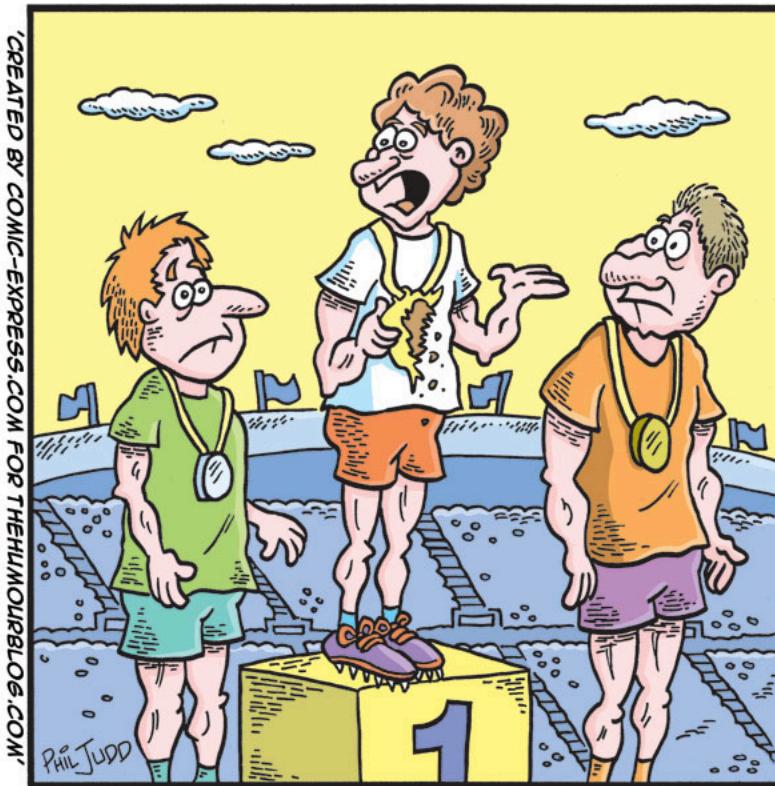
To illustrate the sense of helplessness people felt in the midst of tragedy, a student could use a photograph that shows fear, weariness, or defeat on the face of the photograph's subject.



Figure 40.1

## Illustrations

Illustrations, such as editorial or political cartoons, serve much the same purpose as photographs. Because an illustration does not capture a moment in time the way a photo does, it may have less impact. However, depending on your topic and the effect you want to achieve, illustrations can still be very useful. Use the same criteria for choosing photographs to help you choose illustrations.



**"Talk about budget cuts, mines  
made of chocolate!"**

Figure 40.2

**TIP:** The style of an illustration or photograph affects viewers just as the content does. Keep this in mind if you are working with the stock images available in office software programs. Many of these images have a comical tone. This may be fine for some topics—for instance, a presentation on television shows for children. However, if you need to project a more serious tone, make sure you choose images to suit that purpose. Many free (or reasonably priced) image banks are available online.

## Video Footage

Even more than photographs, video footage can create a sense of immediacy, especially if your video includes sound. Showing a brief video clip can help your audience feel as if they are present at an important event, connect with a person being interviewed, or better understand a process. Again, ask yourself the following questions to ensure you are using the footage well:

- What purpose does this video serve? (Never rely on video clips just to fill time.)
- How much footage should be shown to achieve your purpose?
- What will need to be explained, before or after showing the video, to ensure that your audience understands its significance?
- Will it be necessary to edit the video to stay within time requirements or to focus on the most

important parts?

## Tables

Informational graphics, such as tables, charts, and graphs, do not provoke the same response that images do. Nevertheless, these graphics can have a powerful impact. Their primary purpose is to organize and simplify information.

Tables are effective when you must classify information and organize it in categories. Tables are an especially good choice when you are presenting qualitative data that are not strictly numerical. Table 14.1 “Example of Qualitative Data Table” was created for a presentation discussing the subprime mortgage crisis. It presents information about people who have held powerful positions both in the government and at one of the investment banking firms involved in the subprime mortgage market.

**Table 40.1 Example of Qualitative Data Table<sup>1</sup>**

Name	Role(s) at Goldman Sachs [Years Active]	Government Role(s) [Years Active]
Henry Paulson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief operation officer [1994-98]</li> <li>• Chief executive officer [1998-2006]</li> </ul>	US secretary of treasury [2006-9]
Robert Rubin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vice chairman and co-chief operating officer [1987-90]</li> <li>• Co-chairman and co-senior partner [1990-92]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistant to the president for economic policy and director, National Economic Council [1993-95]</li> <li>• US secretary of the treasury [1995-99]</li> </ul>
Stephen Friedman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chairman [1990-92]</li> <li>• Chairman [1992-94]</li> </ul>	Assistant to the president for economic policy and director, National Economic Council [2002-05]

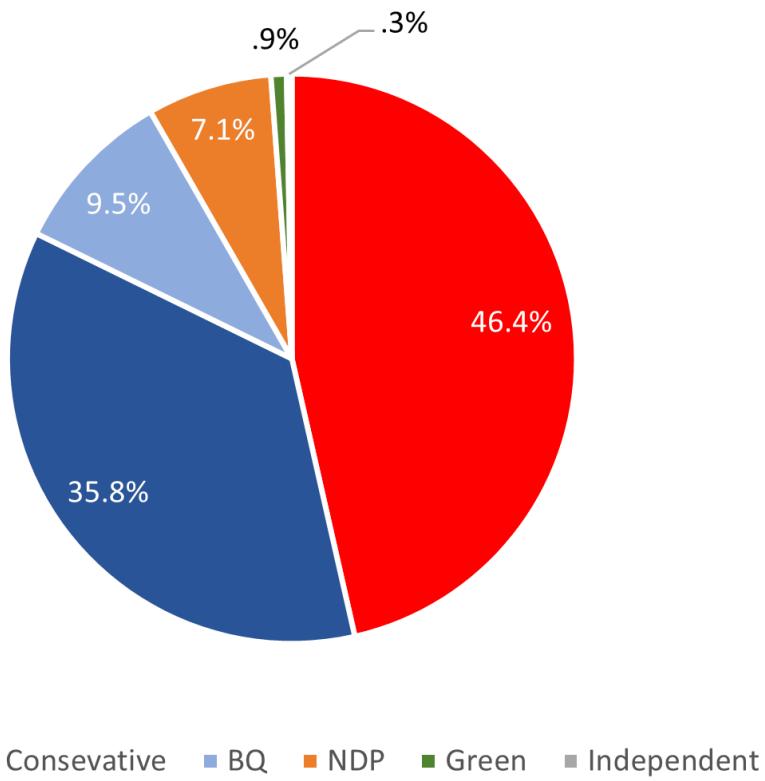
**TIP:** If you are working with numerical information, consider whether a pie chart, bar graph, or line graph might be an effective way to present the content. A table can help you organize numerical information, but it is not the most effective way to emphasize contrasting data or to show changes over time.

1. Data sources: <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/%3Bkw=%5B3351,11459%5D>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/business/19gold.html>; [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/henry\\_m\\_jr\\_paulson/index.html?inline=nyt-per](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/henry_m_jr_paulson/index.html?inline=nyt-per); [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/robert\\_e\\_rubin/index.html?inline=nyt-per](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/robert_e_rubin/index.html?inline=nyt-per), <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/13/us/man-in-the-news-economic-adviser-from-other-side-of-the-deficit-stephen-friedman.html>; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/342086.stm>.

## Pie Charts

Pie charts are useful for showing numerical information in percentages. For example, you can use a pie chart to represent election results. The following pie chart shows the percentage of seats held by each political party in the House of Commons after the 2019 Federal Election out of a total of 338 seats.

**2019 Canadian Federal Election Results**



*Figure 40.3 Liberals won 46.4% of the seats, Conservatives won 35.8% of the seats, the Bloc Québécois won 9.5% the seats, the NDP won 7.1% of the seats, the Greens won 0.9% if the seats, and independents won 0.3% of the seats.*

## Bar Graphs

Bar graphs work well when you want to show similarities and differences in numerical data. Horizontal or vertical bars help viewers compare data from different groups, different time periods, and so forth. For instance, the bar graph in Figure 40.4 allows the viewer to compare data on the five countries that have won the most Olympic medals since the modern games began in 1924: Norway, the United States, the former Soviet Union, Germany, and Austria. Bar graphs can effectively show trends or patterns in data as well.

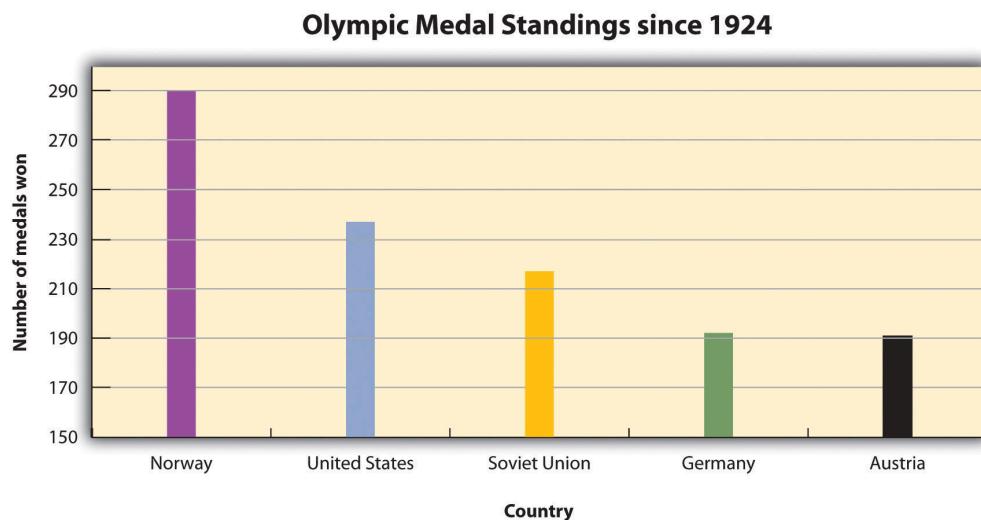


Figure 40.4

## Line Graphs

Like bar graphs, line graphs show trends in data. Line graphs are usually used to show trends in data over time. For example, the line graph in Figure 40.5 shows changes in the Dow Jones Industrial Average—an economic index based on trading information about thirty large, US-based public companies. This graph shows where the Dow closed at the end of each business day over a period of five days.

**Down Jones Industrial Average at Market Closing**

Figure 40.5

### Exercise 40.1

Complete the following steps on your own sheet of paper.

- Analyze the two different types of visual aids: images and informational graphics. Identify at least

two places in your presentation where you might incorporate visual aids.

2. Evaluate the purpose of the visual aid. Does it create emotional impact, or does it organize information? Is the visual effective?
3. Determine whether you will be able to create the visual aid yourself or will need to find it.

## Creating Original Visual Aids

You will include original visual aids in your presentation to add interest, present complex information or data more clearly, or appeal to your audience's emotions. You may wish to create some visual aids by hand—for instance, by mounting photographs on poster board for display. More likely, however, you will use computer-generated graphics.

Computer-generated visual aids are easy to create once you learn how to use certain office software. They also offer greater versatility. You can print hard copies and display them large or include them in a handout for your audience. Or, if you are working with presentation software, you can simply insert the graphics in your slides.

Regardless of how you proceed, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Create visual aids with purpose.** Think carefully about how they will enhance your message, and choose a form that is appropriate for your content.
- **Strive for quality.** You do not need the skills of a professional photographer or designer, but do take time to make sure your visual aids are neat, attractive, and legible. Proofread for errors, too.

## Using Software to Create Visual Aids

You can use standard office software to create simple graphics easily. The following guidelines describe how to work with word-processing software and presentation software.

### Working with Photographs

Most personal computers come equipped with some basic image-editing software, and many people choose to purchase more advanced programs as well. You can upload photographs from a digital camera (or in some cases, a cell phone) or scan and upload printed photographs. The images can then be edited and incorporated into your presentation. Be sure to save all of your images in one folder for easy access.

### Creating Tables

To create a table within a word-processing document consult your software program's help feature or

an online tutorial. Once you have created the table, you can edit and make any additional changes. Be sure that the table has no more than six to seven rows or columns because you do not want to compromise the size of the text or the readability. Aligning with precision will help your table look less crowded. Also, the row and column titles should spell out their contents.

## Creating Graphs

Pie charts and bar and line graphs can also be created using standard office software. Although you can create these graphics within a document, you will need to work with both your word-processing application and your spreadsheet application to do so. The graph should visually explain the data using colours, titles, and labels. The use of colour will help the audience distinguish information; however, avoid colours that are hard on the eyes, such as lime green or hot pink. The title should clearly state what the graph explains. Lastly, avoid using acronyms in the titles and other labels.

## Creating Graphics in an Electronic Presentation

If you plan to work only with hard copy graphics during your presentation, you may choose to create them as word-processing documents. However, if you are using presentation software, you will need to choose one of the following options:

- Create your graphics using the presentation software program.
- Create your graphics within another program and import them.

Standard office presentation software allows you to create informational graphics in much the same way you would create them within a word-processing application. Keep the formatting palette, a menu option that allows you to customize the graphic, open while you use the software. The formatting menu provides options for inserting other types of graphics, such as pictures and video. You may insert pictures from an image bank available within the program, or insert images or video from your own desktop files. Shape your use of multimedia in accordance with the message your presentation is trying to convey, the purpose, and your audience.

## Creating Visual Aids by Hand

Most of the time, using computer-generated graphics is more efficient than creating them by hand. Using office software programs helps give your graphics a polished appearance while also teaching you skills that are useful in a variety of jobs. However, it may make sense to use hand-created visual aids in some cases—for instance, when showing a 3-D model would be effective. If you follow this route, be sure to devote extra time to making sure your visual aids are neat, legible, and professional.

Flip charts are inexpensive and quick visual aids used during face-to-face presentations. The flip chart can be prepared before, as well as during, the presentation. Each sheet of paper should contain one theme, idea, or sketch and must be penned in large letters to be seen by audience members farthest away from the speaker.

## Writing Captions

Any media you incorporate should include a caption or other explanatory text. A caption is a brief, one-to two-sentence description or explanation of a visual image. Make sure your captions are clear, accurate, and to the point. Use full sentences when you write them.

Captions should always be used with photographs, and in some cases, they can be useful for clarifying informational graphics, which represent qualitative data visually. However, informational graphics may not require a caption if the title and labels are sufficiently clear. For other visual media, such as video footage, providing explanatory text before or after the footage will suffice. The important thing is to make sure you always include some explanation of the media.

### Exercise 40.2

In this exercise, you will begin to develop visual aids for your presentation. Complete the steps in this exercise—and enjoy the chance to be creative. Working with visuals can be a pleasant way to take a break from the demands of writing.

1. Revisit the ideas you developed in Exercise 40.1. Choose at least two ideas that you can create. (**Note:** If you are using software to develop a slideshow presentation, count this as one of your self-created visual aids. Include at least one other self-created visual aid, such as an original photograph, within your slideshow.)
2. Get creative! Take your photographs, construct a 3-D model, create informational graphics, or work on your presentation slides. Develop good working drafts.
3. After you have completed drafts of your visual aids, set them aside for a while. Then revisit them with a critical eye. First, check any text included with the graphic. Make sure your facts are correct, your words are clear and concise, and your language is free of errors.
4. Next, evaluate how well your aids work visually. Are they large enough to be seen and read from a distance? Are captions and labels easy to find? Are photographs of reasonably high quality? Ask someone else for feedback, too.
5. Begin making any needed changes. As you proceed through the rest of this section, continue to revisit your work to improve it as needed.

### Collaboration

Please share the first version of your visual aids with a classmate. Examine what they have produced. On a separate piece of paper, note both the elements that catch your attention and those that would benefit from clarification. Return and compare notes.

## Testing and Evaluating Visual Aids

Regardless of how you create your visual aids, be sure to test-drive them before you deliver your presentation. Edit and proofread them, and if possible, show them to someone who can give you objective feedback. Use the following checklist.

#### Checklist 40.1 Visual Aid Evaluation Checklist

- Visual aids are clearly integrated with the content of the presentation
- Photographs and illustrations suit the overall tone of the presentation
- Images and text are large and clear enough for the viewer to see or read
- Images are shown with explanatory text or a caption
- Informational graphics include clear, easy-to-read labels and headings
- Text within informational graphics is easy to read (Watch out for wordiness and crowded text or a font that is too small and hard to read.)
- Formatting choices (colour, different fonts, etc.) organize information effectively
- Any text within graphics is free of errors
- Hyperlinks within slides function properly
- Display text for hyperlinks is concise and informative (Never paste a link into a slide without modifying the display text.)

## Using Existing Visual Media

Depending on your topic, you may be able to find images and other graphics you can use instead of creating your own. For instance, you might use photographs from a reputable news source or informational graphics created by a government agency. If you plan to use visual aids created by others, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Set a purpose before you begin your search.** You will search more efficiently if you start with a general idea of what you are looking for—a line graph of unemployment rates for the past twelve months, for example, or a video clip of the most recent State of the Union address.
- **Filter out visual aids that are not relevant.** You may come across eye-catching graphics and be tempted to use them even if they are only loosely related to your topic, simply because they are attention getting. Resist the temptation. If the graphic is not clearly connected to your point, it does not belong in your presentation.
- **Read carefully.** In addition to reading labels, headings, and captions, read any text that accompanies the visual. Make sure you understand the visual in its original context. For informational graphics, make sure you understand exactly what information is being represented. (This may seem obvious, but it is easy to misread graphic information. Take the time to examine it carefully.)
- **Evaluate sources carefully and record source information.** When you look for visual media to complement your presentation, you are conducting research. Apply the same standards you used for your research paper. Choose reliable sources, such as reputable news organizations, government and nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Verify

data in additional sources. Finally, be sure to document all source information as you proceed.

## Searching Efficiently for Visual Media

You will probably find it most efficient to use the Internet to search for visual aids. Many students begin by typing keywords into a search engine to locate related images. However, this search technique is not necessarily efficient, for several reasons:

- It often pulls up hundreds or even thousands of images, which may be only loosely related to your search terms.
- It can sometimes be difficult to understand the image in its original context.
- It can be hard to find copyright information about how you may use the image.

A more efficient strategy is to identify a few sources that are likely to have what you are looking for, and then search within those sites. For instance, if you need a table showing average life expectancy in different countries, you might begin with the website of the World Health Organization. If you hope to find images related to current events, news publications are an obvious choice. The Library of Congress website includes many media related to American history, culture, and politics.

Searching this way has the following advantages:

- You will often find what you are looking for faster because you are not wasting time scrolling through many irrelevant results.
- If you have chosen your sources well, you can be reasonably certain that you are getting accurate, up-to-date information.
- Images and informational graphics produced by reputable sources are likely to be high quality—easy to read and well designed.

If you do choose to use a search engine to help you locate visual media, make sure you use it wisely. Begin with a clear idea of what you are looking for. Use the advanced search settings to narrow your search. When you locate a relevant image, do not download it immediately. Read the page or site to make sure you understand the image in context. Finally, read the site's copyright or terms of use policy—usually found at the bottom of the home page—to make sure you may use the material.

If you are unable to find what you are looking for on the Internet consider using print sources of visual media. You may choose to mount these for display or scan them and incorporate the files into an electronic presentation. (Scanning printed pages may lower the quality of the image. However, if you are skilled at using photo-editing software, you may be able to improve the quality of the scanned image.)

## Inserting Hyperlinks in an Electronic Presentation

If you are working with images, audio, or video footage available online, you may wish to insert a link

within your presentation. Then, during your presentation, you can simply click the link to open the website in a separate window and toggle between windows to return to your presentation slides.

To insert a hyperlink within your presentation, click on insert in the toolbar and then select hyperlink from the menu. Doing so will open a dialogue box where you can paste your link and modify the accompanying display text shown on your slide.

## Copyright and Fair Use

Before you download (or scan) any visual media, make sure you have the right to use it. Most websites state their copyright and terms of use policy on their home page. In general, you may not use other people's visual media for any commercial purpose without contacting the copyright holder to obtain permission and pay any specified fees.

Copyright restrictions are somewhat more ambiguous when you wish to download visual media for educational uses. Some educational uses of copyrighted materials are generally considered fair use—meaning that it is legally and ethically acceptable to use the material in your work. However, do not assume that because you are using the media for an educational purpose, you are automatically in the clear. Make sure your work meets the guidelines in the following checklist. If it does, you can be reasonably confident that it would be considered fair use in a court of law and always give credit to the source.

### Checklist 40.2 Media Fair Use Checklist

- You are using the media for educational purposes only.
- You will make the work available only for a short period and to a limited audience. For instance, showing a copyrighted image in a classroom presentation is acceptable. Posting a presentation with copyrighted images online is problematic. In addition, avoid any uses that would allow other people to easily access and reproduce the work.
- You have used only as much of the work as needed for your purposes. For video and audio footage, limit your use to no more than 10 percent of the media—five minutes of an hour-long television show, for example. Image use is harder to quantify, but you should avoid using many images from the same source.
- You are using the media to support your own ideas, not replace them. Your use should include some commentary or place the media in context. It should be a supporting player in your presentation—not the star of the show.
- You have obtained the material legally. Purchase the media if necessary rather than using illegally pirated material.
- Your use of the media will not affect the copyright holder or benefit you financially.

By following these guidelines, you are respecting the copyright holder's right to control the distribution of the work and to profit from it.

## Crediting Sources

As you conduct your research, make sure you document sources as you proceed. Follow the guidelines when you download images, video, or other media from the Internet or capture media from other sources. Keep track of where you accessed the media and where you can find additional information about it. You may also provide a references page at the end of the presentation to cite not only media and images but also the information in the text of your presentation.

Write captions or other explanatory text for visual media created by others, just as you would for media you created. Doing so helps keep your audience informed. It also helps ensure that you are following fair use guidelines by presenting the media with your commentary, interpretation, or analysis. In your caption or elsewhere in your presentation, note the source of any media you did not create yourself. You do not need to provide a full bibliographical citation, but do give credit where it is due.

### Exercise 40.3

In this exercise, you will locate visual aids created by others and continue developing the work you began earlier. Complete these steps.

1. Revisit the ideas you developed in Exercise 1. Choose at least two ideas for which it would make more sense to find the visual aid than to create it yourself.
2. Use the search tips provided in this section to locate at least two visual aids from reputable sources that you can use. Prepare them for your presentation by adding clarifying text as needed. Be sure to credit your source.
3. Incorporate the visual aids you created in Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 into your presentation. This may involve preparing physical copies for display or inserting graphic files into an electronic presentation.
4. Take some time now to review how you will integrate the visual and verbal components of your presentation.
  - If you are working with presentation software, refine your slides. Make sure the visual approach is consistent and suits your topic. Give your text a final proofread.
  - If you are not using presentation software, review the annotated outline you created in Exercise 1. Update it as needed to reflect your current plan. Also, determine how you will physically set up your visual aids.

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## 38.

# Giving a Presentation

Public speaking can be stressful. In fact, some researchers have found that a large percentage of people surveyed rate public speaking as their number one fear. Most people feel at least a little bit nervous at the prospect of public speaking.

In this section, you will learn strategies for becoming a confident, effective speaker.

## What Makes a Speaker Effective?

Think about times you have been part of the audience for a speech, lecture, or other presentation. You have probably noticed how certain traits and mannerisms work to engage you and make the experience enjoyable. Effective speakers project confidence and interest in both their audience and their subject matter. They present ideas clearly and come across as relaxed but in control.



Figure 41.1

In contrast, less effective speakers may seem anxious or, worse, apathetic. They may be difficult to hear or understand, or their body language may distract from their message. They have trouble making a connection with their audience. This can happen even when the speaker knows his or her material and has prepared effective visual aids.

In both cases, two factors contribute to your overall impression of the speaker: voice and body language. The following sections discuss specific points to focus on.

## Finding Your Voice

Most people do not think much about how their voices come across in everyday conversations. Talking to other people feels natural. Unfortunately, speaking in public does not, and that can affect your voice. For instance, many people talk faster when they give presentations, because they are nervous and want to finish quickly. In addition, some traits that do not matter too much in ordinary conversation, such as a tendency to speak quietly, can be a problem when speaking to a group. Think about the characteristics discussed in the following section and how your own voice might come across.

### Resonance

One quality of a good speaking voice is resonance, meaning strength, depth, and force. This word is related to the word *resonate*. Resonant speech begins at the speaker's vocal cords and resonates

throughout the upper body. The speaker does not simply use his or her mouth to form words, but instead projects from the lungs and chest. (That is why having a cold can make it hard to speak clearly.)

Some people happen to have powerful, resonant voices. But even if your voice is naturally softer or higher pitched, you can improve it with practice.

- Take a few deep breaths before you begin rehearsing.
- Hum a few times, gradually lowering the pitch so that you feel the vibration not only in your throat but also in your chest and diaphragm.
- Try to be conscious of that vibration and of your breathing while you speak. You may not feel the vibration as intensely, but you should feel your speech resonate in your upper body, and you should feel as though you are breathing easily.
- Keep practicing until it feels natural.

## Enunciation

Enunciation refers to how clearly you articulate words while speaking. Try to pronounce words as clearly and accurately as you can, enunciating each syllable. Avoid mumbling or slurring words. As you rehearse your presentation, practice speaking a little more slowly and deliberately. Ask someone you know to give you feedback.

## Volume

Volume is simply how loudly or softly you speak. Shyness, nervousness, or overenthusiasm can cause people to speak too softly or too loudly, which may make the audience feel frustrated or put off. Here are some tips for managing volume effectively:

- Afraid of being too loud, many people speak too quietly. As a rule, aim to use a slightly louder volume for public speaking than you use in conversation.
- Consider whether you might be an exception to the rule. If you know you tend to be loud, you might be better off using your normal voice or dialing back a bit.
- Think about volume in relation to content. Main points should usually be delivered with more volume and force. However, lowering your voice at crucial points can also help draw in your audience or emphasize serious content.

## Pitch

Pitch refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is. The overall pitch of people's voices varies among individuals. We also naturally vary our pitch when speaking. For instance, our pitch gets higher when we ask a question and often when we express excitement. It often gets lower when we give a command or want to convey seriousness.

A voice that does not vary in pitch sounds monotonous, like a musician playing the same note repeatedly. Keep these tips in mind to manage pitch:

- Pitch, like volume, should vary with your content. Evaluate your voice to make sure you are not speaking at the same pitch throughout your presentation.
- It is fine to raise your pitch slightly at the end of a sentence when you ask a question. However, some speakers do this for every sentence, and as a result, they come across as tentative and unsure. Notice places where your pitch rises, and make sure the change is appropriate to the content.
- Lower your pitch when you want to convey authority. But do not overdo it. Questions should sound different from statements and commands.
- Chances are, your overall pitch falls within a typical range. However, if your voice is very high or low, consciously try to lower or raise it slightly.

## Pace

Pace is the speed or rate at which you speak. Speaking too fast makes it hard for an audience to follow the presentation. The audience may become impatient.

Many less experienced speakers tend to talk faster when giving a presentation because they are nervous, want to get the presentation over with, or fear that they will run out of time. If you find yourself rushing during your rehearsals, try these strategies:

- Take a few deep breaths before you speak. Make sure you are not forgetting to breathe during your presentation.
- Identify places where a brief, strategic pause is appropriate—for instance, when transitioning from one main point to the next. Build these pauses into your presentation.
- If you still find yourself rushing, you may need to edit your presentation content to ensure that you stay within the allotted time.

If, on the other hand, your pace seems sluggish, you will need to liven things up. A slow pace may stem from uncertainty about your content. If that is the case, additional practice should help you. It also helps to break down how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation and then make sure you are adhering to your plan.

**TIP:** Pace affects not only your physical presentation but also the point of view; slowing down the presentation may allow your audience to further comprehend and consider your topic. Pace may also refer to the rate at which PowerPoint slides appear. If either the slide or the animation on the slide automatically appears, make sure the audience has adequate time to read the information or view the animation before the presentation continues.

## Tone

Tone is the emotion you convey when speaking—excitement, annoyance, nervousness, lightheartedness, and so forth. Various factors, such as volume, pitch, and body language, affect how your tone comes across to your audience.

Before you begin rehearsing your presentation, think about what tone is appropriate for the content. Should you sound forceful, concerned, or matter-of-fact? Are there places in your presentation where a more humorous or more serious tone is appropriate? Think about the tone you should project, and practice setting that tone.

#### Exercise 41.1

1. Set up a microphone to record yourself. (You may use a webcam if you wish.) For this exercise, assess yourself on your verbal delivery only, not your body language.)
2. Rehearse and record your presentation.
3. Replay the recording and assess yourself using the following criteria: resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine which areas are strengths and which areas you need to improve.
4. If you wish, ask another person to evaluate your presentation.

## The Power of Body Language

The nonverbal content of a presentation is just as important as the verbal delivery. A person's body language—eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and movement—communicates a powerful message to an audience before any words are spoken.

People interpret and respond to each other's body language instinctively. When you talk to someone, you notice whether the other person is leaning forward or hanging back, nodding in agreement or disagreement, looking at you attentively or looking away. If your listener slouches, fidgets, or stares into space, you interpret these nonverbal cues as signs of discomfort or boredom. In everyday conversations, people often communicate through body language without giving it much conscious thought. Mastering this aspect of communication is a little more challenging, however, when you are giving a presentation. As a speaker, you are onstage. It is not easy to see yourself as your audience sees you.

Think about times you have been part of a speaker's audience. You have probably seen some presenters who seemed to own the room, projecting confidence and energy and easily connecting with the audience. Other presenters may have come across as nervous, gloomy, or disengaged. How did body language make a difference?

Three factors work together powerfully to convey a nonverbal message: eye contact, posture, and movement.

## Eye Contact and Facial Expressions

“Maintain eye contact” is a common piece of public-speaking advice—so common it may sound elementary and clichéd. Why is that simple piece of advice so hard to follow?

Maintaining eye contact may not be as simple as it sounds. In everyday conversation, people establish eye contact but then look away from time to time, because staring into someone’s eyes continuously feels uncomfortably intense. Two or three people conversing can establish a comfortable pattern of eye contact. But how do you manage that when you are addressing a group?

The trick is to focus on one person at a time. Zero in on one person, make eye contact, and maintain it just long enough to establish a connection. (A few seconds will suffice.) Then move on. This way, you connect with your audience, one person at a time. As you proceed, you may find that some people hold your gaze and others look away quickly. That is fine, as long as you connect with people in different parts of the room.

Pay attention to your facial expressions as well. If you have thought about how you want to convey emotion during different parts of your presentation, you are probably already monitoring your facial expressions as you rehearse. Be aware that the pressure of presenting can make your expression serious or tense without your realizing it.

**TIP:** If you are speaking to a very large group, it may be difficult to make eye contact with each individual. Instead, focus on a smaller group of persons or one row of people at time. Look in their direction for a few seconds and then shift your gaze to another small group in the room.

## Posture

While eye contact establishes a connection with your audience, your posture establishes your confidence. Stand straight and tall with your head held high to project confidence and authority. Slouching or drooping, on the other hand, conveys timidity, uncertainty, or lack of interest in your own presentation.

It will not seem natural, but practice your posture in front of a mirror. Take a deep breath and let it out. Stand upright and imagine a straight line running from your shoulders to your hips to your feet. Rock back and forth slightly on the balls of your feet until your weight feels balanced. You should not be leaning forward, backward, or to either side. Let your arms and hands hang loosely at your sides, relaxed but not limp. Then lift your chin slightly and look into your own eyes. Do you feel more confident?

You might not just yet. In fact, you may feel overly self-conscious or downright silly. In time, however, maintaining good posture will come more naturally, and it will improve your effectiveness as a speaker.

**TIP:** Nervousness affects posture. When feeling tense, people often hunch up their shoulders without realizing it. (Doing so just makes them feel even tenser and may inhibit breathing, which can affect your delivery.) As you rehearse, relax your shoulders so they are not hunched forward or pushed back unnaturally.

far. Stand straight but not rigid. Do not try to suck in your stomach or push out your chest unnaturally. You do not need to stand like a military officer, just a more confident version of yourself.

## Movement and Gestures

The final piece of body language that helps tie your presentation together is your use of gestures and movement. A speaker who barely moves may come across as wooden or lacking energy and emotion. Excessive movement and gestures, on the other hand, are distracting. Strive for balance.

A little movement can do a lot to help you connect with your audience and add energy to your presentation. Try stepping forward toward your audience at key moments where you really want to establish that personal connection. Consider where you might use gestures such as pointing, holding up your hand, or moving your hands for emphasis. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets or clasping them in front of or behind you.

### Exercise 41.2

In this exercise, present the same oral presentation from Exercise 41.1, but this time, evaluate your body language.

1. Set up a video camera to record yourself, or ask someone else to evaluate you.
2. Rehearse and, if applicable, record your presentation.
3. Replay the recording and assess yourself (or have your companion assess you) on the following criteria: eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine in which areas you have strength and in which areas you need to improve.

## Rehearsing Your Presentation and Making Final Preparations

Practice is essential if you want your presentation to be effective. Speaking in front of a group is a complicated task because there are so many components to stay on top of—your words, your visual aids, your voice, and your body language. If you are new to public speaking, the task can feel like juggling eggs while riding a unicycle. With experience, it gets easier, but even experienced speakers benefit from practice.

Take the time to rehearse your presentation more than once. Each time you go through it, pick another element to refine. For instance, once you are comfortable with the overall verbal content, work on integrating your visuals. Then focus on your vocal delivery and your body language. Multiple practice sessions will help you integrate all of these components into a smooth, effective presentation.

Practice in front of another person (or a small group) at least once. Practicing with a test audience will help you grow accustomed to interacting with other people as you talk, and it will give you a chance to get feedback from someone else's perspective. Your audience can help you identify areas to improve.

Just as important as identifying areas for improvement, your audience can encourage you not to be too hard on yourself. When preparing for an oral presentation, many people are their own worst critics. They are hyperconscious of any flaws in their presentation, real or imagined. A test audience can provide honest feedback from a neutral observer who can provide support and constructive critique.

## Managing Your Environment

Part of being a good presenter is managing your environment effectively. Your environment may be the space, the sound levels, and any tools or equipment you will use. Take these factors into account as you rehearse. Consider the following questions:

- Will you have enough space to move around in? Consider whether you might need to rearrange chairs or tables in the room in advance.
- Do you have enough space to display your visual aids? If you are using slides, where will you project the images?
- Will the lighting in the room need to be adjusted for your presentation? If so, where are the light switches located? How are window coverings opened or closed?
- Will your audience be able to hear you? Does the environment have any distracting noises, such as heating or cooling vents, outside traffic, or noisy equipment or machines? If so, how can you minimize the problem? Will you need a microphone?
- Do you have access to any technical equipment you need, such as a laptop computer, a projector, or a CD or DVD player? Are electrical outlets conveniently placed and functional?

You may not be able to control every aspect of the environment to your liking. However, by thinking ahead, you can make the best of the space you have to work in. If you have a chance to rehearse in that environment, do so.

## Engaging Your Audience: Planning a Question-and-Answer Session

Rehearsing your presentation will help you feel confident and in control. The most effective presenters do not simply rehearse the content they will deliver. They also think about how they will interact with their audience and respond effectively to audience input.

An effective way to interact is to plan a brief question-and-answer (Q&A) session to follow your presentation. Set aside a few minutes of your allotted time to address audience questions. Plan ahead. Try to anticipate what questions your audience might have, so you can be prepared to answer them. You probably will not have enough time to cover everything you know about the topic in your presentation. A Q&A session can give you an opportunity to fill in any gaps for your audience.

Finally, accept that interacting with your audience means going with the flow and giving up a little of

your control. If someone asks a question you were not anticipating and cannot answer, simply admit you do not know and make a note to follow up.

#### Exercise 41.3

If you have not yet rehearsed in front of an audience, now is the time. Ask a peer (or a small group of people) to observe your presentation, provide a question-and-answer session, and have your audience provide feedback on the following:

- The overall quality of your content (clarity, organization, level of detail)
- The effectiveness of your visual aids
- Your vocal delivery (resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone)
- The effectiveness of your body language (eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures)
- Your response to questions the audience posed during the question-and-answer session

Use your audience's feedback to make any final adjustments to your presentation. For example, could you clarify your presentation to reduce the number of questions—or enhance the quality of the questions—the audience asked during the question-and-answer session?

### Coping with Public-Speaking Anxiety

The tips in this chapter should help you reduce any nervousness you may feel about public speaking. Although most people are a little anxious about talking to a group, the task usually becomes less intimidating with experience and practice.

Preparation and practice are the best defenses against public-speaking anxiety. If you have made a serious effort to prepare and rehearse, you can be confident that your efforts will pay off. If you still feel shaky, try the following strategies:

- Take care of your health. In the days leading up to your presentation, make sure you get plenty of sleep and eat right. Exercise to help cope with tension. Avoid caffeine if it makes you jittery.
- Use relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, and stretching to help you feel calm and focused on the day of your presentation.
- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. Image yourself succeeding. It will make you feel more confident.
- Put things into perspective. What is the worst that could happen if anything went wrong? Many people have given less-than-perfect presentations and lived to tell about it! Of course, you should make your best effort, but if something does go wrong, you can use it as a learning experience.

- Understand that you may not be able to overcome your nervousness completely. Feeling a little anxious can help you stay alert and focused. If you do not feel confident, try to “fake it until you make it.”

#### Exercise 41.4

To practice overcoming public-speaking anxiety, ask a family member, coworker, or peer to view a rehearsal of the presentation. Schedule the rehearsal at a time that works for you, and plan to get plenty of rest the night before. After the presentation, answer the following questions.

1. When did you feel most nervous during the presentation? Make a note on your outline of the most nervous moments. Next to this note, add one strategy that may ease your anxiety. For example, you could add a reminder to relax, such as, “Take a deep breath here!” or a few words of encouragement, such as, “You are doing a great job!”
2. Ask your rehearsal audience for feedback on which moments of the presentation seemed most nerve wrecking for you. What nonverbal or verbal clues indicated to your audience that you were nervous? Which were most distracting to the audience? Make a note of these clues and practice the presentation again; be aware of how you show your anxiety and try to lessen these distractions.

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## **Group Communication, Teamwork, and Leadership**



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## 39.

### What is a Group?

Most humans form self-identities through their communication with others, and much of that interaction occurs in a group context.

A group may be defined as three or more individuals who affiliate, interact, or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context. Group communication may be defined as the exchange of information with those who are alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically. Group members may be known by their symbols, such as patches and insignia on a military uniform. They may be known by their use of specialized language or jargon. Group members may also be known by their proximity, as in gated communities. Regardless of how the group defines itself, and regardless of the extent to which its borders are porous or permeable, a group recognizes itself as a group. Humans naturally make groups a part of their context or environment.



Figure 42.1

### Primary and Secondary Groups

There are fundamentally two types of groups, primary and secondary. The hierarchy denotes the degree to which the group(s) meet your interpersonal needs. Primary groups meet most, if not all, of one's needs. Groups that meet some, but not all, needs are called secondary groups. Secondary groups often include work groups, where the goal is to complete a task or solve a problem. Secondary groups may meet your need for professional acceptance and celebrate your success, but they may not meet your need for understanding and sharing on a personal level.

### If Two's Company and Three's a Crowd, What Is a Group?

This old cliché refers to the human tendency to form pairs. Pairing is the most basic form of relationship formation; it applies to childhood best friends, college roommates, romantic couples, business partners, and many other dyads (two-person relationships). A group, by definition, includes at least three people. We can categorize groups in terms of their size and complexity.

The larger the group grows, the more likely it is to subdivide. Analysis of these smaller, or microgroups, is increasingly a point of study as the internet allows individuals to join people of similar mind or habit to share virtually anything across time and distance. A microgroup is a small, independent group that has a link, affiliation, or association with a larger group. With each additional group member the number of possible interactions increases (Harris & Sherblom, 1999; McLean, 2003).

Small groups normally contain between three and eight people. One person may involve intrapersonal communication, while two may constitute interpersonal communication, and both may be present within a group communication context.

Group norms are customs, standards, and behavioural expectations that emerge as a group forms. If you post an update every day on your Facebook page and your friends stop by to post on your wall and comment, not posting for a week will violate a group norm. They will wonder if you are sick or in the hospital where you have no access to a computer to keep them updated. If, however, you only post once a week, the group will come to naturally expect your customary post. Norms involve expectations that are self and group imposed and that often arise as groups form and develop.

If there are more than eight members, it becomes a challenge to have equal participation, where everyone has a chance to speak, listen, and respond. Some will dominate, others will recede, and smaller groups will form. Finding a natural balance within a group can also be a challenge. Small groups need to have enough members to generate a rich and stimulating exchange of ideas, information, and interaction, but not so many people that what each brings cannot be shared (Galanes, Adams, & Brilhart, 2000).

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## 40.

### **Group Life Cycles and Member Roles**

Groups are dynamic systems in constant change. Groups grow together and eventually come apart. People join groups and others leave. This dynamic changes and transforms the very nature of the group. Those who are in leadership positions may ascend or descend the leadership hierarchy as the needs of the group, and other circumstances, change over time.

Group socialization involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships.

### **Group Life Cycle Patterns**

In order to better understand group development and its life cycle, many researchers have described the universal stages and phases of groups. While there are modern interpretations of these stages, most draw from the model proposed by Bruce Tuckman (1965). This model, shown in Figure 43.1, specifies the usual order of the phases of group development as a cycle, and allows us to predict several stages we can anticipate as we join a new group.

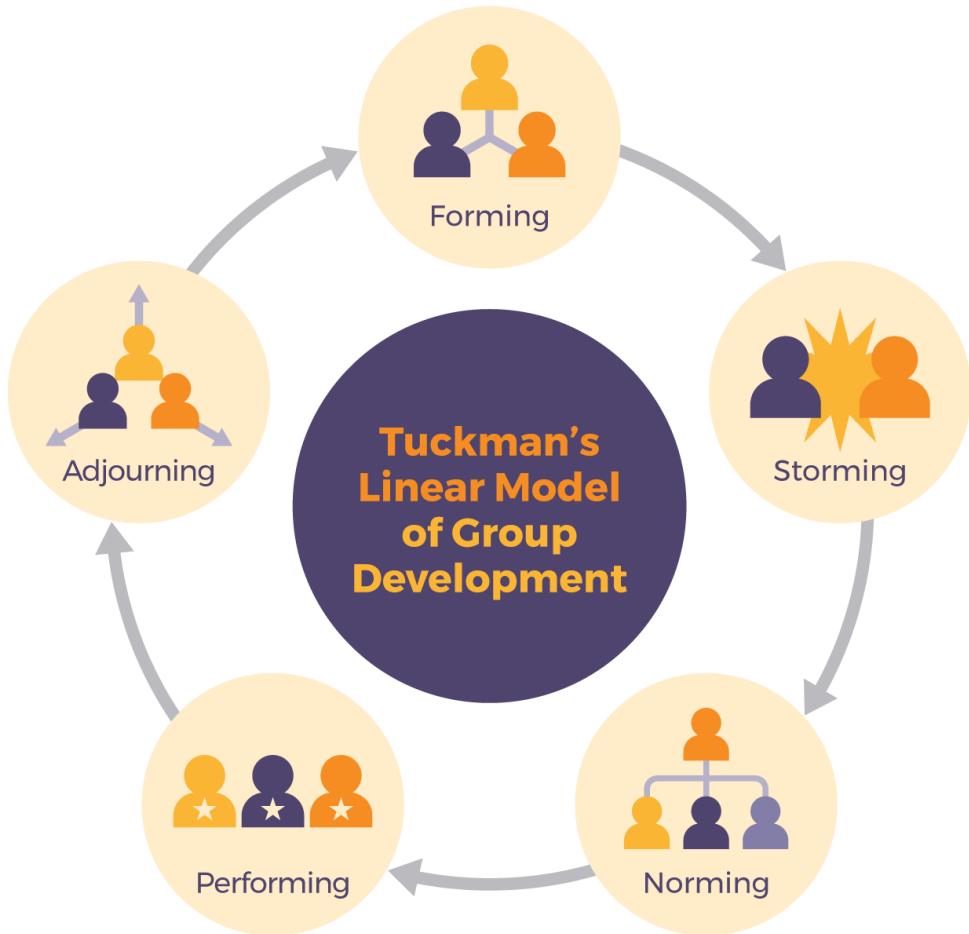


Figure 43.1. Tuckman's Linear Model of group development.

Tuckman (1965) describes the five stages as follows:

- **Forming:** Members come together, learn about each other, and determine the purpose of the group.
- **Storming:** Members engage in more direct communication and get to know each other. Conflicts between group members will often arise during this stage.
- **Norming:** Members establish spoken or unspoken rules about how they communicate and work. Status, rank, and roles in the group are established.
- **Performing:** Members fulfill their purpose and reach their goal.
- **Adjourning:** Members leave the group

Tuckman begins with the **forming stage** as the initiation of group formation. This stage is also called the **orientation stage** because individual group members come to know each other.

If you don't know someone very well, it is easy to offend. Each group member brings to the group a set of experiences, combined with education and a self-concept. You won't be able to read this information on a nametag, but instead you will only come to know it through time and interaction.

Since the possibility of overlapping and competing viewpoints and perspectives exists, the group will experience a **storming stage**, a time of struggles as the members themselves sort out their differences. There may be more than one way to solve the problem or task at hand, and some group members may prefer one strategy over another.

The **norming stage** is where the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behaviour and interaction. Who speaks first? Who takes notes? Who is creative, who is visual, and who is detail-oriented? We are not simply a list of job functions, and in the dynamic marketplace of today's business environment you will often find that people have talents and skills well beyond their "official" role or task. Drawing on these strengths can make the group more effective.

The norming stage is marked by less division and more collaboration. The level of anxiety associated with interaction is generally reduced, making for a more positive work climate that promotes listening.

Ultimately, the purpose of a work group is performance, and the preceding stages lead to the **performing stage**, in which the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals. To facilitate performance, group members can't skip the initiation of getting to know each other or the sorting out of roles and norms, but they can try to focus on performance with clear expectations from the moment the group is formed.

In the **adjourning stage**, members leave the group. The group may cease to exist or it may be transformed with new members and a new set of goals. Like life, the group process is normal, and mixed emotions are to be expected.

**Watch the following 2 minute video *Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing: Bruce Tuckman's Team Stages Model Explained***



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/provincialenglishabe/?p=150>

## Life Cycle of Member Roles

Just as groups go through a life cycle when they form and eventually adjourn, so the group members fulfill different roles during this life cycle. These roles, proposed by Richard Moreland and John Levine (1982), are summarized in Table 43.1.

**Table 43.1 Life Cycle of Member Roles**

<b>Potential Member</b>	Curiosity and interest
<b>New Member</b>	Joined the group but still an outsider and unknown
<b>Full Member</b>	Knows the “rules” and is looked to for leadership
<b>Divergent Member</b>	Focuses on differences
<b>Marginal Member</b>	No longer involved
<b>Ex-Member</b>	No longer considered a member

## Positive and Negative Member Roles

If someone in your group always makes everyone laugh, that can be a distinct asset when the news is less than positive. At times when you have to get work done, however, the class clown may become a distraction. Notions of positive and negative will often depend on the context when discussing groups. Table 11.2 “Positive Roles” and Table 11.3 “Negative Roles” list both positive and negative roles people sometimes play in a group setting (Beene & Sheets, 1948; McLean, 2005).

**Table 43.2 Positive Roles**

<b>Initiator-Coordinator</b>	Suggests new ideas of new ways of looking at the problem
<b>Elaborator</b>	Builds on ideas and provides examples
<b>Coordinator</b>	Brings ideas, information, and suggestions together
<b>Evaluator-Critic</b>	Evaluates ideas and provides constructive criticism
<b>Recorder</b>	Records ideas, examples, suggestions, and critiques

**Table 43.3 Negative Roles**

<b>Dominator</b>	Dominates discussion, not allowing others to take their turn
<b>Recognition Seeker</b>	Relates discussion to their accomplishments; seeks attention
<b>Special-Interest Pleader</b>	Relates discussion to special interest or personal agenda
<b>Blocker</b>	Blocks attempts at consensus consistently
<b>Joker or Clown</b>	Seeks attention through humour and distracts group members

Now that you've reviewed positive and negative group member roles, you may examine another perspective. While some personality traits and behaviours may negatively influence groups, some traits can be positive or negative depending on the context.

Just as the class clown can have a positive effect in lifting spirits or a negative effect in distracting members, a dominator may be exactly what is needed for quick action. An emergency physician doesn't have time to ask all the group members in the emergency unit how they feel about a course of action; instead, a self-directed approach based on training and experience may be necessary. In contrast, a teacher may ask students their opinions about a change in the format of class; in this situation, the role of coordinator or elaborator is more appropriate than that of dominator.

The group is together because they have a purpose or goal, and normally they are capable of more than any one individual member could be on their own, so it would be inefficient to hinder that progress. But a blocker, who cuts off collaboration, does just that. If a group member interrupts another and presents a viewpoint or information that suggests a different course of action, the point may be well taken and serve the collaborative process. But if that same group member repeatedly engages in blocking behaviour, then the behaviour becomes a problem. A skilled business communicator will learn to recognize the difference, even when positive and negative situations and roles aren't completely clear.

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## 41.

### Group Problem Solving

The problem-solving process involves thoughts, discussions, actions, and decisions that occur from the first consideration of a problematic situation to the goal. The problems that groups face are varied, but some common problems include budgeting funds, raising funds, planning events, addressing customer or citizen complaints, creating or adapting products or services to fit needs, supporting members, and raising awareness about issues or causes.

While there are many ways to approach a problem, the American educational philosopher John Dewey's reflective thinking sequence has stood the test of time. This seven-step process (Adler, 1996) has produced positive results and serves as a handy organizational structure. If you are member of a group that needs to solve a problem and don't know where to start, consider the seven simple steps illustrated in Figure 44.1 below:

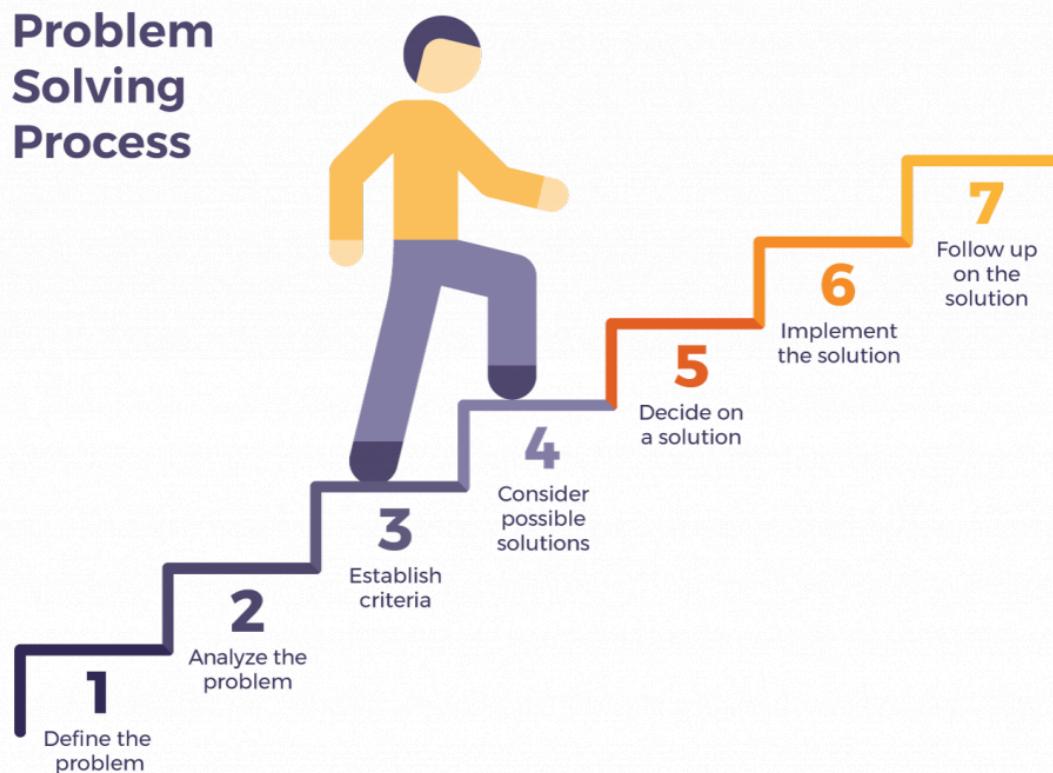


Figure 44.1. Problem-solving process.

## Define the Problem

If you don't know what the problem is, how do you know you can solve it? Defining the problem allows the group to set boundaries of what the problem is and what it is not and to begin to formalize a description or definition of the scope, size, or extent of the challenge the group will address. A problem that is too broadly defined can overwhelm the group. If the problem is too narrowly defined, important information will be missed or ignored.

In the following example, there is a web-based company called *Favourites* that needs to increase its customer base and ultimately sales. A problem-solving group has been formed, and they start by formulating a working definition of the problem.

### Example problems:

**Too broad:** “Sales are off, our numbers are down, and we need more customers.”

**More precise:** “Sales have been slipping incrementally for six of the past nine months and are significantly lower than a seasonally adjusted comparison to last year. Overall, this loss represents a 4.5 percent reduction in sales from the same time last year. However, when we break it down by product category, sales of our nonedible products have seen a modest but steady increase, while sales of edibles account for the drop off and we need to halt the decline.”

## Analyze the Problem

The problem-solving group Kevin, Mariah, and Suri analyze the problem and begin to gather information to learn more. The problem is complex and requires more than one area of expertise. Why do nonedible products continue selling well? What is it about the edibles that is turning customers off?

**Kevin** is responsible for customer resource management. He is involved with the customer from the point of initial contact through purchase and delivery. Most of the interface is automated in the form of an online “basket model,” where photographs and product descriptions are accompanied by “buy it” buttons. He is available during normal working business hours for live chat and voice chat if needed, and customers are invited to request additional information. Most *Favourites* customers do not access this service, but Kevin is kept quite busy, as he also handles returns and complaints. Because Kevin believes that superior service retains customers while attracting new ones, he is always interested in better ways to serve the customer. Looking at edibles and nonedibles, he will study the cycle of customer service and see if there are any common points—from the main webpage, through the catalog, to the purchase process, and to returns—at which customers abandon the sale. He has existing customer feedback loops with end-of-sale surveys, but most customers decline to take the survey and there is currently no incentive to participate.

**Mariah** is responsible for products and purchasing. She wants to offer the best products at the lowest price, and to offer new products that are unusual, rare, or exotic. She regularly adds new products to the *Favourites* catalog and culls underperformers. Right now she has the data on every product and its sales history, but it is a challenge to represent it. She will analyze current sales data and produce a report that specifically identifies how each product—edible and nonedible—is performing. She wants

to highlight “winners” and “losers” but also recognizes that today’s “losers” may be the hit of tomorrow. It is hard to predict constantly changing tastes and preferences, but that is part of her job. It’s not all science, and it’s not all art. She has to have an eye for what will catch on tomorrow while continuing to provide what is hot today.

**Suri** is responsible for data management at *Favourites*. She gathers, analyzes, and presents information gathered from the supply chain, sales, and marketing. She works with vendors to make sure products are available when needed, makes sales predictions based on past sales history, and assesses the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

The problem-solving group members already have certain information on hand. They know that customer retention is one contributing factor. Attracting new customers is a constant goal, but they are aware of the well-known principle that it takes more effort to attract new customers than to keep existing ones. Thus, it is important to ensure a quality customer service experience for existing customers and encourage them to refer friends. The group needs to determine how to promote this favourable customer behaviour.

Another contributing factor seems to be that customers often abandon the shopping cart before completing a purchase, especially when purchasing edibles. The group members need to learn more about why this is happening.

## Establish Criteria

Establishing the criteria for a solution is the next step. At this point, information is coming in from diverse perspectives, and each group member has contributed information from their perspective, even though there may be several points of overlap.

**Kevin:** Customers who complete the postsale survey indicate that they want to know (1) what is the estimated time of delivery, (2) why a specific item was not in stock and when it will be available, and (3) why their order sometimes arrives with less than a complete order, with some items back-ordered, without prior notification.

He notes that a very small percentage of customers complete the postsale survey, and the results are far from scientific. He also notes that it appears the interface is not capable of cross-checking inventory to provide immediate information concerning back orders, so that the customer “buys it” only to learn several days later that it was not in stock. This seems to be especially problematic for edible products, because people may tend to order them for special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries. But we don’t really know this for sure because of the low participation in the postsale survey.

**Mariah:** There are four edible products that frequently sell out. So far, we haven’t been able to boost the appeal of other edibles so that people would order them as a second choice when these sales leaders aren’t available. We also have several rare, exotic products that are slow movers. They have potential, but currently are underperformers.

**Suri:** We know from a postal code analysis that most of our customers are from a few specific geographic areas associated with above-average incomes. We have very few credit cards declined, and the average sale is over \$100. Shipping costs represent on average 8 percent of the total sales cost. We

do not have sufficient information to produce a customer profile. There is no specific point in the purchase process where basket abandonment tends to happen; it happens fairly uniformly at all steps.

## Consider Possible Solutions to the Problem

The group has listened to each other and now starts to brainstorm ways to address the challenges they have addressed while focusing resources on those solutions that are more likely to produce results.

**Kevin:** Is it possible for our programmers to create a cross-index feature, linking the product desired with a report of how many are in stock? I'd like the customer to know right away whether it is in stock, or how long they may have to wait. As another idea, is it possible to add incentives to the purchase cycle that won't negatively impact our overall profit? I'm thinking a small volume discount on multiple items, or perhaps free shipping over a specific dollar amount.

**Mariah:** I recommend we hold a focus group where customers can sample our edible products and tell us what they like best and why. When the best sellers are sold out, could we offer a discount on related products to provide an instant alternative? We might also cull the underperforming products with a liquidation sale to generate interest.

**Suri:** If we want to know more about our customers, we need to give them an incentive to complete the postsale survey. How about a 5 percent off coupon code for the next purchase to get them to return and to help us better identify our customer base? We may also want to build in a customer referral rewards program, but it all takes better data in to get results out. We should also explore the supply side of the business by getting a more reliable supply of the leading products and trying to get discounts that are more advantageous from our suppliers, especially in the edible category.

## Decide on a Solution

Kevin, Mariah, and Suri may want to implement all the solution strategies, but they do not have the resources to do them all. They'll complete a cost-benefit analysis, which ranks each solution according to its probable impact.

## Implement the Solution

Kevin is faced with the challenge of designing the computer interface without incurring unacceptable costs. He strongly believes that the interface will pay for itself within the first year—or, to put it more bluntly, that *Favourites'* declining sales will get worse if the website does not have this feature soon. He asks to meet with top management to get budget approval and secures their agreement, on one condition: he must negotiate a compensation schedule with the information technology consultants that includes delayed compensation in the form of bonuses after the feature has been up and running successfully for six months.

Mariah knows that searching for alternative products is a never-ending process, but it takes time and the company needs results. She decides to invest time evaluating products that competing companies

currently offer, especially in the edible category, on the theory that customers who find their desired items sold out on the *Favourites* website may have been buying alternative products elsewhere instead of choosing an alternative from *Favourites*' product lines.

Suri decides to approach the vendors of the four frequently sold-out products and ask point blank, "What would it take to get you to produce these items more reliably in greater quantities?" By opening the channel of communication with these vendors, she is able to motivate them to make modifications that will improve the reliability and quantity. She also approaches the vendors of the less popular products with a request for better discounts in return for their cooperation in developing and test-marketing new products.

## Follow Up on the Solution

**Kevin:** After several beta tests, the cross-index feature was implemented and has been in place for thirty days. Now customers see either "in stock" or "available [mo/da/yr]" in the shopping basket. As expected, Kevin notes a decrease in the number of chat and phone inquiries to the effect of, "Will this item arrive before my wife's birthday?" However, he notes an increase in inquiries asking, "Why isn't this item in stock?" It is difficult to tell whether customer satisfaction is higher overall.

**Mariah:** In exploring the merchandise available from competing merchants, she got several ideas for modifying *Favourites*' product line to offer more flavors and other variations on popular edibles. Working with vendors, she found that these modifications cost very little. Within the first thirty days of adding these items to the product line, sales are up. Mariah believes these additions also serve to enhance the *Favourites* brand identity, but she has no data to back this up.

**Suri:** So far, the vendors supplying the four top-selling edibles have fulfilled their promise of increasing quantity and reliability. However, three of the four items have still sold out, raising the question of whether *Favourites* needs to bring in one or more additional vendors to produce these items. Of the vendors with which *Favourites* asked to negotiate better discounts, some refused, and two of these were "stolen" by a competing merchant so that they no longer sell to *Favourites*. In addition, one of the vendors that agreed to give a better discount was unexpectedly forced to cease operations for several weeks because of a fire.

This scenario allows us to see that the problem may have several dimensions as well as solutions, that resources can be limited, and not every solution is successful. Even though the problem is not immediately resolved, the group problem-solving pattern and communication among the group members serves as a useful guide through the problem-solving process.

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## 42.

### Teamwork and Leadership

Two important aspects of group communication—especially in the business environment—are teamwork and leadership. You will work in a team and at some point may be called on to lead. You may emerge to that role as the group recognizes your specific skill set in relation to the task, or you may be appointed to a position of responsibility for yourself and others. Your communication skills will be your foundation for success as a member and as a leader. Listen and seek to understand both the task and your group members as you become involved with the new effort. Have confidence in yourself and inspire the trust of others. Know that leading and following are both integral aspects of effective teamwork.

### Teamwork

Teams are a form of a group normally dedicated to production or problem solving. Teams can often achieve higher levels of performance than individuals because of the combined energies and talents of the members. Collaboration can produce motivation and creativity that may not be present in single-contractor projects. Individuals also have a sense of belonging to the group, and the range of views and diversity can energize the process, helping address creative blocks and stalemates. By involving members of the team in decision-making, and calling upon each member's area of contribution, teams can produce positive results.



Figure 45.1

Teamwork is not without its challenges. The work itself may prove a challenge as members juggle competing assignments and personal commitments. The work may also be compromised if team members are expected to conform and pressured to go along with a procedure, plan, or product that they themselves have not developed. Groupthink, or the tendency to accept the group's ideas and actions in spite of individual concerns, can also compromise the process and reduce efficiency. Personalities and competition can play a role in a team's failure to produce.

We can recognize that people want to belong to a successful team, and celebrating incremental gain can focus the attention on the project and its goals. Members will be more willing to express thoughts and opinions, and follow through with actions, when they perceive that they are an important part of the team. By failing to include all the team members, valuable insights may be lost in the rush to judgment or production. Making time for planning, and giving each member time to study, reflect, and contribute can allow them to gain valuable insights from each other, and may make them more likely to contribute information that challenges the status quo. Unconventional or “devil’s advocate” thinking may prove insightful and serve to challenge the process in a positive way, improving the production of the team. Respect for divergent views can encourage open discussion.

John Thill and Courtland Bovee (2002) provide a valuable list to consider when setting up a team as follows:

- Select team members wisely
- Select a responsible leader
- Promote cooperation
- Clarify goals
- Elicit commitment
- Clarify responsibilities
- Instill prompt action
- Apply technology
- Ensure technological compatibility
- Provide prompt feedback

Group dynamics involve the interactions and processes of a team and influence the degree to which members feel a part of the goal and mission. A team with a strong identity can prove to be a powerful force, but it requires time and commitment. A team that exerts too much control over individual members can run the risk of reducing creative interactions and encourage tunnel vision. A team that exerts too little control, with attention to process and areas of specific responsibility, may not be productive. The balance between motivation and encouragement, and control and influence, is challenging as team members represent diverse viewpoints and approaches to the problem. A skilled business communicator creates a positive team by first selecting members based on their areas of skill and expertise, but attention to their style of communication is also warranted. Individuals that typically work alone or tend to be introverted may need additional encouragement to participate. Extroverts may need to be encouraged to listen to others and not dominate the conversation.

## Leadership

Leadership is one of the most studied aspects of group communication. Scholars in business, communication, psychology, and many other fields have written extensively about the qualities of leaders, theories of leadership, and how to build leadership skills. It’s important to point out that although a group may have only one official leader, other group members play important leadership

roles. Making this distinction also helps us differentiate between leaders and leadership (Hargie, 2011). The leader is a group role that is associated with a high-status position and may be formally or informally recognized by group members. Leadership is a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviours that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its task. A person in the role of leader may provide no or poor leadership. Likewise, a person who is not recognized as a “leader” in title can provide excellent leadership.



Navigate to the following quick quiz: [What's Your Leadership Style?](#)

## Leadership Styles

Given the large amount of research done on leadership, it is not surprising that there are several different ways to define or categorize leadership styles. In general, effective leaders do not fit solely into one style in any of the following classifications. Instead, they are able to adapt their leadership style to fit the relational and situational context (Wood, 1977).



Read and review the following article from MindTools that describes a variety of leadership style models: [Leadership styles: Choosing the right approach for the situation.](#)

One common way to study leadership style is to make a distinction among autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). These leadership styles can be described as follows:

- Autocratic leaders set policies and make decisions primarily on their own, taking advantage of the power present in their title or status to set the agenda for the group.
- Democratic leaders facilitate group discussion and like to take input from all members before making a decision.
- Laissez-faire leaders take a “hands-off” approach, preferring to give group members freedom to reach and implement their own decisions.

Thomas Harris and John Sherblom (1999) specifically note three leadership styles that characterize the modern business or organization, and reflect our modern economy. We are not born leaders but may become them if the context or environment requires our skill set. A leader-as-technician role often occurs when we have skills that others do not. If you can fix the copy machine at the office, your leadership and ability to get it running again are prized and sought-after skills. You may instruct others on how to load the paper or how to change the toner, and even though your pay grade may not reflect this leadership role, you are looked to by the group as a leader within that context. Technical skills, from internet technology to facilities maintenance, may experience moments where their particular area of knowledge is required to solve a problem. Their leadership will be in demand.

The leader-as-conductor involves a central role of bringing people together for a common goal. In the common analogy, a conductor leads an orchestra and integrates the specialized skills and sounds of the various components the musical group comprises. In the same way, a leader who conducts may set a

vision, create benchmarks, and collaborate with a group as they interpret a set script. Whether it is a beautiful movement in music or a group of teams that comes together to address a common challenge, the leader-as-conductor keeps the time and tempo of the group.

Coaches are often discussed in business-related books as models of leadership for good reason. A leader-as-coach combines many of the talents and skills we've discussed here, serving as a teacher, motivator, and keeper of the goals of the group. A coach may be autocratic at times, give pointed direction without input from the group, and stand on the sidelines while the players do what they've been trained to do and make the points. The coach may look out for the group and defend it against bad calls, and may motivate players with words of encouragement. Coaches are teachers, motivators, and keepers of the goals of the group. Coaches serve to redirect the attention and energy of the individuals to the overall goals of the group. We can recognize some of the behaviors of coaches, but what specific traits have a positive influence on the group? Thomas Peters and Nancy Austin (1985) identify five important traits that produce results:

1. Orientation and education
2. Nurturing and encouragement
3. Assessment and correction
4. Listening and counseling
5. Establishing group emphasis

#### Text Attributions

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# Glossary of Literary Terms

James Sexton

**Adage:** A traditional or proverbial saying.

**Allegory** A story in which the characters and events extend beyond the confines of their story to represent an object lesson to readers.

**Alliteration:** The repetition of a consonant sound – “storm strewn sea.”

**Anapaest:** The anapaestic meter consists of a series of two unstressed sounds followed by a single stressed sound – “The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold” (Lord Byron).

**Antagonist** Character whose dramatic role is to oppose the *protagonist* (q.v.).

**Archetype:** Also known as universal symbol, an archetype may be a character (the intrepid hero, damsels in distress, party animal), a [theme](#) (the triumph of good over evil), a symbol, or even a setting. Many literary critics are of the opinion that archetypes, which have a common and recurring representation in a particular human culture or entire human race, shape the structure and function of a literary work.

**Archetypal plot:** A sequence of events forming a type of story that has recurred throughout the history of a civilization, and with which most people are familiar; for example, a battle between good and evil.

**Assonance:** The repetition of vowel sounds, as in “rapid rattle” (Wilfred Owen).

**Aural** Describes how a poem appeals to our sense of sound, hearing.

**Ballad:** A narrative poem, usually written in quatrains with abcb rhyme scheme (q.v.).

**Blank verse:** Unrhymed iambic pentameter (q.v.) poetry.

**Blocking agents:** In drama, characters who try to prevent other characters from achieving their goals.

**Catharsis:** The purging of audience emotion in tragedy, the release of emotion, and final feeling of relief.

**Comedy:** Form of drama characterized by some sense of optimism, fellowship, love, and good humour.

**Conceit:** A metaphor that is unusually ingenious or elaborate. Common feature in work of metaphysical poets, such as John Donne.

**Contextual symbol:** A symbol that has a non-literal meaning only within the context of the work of art in which it is found.

**Dactyl:** The dactylic meter is the opposite of the anaesthetic. It consists of a series of single hard-

stressed sounds followed by two soft-stressed sounds – “Just for a handful of silver he left us” (Robert Browning).

**Deconstruction:** An interpretive movement in literary theory that reached its apex in the 1970s. Deconstruction rejects absolute interpretations, stressing ambiguities and contradictions in literature. Deconstruction grew out of the linguistic principles of De Saussure who noted that many [Indo-European](#) languages create meaning by binary opposites. Verbal oppositions such as good/evil, light/dark, male/female, rise/fall, up/down, and high/low show a human tendency common transculturally to create vocabulary as pairs of opposites, with one of the two words arbitrarily given positive connotations and the other word arbitrarily given negative connotations.

**Dramatic monologue:** A poem which is “dramatic” because it is a speech presented to an audience (usually of only one person) and a “monologue” because no other character does any talking.

**Dynamic character:** Sometimes referred to as a round character, a dynamic character is one whose values, attitudes, and/or ideals change as a result of the experience the character undergoes throughout the story.

**Elegy:** A poem written to commemorate the death of a person who played a significant role in the poet’s life.

**Epic:** An epic in its most specific sense is a [genre](#) of classical poetry. It is a poem that is a long narrative about a serious subject, told in an elevated style of language, focused on the exploits of a hero or demi-god who represents the cultural values of a race, nation, or religious group, in which the hero’s success or failure will determine the fate of that people or nation. Usually, the epic has a vast setting and covers a wide geographic area, it contains superhuman feats of strength or military prowess, and gods or supernatural beings frequently take part in the action. The poem begins with the invocation of a muse to inspire the poet and, the narrative starts [in medias res](#). The epic contains long catalogues of heroes or important characters, focusing on highborn kings and great warriors rather than peasants and commoners.

**Epiphany** A change, sudden insight or awareness revealed to the main character.

**Eye rhyme:** Words that look as if they should rhyme but do not – for example “good” and “mood.” Also known as sight rhyme.

**Fable:** A short and traditional story, involving archetypal characters and ending with a moral.

**Feminism and literature:** Feminist critics aim to examine how gender functions and how power is distributed.

**Fiction:** Prose text in the form of a story that is primarily a product of human imagination.

**First-person major-character narrator:** This type of narrator tells a story in which they are the main character, or main focus of attention.

**First-person minor-character narrator :** This narrator is typically a gossip. They observe the actions of another person, often a friend, and then tells what that friend did, when, and to whom.

**Flashback:** The technique of narrating an event that occurred before the point in the story to which the narrator has advanced.

**Flat character:** A character, also known as a static character, who is offered the chance for positive change but who, for one reason or another, fails to embrace it.

**Free verse:** Poetry without a set rhyme scheme or rhythm pattern.

**Full rhyme:** The use of words that rhyme completely, such as “good” and “wood.”

**Genre:** A major literary form, such as drama, poetry, and the novel.

**Haiku:** The Japanese haiku is a brief poem, consisting of a single image. The haiku consists of three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively.

**Half rhyme:** Describes words that almost rhyme such as “time” and “mine.”

**Hamartia:** A term from Greek tragedy that literally means “missing the mark.” Originally applied to an archer who misses the target, a *hamartia* came to signify a tragic flaw, especially a misperception, a lack of some important insight, or some blindness that ironically results from one’s own strengths and abilities.

**Horatian satire:** Named after the Roman poet, Horace, this is a fairly gentle type of satire used to poke fun at people and their failings or foibles.

**Hyperbole:** A metaphor that bases its comparison on the use of exaggeration, for example, “I’d walk a million miles for one of your smiles” (Al Jolson).

**Iambic:** The iambic rhythm pattern in poetry consists of one unstressed sound or beat, followed by one stressed sound or beat – “The cúrfew tólls the knéll of pártинг dáy” (Thomas Gray).

**Iambic diameter:** A line with two beats – “I can’t.”

**Iambic pentameter:** A line with five beats – “I have been one acquainted with the night” (Robert Frost).

**Iambic tetrameter:** A line with four beats – “I wandered lonely as a cloud” (William Wordsworth).

**Iambic trimeter:** A line with three beats – “The only news I know/Is bulletins all day” (Emily Dickinson).

**Imagery:** In literature, an image is a word picture. It can be a phrase, a sentence, or a line. It is used to enhance the reader’s appreciation of the figurative more than the literal meaning of a poem, story, or play – “The fog comes/on little cat feet” (Carl Sandberg).

**Imagists:** A group of poets whose aim between 1912 and 1917 was to write poetry that accented imagery (q.v.) or, their preferred term, “imaging” to communicate meaning.

**In media res:** Latin for “in the middle of the action,” the point at which an epic, such as “The Odyssey,” typically opens.

**Irony:** Cicero referred to irony as “saying one thing and meaning another.” Irony comes in many forms. **Verbal irony** is a [trope](#) in which a speaker makes a statement in which its actual meaning differs sharply from the meaning that the words ostensibly express. **Dramatic irony** involves a situation in a narrative in which the reader knows something about present or future circumstances that the character does not know. In that situation, the character acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or the character expects the opposite of what the reader knows that fate holds in store, or the character anticipates a particular outcome that unfolds itself in an unintentional way. Probably the most famous example of dramatic irony is the situation facing Oedipus in the play *Oedipus Rex*. **Situational irony** is a trope in which accidental events occur that seem oddly appropriate, such as the poetic justice of a pickpocket getting his own pocket picked.

**Juvenalian satire:** Named after the Roman poet Juvenal, this form of satire uses bitter sarcasm more than humour, and is often tinged with cruelty.

**Limited omniscient narrator:** A narrator who limits himself or herself to relaying to readers the thoughts and actions of the main character only.

**Litotes:** The deliberate use of understatement, usually to create an ironic or satiric effect – “I am not as young as I used to be.”

**Malapropism:** A blunder in diction, grotesquely substituting one word with a similar sound for the proper word. Mrs. Malaprop, (Fr. *Mal à propos*), a character in R. B. Sheridan’s comedy *The Rivals*, was famously guilty of such errors in diction: e.g., “As headstrong as an *allegory* [alligator] on the banks of the Nile”; Shakespeare’s Mistress Quickly in 2 *Henry IV* (Falstaff “is *indicted* to dinner”); and Capt. Jack Boyle in O’Casey’s *Juno and the Paycock* (“The whole world’s in a state of *chassis*” [chaos]) are earlier and later characters given to malapropisms.

**Marxist literary theory:** Like feminist critics, Marxist critics examine the imbalance of power relationships among characters in literature, in terms of social class.

**Metaphor:** A comparison intended to clarify or intensify the more complex of the objects of the comparison.

**Metonymy:** A form of metaphor in which a phrase is understood to represent something more; for example, to use the phrase “sabre rattling” to mean “threatening war.”

**Meter:** A term used to describe the rhythm and measure of a line of poetry.

**Narrative:** The storyline in a literary work.

**Narrator:** Storyteller.

**Non-sequential plot:** One in which the author holds back an important incident that occurred before the chronological ending of the story, typically to create suspense.

**Novel:** A narrative work of fiction typically involving a range of characters and settings, linked together through plot and sub-plots.

**Novella:** A short work of fiction that falls in length somewhere between the novel and the short story.

**Objective narrator:** The objective narrator establishes setting in a precise but rather detached style, and then lets the conversation tell the story, using an objective point of view.

**Octave:** An eight-line stanza.

**Ode:** A long formal poem that typically presents a poet's philosophical views about such subjects as nature, art, death, and human emotion.

**Omniscient narrator:** A narrator capable of telling readers the thoughts of all the characters and the actions of all the characters at any time. An omniscient narrator is like a god who can provide readers with all the information they could ever want.

**Onomatopoeia:** A word or phrase usually found in a poem the sound of which suggests its meaning – “bang,” “thwack.”

**Oral:** Describes a spoken as opposed to written literary tradition.

**Paradox:** A phrase which seems self-contradictory but, in fact, makes powerful sense despite its lack of logic – “I must be cruel only to be kind” (Shakespeare).

**Pastoral:** Relating to the countryside, especially in an idealized form.

**Pastoral elegy:** A form of elegy that typically contrasts the serenity of the simple life of a shepherd with the cruel world which hastened the death of the poet's friend.

**Personification:** A form of metaphor that compares something non-human with something that is human – “Two Sunflowers/Move in the Yellow Room” (William Blake).

**Petrarchan sonnet:** A sonnet with a rhyme scheme: abbaabbacdecde.

**Plot:** In a literary fiction work, “plot” refers to the events, the order in which they occur, and the relationship of the events to each other.

**Poetry:** One of the major literary genres, usually written in a series of discrete lines which highlight the artistic use of language.

**Point of view:** The stance from which the storyteller or narrator tells the story.

**Prose:** The written text of fiction and non-fiction, as distinct from poetry.

**Protagonist:** The main character in a literary work. See also *antagonist*.

**Quatrain:** A four-line stanza.

**Reader response theory:** A theory of literature that asserts that the reader creates meaning and that, because all people are different, all readings will be different.

**Regular verse:** A literary work written in lines that have the same rhythm pattern and a regular rhyme scheme.

**Rhyme scheme:** The rhyming pattern of a regular-verse poem.

**Rhyming couplet:** A two-line stanza in which the last words in each line rhyme.

**Satire:** A literary form in which a writer pokes fun at those aspects of his society, especially those people and those social institutions that the author thinks are corrupt and in need of change.

**Scapegoat:** A person who is banished or sacrificed in the interests of his or her community. The term is often applied to a tragic hero.

**Sequential plot:** One in which the events are narrated in the order in which they occurred in time.

**Sestet:** A six-line stanza.

**Shakespearean sonnet:** A sonnet with a rhyme scheme: ababcdcdefefgg.

**Short story:** A prose fiction narrative that usually occurs in a single setting and concerns a single main character.

**Sight rhyme:** Words that look as if they should rhyme but do not – for example “mood” and “good.” Also known as eye rhyme.

**Simile:** A type of metaphor that makes the comparison explicit by using either the word “like” or the word “as” – “Elderly American ladies leaning on their canes listed toward me like towers of Pisa” (Nabokov).

**Sonnet:** A 14-line regular-verse poem, usually written in iambic pentameter.

**Spondee:** A double-hard-stressed phrase such as “shook foil” (Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur”).

**Static character:** A static character, also known as a flat character, is one who is offered the chance for positive change but who, for one reason or another, fails to embrace it.

**Stereotype:** A recognizable *type* of person rather than a fully developed character. A stereotypical character is one who can be identified by a single dominant trait; for example, the braggart soldier, the country bumpkin.

**Symbolism:** The use within a literary work of an element that has more than a literal meaning – “All the world’s a stage” (Shakespeare).

**Synecdoche:** The use of a part to represent a whole, as in the expression “lend me a hand.”

**Tercet:** A three-line stanza.

**Theatre of the absurd:** A phrase used to describe a group of plays written during and after the 1950s. The term “absurd” is used because the plots and the characters (though not the themes) are unconventional when examined in the context of conventional tragedy and comedy.

**Theme:** The message or insight into human experience that an author offers to his or her readers. Broad themes might include family, love, war, nature, death, faith, time, or some aspects of these.

**Tone:** The attitude or personality that a literary work projects; for example, serious and solemn, or lighthearted and amusing.

**Tragedy:** A play that tells the story of a significant event or series of events in the life of a significant person.

**Tragic hero:** The main character in a Greek or Roman tragedy. In contrast with the [epic hero](#) (who embodies the values of his culture and appears in an epic poem), the tragic hero is typically an admirable character who appears as the focus in a tragic play, but one who is undone by a *hamartia*—a tragic mistake, misconception, or flaw. That hamartia leads to the downfall of the main character.

**Trochaic:** The opposite of iambic. The rhythm of the lines of a trochaic poem consist not of a series of soft-stressed-hard-stressed sounds, but a series of hard-stressed-soft-stressed sounds – “There they are my fifty men and women” (Robert Browning).

**Valediction:** Bidding farewell to someone or something.

**Verse:** A unit of a varying number of lines with which a poem is divided. Also called a stanza.

**Villanelle:** A 19-line poem divided into five tercets and one quatrain. Probably the most famous English villanelle is Dylan Thomas’s “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night.”

#### Text Attributions

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# Writing an Analysis of a Poem, Story, or Play

James Sexton

If you are taking a literature course, it is important that you know how to write an analysis—sometimes called an interpretation or a literary analysis or a critical reading or a critical analysis—of a story, a poem, and a play. Your instructor will probably assign such an analysis as part of the course assessment. On your mid-term or final exam, you might have to write an analysis of one or more of the poems and/or stories on your reading list. Or the dreaded “sight poem or story” might appear on an exam, a work that is not on the reading list, that you have not read before, but one your instructor includes on the exam to examine your ability to apply the active reading skills you have learned in class to produce, independently, an effective literary analysis. You might be asked to write instead or, or in addition to an analysis of a literary work, a more sophisticated essay in which you compare and contrast the protagonists of two stories, or the use of form and metaphor in two poems, or the tragic heroes in two plays.

You might learn some literary theory in your course and be asked to apply theory—feminist, Marxist, reader-response, psychoanalytic, new historicist, for example—to one or more of the works on your reading list. But the seminal assignment in a literature course is the analysis of the single poem, story, novel, or play, and, even if you do not have to complete this assignment specifically, it will form the basis of most of the other writing assignments you will be required to undertake in your literature class. There are several ways of structuring a literary analysis, and your instructor might issue specific instructions on how they want this assignment done. The method presented here might not be identical to the one your instructor wants you to follow, but it will be easy enough to modify, if your instructor expects something a bit different, and it is a good default method, if your instructor does not issue more specific guidelines. You want to begin your analysis with a paragraph that provides the context of the work you are analyzing and a brief account of what you believe to be the poem or story or play’s main theme. At a minimum, your account of the work’s context will include the name of the author, the title of the work, its genre, and the date and place of publication. If there is an important biographical or historical context to the work, you should include that, as well. Try to express the work’s theme in one or two sentences. Theme, you will recall, is that insight into human experience the author offers to readers, usually revealed as the content, the drama, the plot of the poem, story, or play unfolds and the characters interact. Assessing theme can be a complex task. Authors usually show the theme; they don’t tell it. They rarely say, at the end of the story, words to this effect: “and the moral of my story is...” They tell their story, develop their characters, provide some kind of conflict—and from all of this theme emerges. Because identifying theme can be challenging and subjective, it is often a good idea to work through the rest of the analysis, then return to the beginning and assess theme in light of your analysis of the work’s other literary elements. Here is a good example of an introductory paragraph from Ben’s analysis of William Butler Yeats’ poem, “Among School Children.”

“Among School Children” was published in Yeats’ 1928 collection of poems *The Tower*. It was inspired by a visit Yeats made in 1926 to school in Waterford, an official visit in his capacity as a senator of the Irish Free State. In the course of the tour, Yeats reflects upon his own youth and the experiences that shaped the “sixty-year old, smiling public man” (line 8) he has become.

Through his reflection, the theme of the poem emerges: a life has meaning when connections among apparently disparate experiences are forged into a unified whole.

In the body of your literature analysis, you want to guide your readers through a tour of the poem, story, or play, pausing along the way to comment on, analyze, interpret, and explain key incidents, descriptions, dialogue, symbols, the writer's use of figurative language—any of the elements of literature that are relevant to a sound analysis of this particular work. Your main goal is to explain how the elements of literature work to elucidate, augment, and develop the theme. The elements of literature are common across genres: a story, a narrative poem, and a play all have a plot and characters. But certain genres privilege certain literary elements. In a poem, for example, form, imagery and metaphor might be especially important; in a story, setting and point-of-view might be more important than they are in a poem; in a play, dialogue, stage directions, lighting serve functions rarely relevant in the analysis of a story or poem.

The length of the body of an analysis of a literary work will usually depend upon the length of work being analyzed—the longer the work, the longer the analysis—though your instructor will likely establish a word limit for this assignment. Make certain that you do not simply paraphrase the plot of the story or play or the content of the poem. This is a common weakness in student literary analyses, especially when the analysis is of a poem or a play.

Here is a good example of two body paragraphs from Amelia's analysis of "Araby" by James Joyce.

Within the story's first few paragraphs occur several religious references which will accumulate as the story progresses. The narrator is a student at the Christian Brothers' School; the former tenant of his house was a priest; he left behind books called *The Abbot* and *The Devout Communicant*. Near the end of the story's second paragraph the narrator describes a "central apple tree" in the garden, under which is "the late tenant's rusty bicycle pump." We may begin to suspect the tree symbolizes the apple tree in the Garden of Eden and the bicycle pump, the snake which corrupted Eve, a stretch, perhaps, until Joyce's fall-of-innocence theme becomes more apparent.

.....

The narrator must continue to help his aunt with her errands, but, even when he is so occupied, his mind is on Mangan's sister, as he tries to sort out his feelings for her. Here Joyce provides vivid insight into the mind of an adolescent boy at once elated and bewildered by his first crush. He wants to tell her of his "confused adoration," but he does not know if he will ever have the chance. Joyce's description of the pleasant tension consuming the narrator is conveyed in a striking simile, which continues to develop the narrator's character, while echoing the religious imagery, so important to the story's theme: "But my body was like a harp, and her words and gestures were like fingers, running along the wires."

The concluding paragraph of your analysis should realize two goals. First, it should present your own opinion on the quality of the poem or story or play about which you have been writing. And, second, it should comment on the current relevance of the work. You should certainly comment on the enduring social relevance of the work you are explicating. You may comment, though you should never be obliged to do so, on the personal relevance of the work. Here is the concluding paragraph from Dao-Ming's analysis of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

First performed in 1895, *The Importance of Being Earnest* has been made into a film, as recently as 2002 and is regularly revived by professional and amateur theatre companies. It endures not only because of the comic brilliance of its characters and their dialogue, but also because its satire still resonates with contemporary audiences. I am still amazed that I see in my own Asian mother a shadow of Lady Bracknell, with her obsession with finding for her daughter a husband who will maintain, if not, ideally, increase the family's social status. We might like to think we are more liberated and socially sophisticated than our Victorian ancestors, but the starlets and eligible bachelors who star in current reality television programs illustrate the extent to which superficial concerns still influence decisions about love and even marriage. Even now, we can turn to Oscar Wilde to help us understand and laugh at those who are earnest in name only.

Dao-Ming's conclusion is brief, but she does manage to praise the play, reaffirm its main theme, and explain its enduring appeal. And note how her last sentence cleverly establishes that sense of closure that is also a feature of an effective analysis.

You may, of course, modify the template that is presented here. Your instructor might favour a somewhat different approach to literary analysis. Its essence, though, will be your understanding and interpretation of the theme of the poem, story, or play and the skill with which the author shapes the elements of literature—plot, character, form, diction, setting, point of view—to support the theme.

## A Model Analysis

Now read the short poem by Siegfried Sassoon, “[Base Details](#),” and then read the sample essay with comments.

First let's try to determine who is the speaker, the “I” of the poem. Notice that the speaker speculates: “If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath...” Might we assume he is none of the three adjectives? So how old would he be? Start with a hypothesis and stick with it unless further details make your guess seem untenable. Then try a different hypothesis. For now let's assume that the speaker is young. What is his rank? Is he an officer? Unlikely, probably an unlisted man, since his tone toward the majors is angry and sarcastic.

He calls them “scarlet.” What is the denotation of “scarlet”? What are some connotations of “scarlet”? What does “petulant” mean? Why are the faces of the majors described as “puffy”? What is the main meaning here of “scrap”? Are other meanings intended?

What is the purpose of the poem? Look up the brief biographical details for Sassoon on the online “[Oxford World War I Poets](#)” website.

After reading the poem three times (you should print a copy of the poem from Project Bartleby), have a look at the following student essay on diction in “Base Details.”

## Student Essay: The Diction of “Base Details”

(Adapted from Edward J. Gordon, *Writing About Imaginative Literature*, Harbrace: 1973).

Old men make and run wars; young men fight and die in them. In “Base Details,” Siegfried Sassoon reveals through his diction a bitterness toward the fact that young men die in wars while the officers live safely behind the lines. The speaker in the poem is an ordinary soldier talking about the majors at the army base. By pretending what he would be like if he were an officer, he condemns war.

Through his choice of words, the soldier expresses an attitude of contempt for the officers behind the lines who “speed glum heroes up the line to death.” He speaks with sarcasm of their fierceness and goes on to describe them as “bald, and short of breath.” If he were a major, he, too, would have a “puffy petulant face,/Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel.” The connotations of these words suggest men who are overweight and out of shape from drinking and eating too much. The reference to “scarlet Majors” recalls the red dress uniforms of British officers and the colour of blood.<sup>1</sup>

The speaker then goes on to describe the attitude toward soldiers that is held by the officers. One speaks of losing many men in “this last scrap.” The understatement of that last word contrasts sharply with the mention in the same line of a heavy loss in battle.<sup>2</sup> In the last two lines of the poem, a further contrast is set up between “youth stone dead” and the officer who will “toddle safely home and die—in bed.”<sup>3</sup>

When the entire poem is read, the title becomes ambiguous. The apparent meaning refers to the details of a military base. But “base” can also mean low and contemptible. “Detail” also has two meanings. It can mean a detachment of men sent out on a particular mission—“speed glum heroes up the line”—but it can also mean a minor matter, as if sending people off to die is not important to the officers. So the apparent meaning that we see as we begin reading turns into a second meaning when we finish reading the poem.

The diction, then, makes a comment on the theme of the poem: old men who direct wars at a safe distance behind the lines seem to have little understanding of what it means to die in battle and appear on “the Roll of Honor.”

### Text Attributions

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1. Coherence would be even better here if the student could perhaps go on to point out explicitly how the majors figuratively have blood on their hands—the blood of the young soldiers under their command. One brief sentence would do.

2. Here the student should state the other meanings of "scrap" and point out their thematic significance.

3. Here the student could improve the essay by discussing the connotations of the verb "toddle" and then relating the diction to theme.

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## Documenting Essays in MLA Style

The Modern Language Association (MLA) began recommending the use of in-text parenthetical citations in 1984, with the second edition of the *MLA Handbook*. Before then, source citations were placed in footnotes and the final, alphabetical list of sources was attached at the end of the paper under the heading, “Bibliography.” The term “Works Cited” has since replaced “Bibliography.” The entries in a typical Works Cited document cover not only traditional print sources, but—reflecting the widespread scholarly use of technology—also cover Web and related sources.

Listed below is a series of resources on all aspects of MLA documentation. Students preparing a research essay will find every kind of citation example in this comprehensive series of online tutorials.

- [MLA Formatting and Style Guide](#) from Purdue University
- A video from the Purdue Online writing Lab (OWL) on using MLA format for research, with useful page set-up information in addition to practical help on most MLA kinds of citation:  
[Purdue Owl: MLA Formatting – The Basics](#)

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This adaptation has reformatted the original texts and replaced some images and figures to make the resulting work more shareable and unified. This adaptation has significantly altered or updated many of the original texts it has drawn from. In addition, this adaptation aimed to accomplish the following goals:

- Replace almost all American examples with Canadian examples,
- Use Canadian spelling and conventions, and
- Follow the ABE Articulation Handbook required learning outcomes for Advanced Level English as provided by the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training.



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## Versioning History

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.01. If the edits involve substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number.

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Version	Date	Change	Details
1.00	January 5, 2022	Book published.	