

## **How to Structure Analytical/Expository Writing**

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## **The Structure of Analytical/Expository Writing**

Analytical/expository compositions are usually designed to explain, analyze, interpret, speculate, evaluate, persuade, or reflect. But, regardless of what they are about or their intent, analytical/expository compositions usually have a three-part structure consisting of an introduction, main body and a conclusion. The introduction orients the reader to the writer's purpose and focus as well as indicates something about what the reader can expect to find in the remainder of the essay. Most introductions contain a thesis statement which communicates the point the writer intends to make -- although some writers may choose to let the reader infer what their thesis is or to include it at the end of the composition rather than at the beginning. In the main body, the writer explores and develops the controlling idea or ideas presented in the introduction point by point by providing examples, details, and facts, by giving reasons, and by relating incidents. The conclusion reminds the reader of the essay's main point by summarizing, coming full circle, exploring the significance of something, asking a question, offering new insights, etc.

In order to give you a sense of what the structure of an analytical/expository composition looks like, the following essay, "The Tragic Life and Death of Willy Loman" by a community college student is included on the next page. The students in this freshman composition class were asked to read Arthur Miller's definition of a tragic hero in his essay "Tragedy and the Common Man," and then, applying Miller's definition to his play, *Death of a Salesman*, write a persuasive essay arguing whether the main character, Willy Loman, does or does not qualify as a tragic hero

## The Tragic Life and Death of Willy Loman

### Introduction

This sentence  
ties in with  
the title

Reference  
to Miller's  
definition  
of the  
tragic hero

Every person on earth is a precious resource--one of a kind and special. Any object known to man which is the only one of its kind is priceless. Once lost or tarnished, it disappears forever; and that is a true tragedy. The same sense of tragedy and loss holds true for the life and death of Willy Loman, the main character in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. Willy's whole existence was spent behind a fortress of lies and illusions that mounted until the misconceptions were too high to control and the walls of his fortress came tumbling down. His tragic life seems to have three phases. In the first phase, Willy misrepresents himself because of his shortcomings or, as Arthur Miller identifies it in his essay "Tragedy and the Common Man," his "tragic flaw." In the second phase, Willy fears being torn away from his illusions of himself and the philosophy he lives by--so much so that in his final phase he is willing to die for the same beliefs that proved misleading and damaging not only in his own life but in that of his sons. In essence, he puts a price tag on his own life.

Writer offers  
her own  
definition of  
tragedy

Outline of  
essay's  
structure

This sentence  
will tie in  
with the  
conclusion

Part 1 of  
the Main  
Body--  
Phase 1

From the time Willy's sons were born, he must have felt he was a failure. This tragic flaw, as Miller called it, hounded him to the point where he contrived false ideas about himself to convey to others. His popularity in New England is something he constantly brags about: "I can park my car on the street and the cops watch it as if it were their own." Like most fathers, Willy wanted his sons to grow up reflecting his ideas and beliefs. This would be their key to success. Unfortunately, Willy didn't genuinely believe in himself and often doubted the ideas he professed. He projected counterfeit ideologies in order to raise his feelings of self-worth as well as to benefit his sons.

The idea of being well-liked is the pivotal point in Willy's plan for success. He feels a terrible shortcoming in this department; as a result, he overemphasizes the importance of his possessing such a quality. He demonstrates his blind faith in popularity when he says, "And when I bring you fellas up, there'll be open sesame for all of us, 'cause one thing boys, I have friends." These types of illusions mount and develop as Willy enters phase two--living with his lies in fear of being torn away from his illusions.

Transition to  
Phase 2

All of Willy's illusions have been created at this point but he now has the problem of juggling them so as not to destroy his fantasy world. Because he works in New England, Willy imposes a large distance between his work and his family. This allows him to stretch the truth about his successes in New England with the peace of mind that he cannot be found out and exposed.

Part 2 of  
Main  
Body--  
Phase 2

The character of Charley plays a central role in this phase of Willy's life. Charley is not an advocate of Willy's theories and yet he is a success. This is why Willy resents him. Willy feels that being well-liked is crucial but Charley is only liked. He also pays no great attention to his son as Willy does to his; and yet Bernard becomes successful while Biff and Happy are both somewhat losers. Charley is a thorn in Willy's side. It is doubly humiliating that Willy must look to Charley for a loan at the end of each month to pretend to Linda that he has been making commission on his sales. This segment of Willy's life leads into the most tragic part of his existence.

Part 3 of  
Main Body--  
Final Phase

Here in the final phase of Willy's life, "the woods are burning." He realizes that time is running out on him and he feels compelled to make his mark--to proclaim to the world that Willy Loman existed. This is very important to him--something concrete and lasting. His attempt at a carrot garden is really a symbolic gesture indicating Willy's desire to make something grow and flourish.

Willy compares his life to his older brother, Ben, in this phase. Ben walked into the jungle of life poor and exited a rich man; he beat the jungle. Willy feels he has lost the battle to the jungle and now must exit the only way left open to him--suicide. In "Tragedy and the Common Man," Miller says that the tragic hero "is ready to lay down his life," for his beliefs. In the end, Willy Loman is such a man. He strongly believes that his sons--especially Biff--are well-liked and clings to the dream that with a little money they could make something of themselves. Therefore, with his illusions still strongly implanted in his mind, Willy takes the car and his illusions to his death.

<u>Conclusion</u>	According to Miller's definition, the character of Willy Loman is by all means a tragic hero. His life was a play in which he acted the role of someone he would like to have been but was not underneath.	Thesis Statement I
Return to Miller's criteria	His tragic flaw, or the shortcoming he felt about himself, made him develop false ideas and philosophies. These concepts, in turn, were passed on to his sons who were hurt by them. Willy clung to his dreams, refused to be torn away from them and, eventually, carried them all the way to his death. While Miller may see Willy's suicide as heroic, I see only the tragic dimensions of his actions. I say it was a tragic death because Willy compromised a priceless life for a twenty thousand dollar insurance policy.	Summary of paper
Thesis Statement II		Return to writer's definition of tragedy

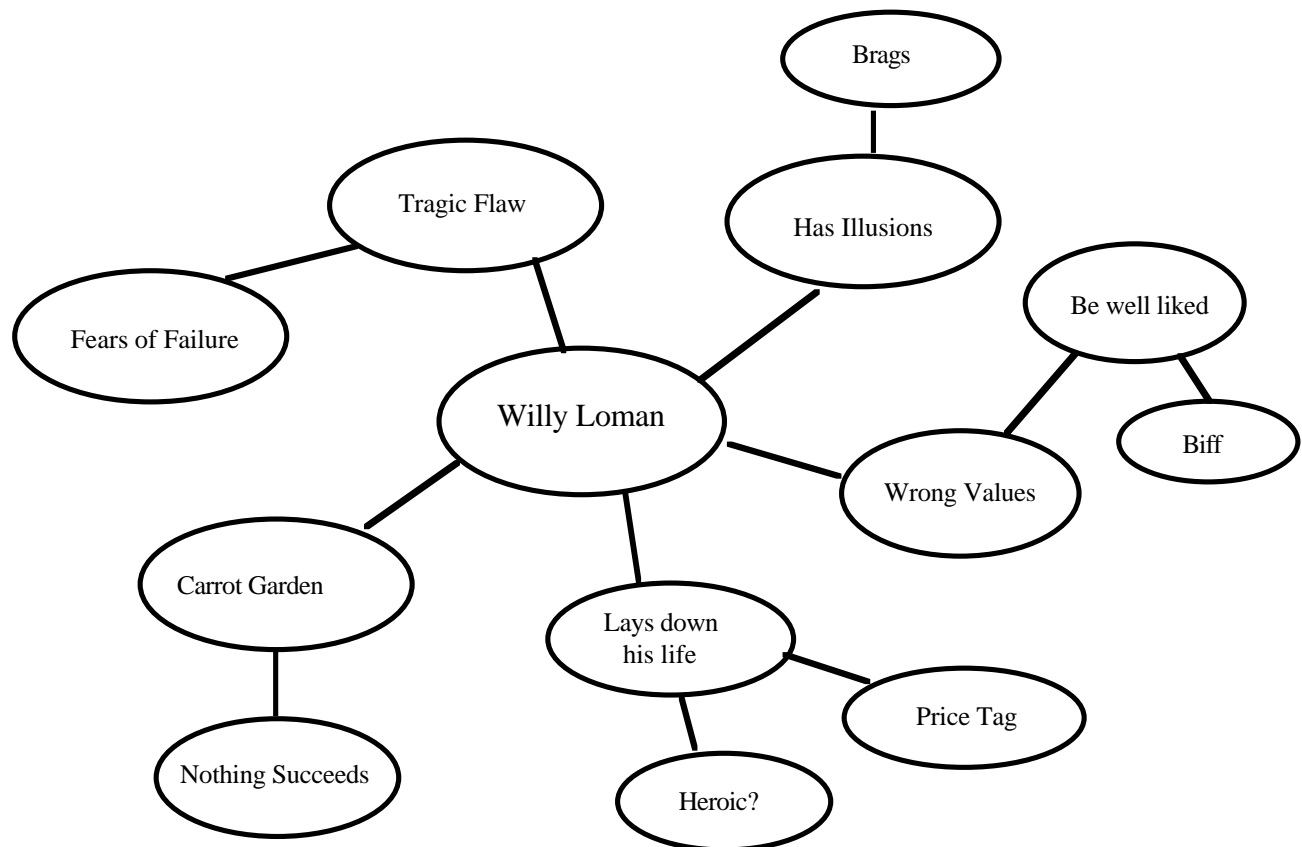
## Organizing and Planning a Composition

It is not enough to know what you want to say in an analytical/expository composition. You also have to carefully consider how you want to say it. In other words, generating and planning go hand in hand in an effective piece of writing. Here are some planning or what are often called prewriting and/or precomposing strategies to help you organize your thoughts and translate them into a written text.

### Finding a Focus: Clustering and Freewriting

Finding a focus for your composition involves not only generating ideas but deciding which ideas are “kernel” ideas, the ideas that get at the heart of what you want to say. One way to find your focus is to cluster and then to freewrite about your essay topic.

Clustering<sup>1</sup> is a brainstorming activity that generates ideas, images and feelings around a topic or stimulus word. For example, this is what the student who wrote “The Tragic Life and Death of Willy Loman” clustered when she pondered whether Willy Loman was a tragic hero.



<sup>1</sup>For more information on clustering, see Gabriel Rico's book, *Writing the Natural Way* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, Inc., 1983).



Once you have clustered a number of ideas about your subject, taking five minutes to freewrite as quickly as you can about that topic, without censoring yourself, can often help you discover an “Aha” that will give you a focus for your paper. For instance, when the student wrote “The Tragic Life and Death of Willy Loman,” she discovered that although Willy fit Arthur Miller’s definition of a tragic hero, she did not agree. She felt he was just tragic and not heroic:

Hmm. Is Willy a tragic hero? Well, he certainly has a tragic flaw. He cannot accept himself for who he is and he is petrified of failure. But what’s heroic about that? I guess he is willing to lay down his life for what he believes in -- material success. But this belief has been his downfall. And his sons are infected with the same diseased illusions. Maybe Miller thinks this is heroic but I just think it’s tragic. Willy believed in the wrong values. He sold himself short.

### Considering Your Audience

Upon completing your paper, your reader should be able to paraphrase (put into his/her own words) the basic premises of your composition. You need to carefully consider what your reader needs to know in order to be able to write such a paraphrase. This will include determining: who your audience is (the teacher, peers, students at a different grade level, an elected official, etc.); what your audience can be presumed to know or not to know and what they need to know in order to understand your argument; what your purpose is relative to your audience (to inform, persuade, refute, etc.); and whether your audience is likely to be sympathetic to your ideas or be likely to come up with objections to and/or questions about what you have to say. It is important to keep your reader in mind as you write.

### Should You Use “I” in Your Paper?

The issue of whether to use “I” in an analytical/expository paper is a controversial one. It is best to check with your instructor regarding his or her preferences. In professional articles, you will often encounter a phrase like, “In this paper, I will argue that...” However, you will rarely find a professional writer who says, “I think...”

### Determining an Appropriate Tone

In addition to keeping what your audience does or doesn’t know about your topic in mind, it is important to determine what kind of tone you will adopt. The tone of a piece of writing communicates the author’s attitude toward his or her topic and reader. Tone may also be referred to as the writer’s voice. How would you characterize the tone of this excerpt from Kevin Leman’s *The Birth Order Book*?

#### **The Leman Tribe and How We Grew**

To give you a quick look at the three “typical” birth order positions, bear with me while I introduce you to the family I grew up in. (You’ll meet my own family, wife Sande, daughters Holly and Krissy, and son Kevin II a little later.) Mom and Dad Leman had three children:

Sally - first born

John. Jr. (Jack) - middle child, born three years later

Kevin ("Baby Cub") - born five years after Jack

I'll explain the "Cub" business later because it remains my nickname to this day. But first a look at my sister, Sally, a classic first born who lives in a small town in western New York. I usually take my wife and children to visit Sally's immaculate house just about every summer vacation, and the first thing we all notice as we come through the front door is the clear vinyl runner which leads to every room in the house. The message is loud and clear: "Thou shalt not walk on the blue carpet, except where absolutely necessary."

What does the fact that Leman assumes a conversational, humorous tone tell you about the kind of relationship he wishes to establish with his reader as well as the perspective he wants to place his topic in? As you formulate your writing plan, begin thinking about the tone of voice that will be best suited to your audience and purpose.

### Formulating a Writing Plan

Before you begin writing, develop an informal writing plan or microtheme<sup>2</sup> to help you shape the structure of your composition and to identify key points you want to make along the way. Look at this writing plan as a general road map to where you're going rather than as an explicit set of directions you have to follow. Divide a piece of notebook paper into three sections. At the top, write INTRODUCTION; in the center write MAIN BODY; and toward the bottom write CONCLUSION. Under INTRODUCTION, sketch out two different ways you could open your paper that will orient the reader to the topic as well as engage his or her interest. You might begin with a description, an anecdote, a pertinent quote, a statement of fact, a question, or a number of other introductory strategies. Your audience for your writing plan is yourself. So, use any form of writing that will help you think on paper. In your MAIN BODY section, brainstorm a list of main points that you intend to make. Under each main point, list at least one example that you can use to support what you have to say. Finally, to generate ideas for the CONCLUSION, reread the freewrite you engaged in to find your focus and freewrite again for five minutes beginning with the statement, "One key impression I'd like to leave the reader with is..."

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the microtheme, see Bean, Drenk and Lee, "Microtheme Strategies for Developing Cognitive Skills" in *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, ed. C. E. Griffin (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1982).

## Microtheme

**Introduction:** *I could begin my paper one of the following ways ...*

Ideas for Version 1:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Ideas for Version 2:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Thesis:** The claim I want to make and support in my essay is as follows: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Main Body:

Main points I want to make:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Specific references from the text to support my main points:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion:** *A predominant feeling, impression or message that I want to leave my reader with is ...*

\*Note: A thesis does not have to be stated in the introduction although writers usually make their claim early-on in the essay.

## Writing Your Introduction

The introduction to an analytical/expository composition orients the reader to the writer's purpose and focus as well as indicates something about what the reader can expect to find in the remainder of the essay. Most introductions contain a thesis statement which communicates the point the writer intends to make -- although some writers may choose to let the reader infer what their thesis is or to include it at the end of the composition rather than at the beginning. There are many approaches one can use in writing an introduction. Several of these approaches are described for you below.

### Generalization

One way to open a paper is to begin with a generalization about the topic at hand and, in the remainder of the essay, to qualify and support that generalization with specifics. Notice how this paper on birth order theory begins by offering a generalization about a topic and then supports that generalization with further details.

According to psychologists, being the first, last or middle in anything influences people in fairly predictable ways. This is particularly true of the order in which we are born into our families. Since the turn of the century when Freud's student Alfred Adler introduced the concept, psychologists have been exploring the ways in which birth order influences personality traits and they have noticed that the oldest, only, middle or youngest children in any family will share certain common tendencies or what Adler called a "lifescript." Despite the general characteristics that often apply, "birth order isn't a simplistic 1-2-3 system that says all firstborns are one way, all second children are another, and lastborns are always just like this or that," as Dr. Kevin Leman, author of *The Birth Order Book* notes. There are a number of variables in birth order theory which may account for why individuals can and very often do exhibit traits attributed to more than one birth order. "The real point," according to Leman, is that there are "dynamic relationships existing between members of a family." Birth order may help us look at those dynamics and give us "clues as to why people are the way they are."

Notice that while this paragraph begins with a generalization, it ends with the thesis statement -- that birth order may help us look at our family dynamics and give us "clues as to why people are the way they are."

### Thesis Statement

Many analytical/expository compositions begin directly with the thesis statement. The thesis is the key proposition or argument to be supported, advanced or defended by the writer throughout the remainder of the paper. This paper on *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* begins directly with the writer's thesis statement about the novel.

The novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey is just as much the story of Bromden's recovery as it is of McMurphy's sacrifice. Bromden's progress from a paranoid-schizophrenic posing as a deaf-mute to a liberated man was not because of his treatment in a mental institution, but because of McMurphy's representation of freedom, his leadership, and his self-sacrifice. As a result of McMurphy's losing his sanity, Bromden is able to face reality and becomes aware of his own identity.

### Outline of Structure

Very often, introductions present the problem or topic to be discussed and then outline the structure of the essay to follow. Notice how this student combines descriptive language and dialogue to get the reader's attention, then presents the problem/topic (a comparison/contrast of two cars) and then outlines the structure of the essay to follow. As readers, we can and should anticipate that the writer's main body of the essay will cover all three subtopics thoroughly before arriving at a decision.

Cough, cough, sputter, clank, boom! "Damn it," I screamed. "This is the last straw!" That was three days ago when my 1963 Rambler went to the great salvage yard in the sky. During the past few days, I have narrowed my choices of a new car down to two: a sporty Mazda RX-7 or a functional Datsun pick-up truck. Now the problem is which to choose. I have to consider styling, practicality and economy.

These are just a few of the many approaches to writing introductions to analytical/expository compositions. You are limited only by your imagination and what kind of approach is suitable for your topic. Consider several options and then choose the one that best fits your topic, your audience and your purpose for writing.

### Quotation

Quotations from a book, song lyric, poem, etc., are often an attention-getting way of opening a paper. In the paper below, this student uses an especially appropriate quotation from one author to introduce his generalization about the main characters in two other literary works.

"One sorrow never comes but brings an heir that may succeed as his inheritor."

This line, written by William Shakespeare, could have been written for Mariana in Tennyson's poem. Surprisingly, it could be applied equally well to Miss Havisham in Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Both women are bitten by the serpent of unrequited love and neither one is able to overcome the effect of its toxicity. Through examining each character's long standing affliction caused by being abandoned, we can compare and contrast how Tennyson and Dickens reveal the personalities of Mariana and Miss Havisham.

Notice how descriptively this student makes his generalization, using the metaphor of the serpent's bite, and then moves from the generalization to a statement of the paper's purpose.

### Description

In order to engage your reader's interest, it is often effective to lead into analytical/expository writing with a descriptive passage. This is the introduction to a paper on Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*:

She looked as wary as a dog who is kicked every time its owner passes by. Her complexion was a yellowish-color and her hair, limp as seaweed, dripped from her head. She wore this full-type skirt, of an obtrusive pattern, which made your eyes go crazy if you looked at it too long. And her once white blouse was now some color in between grey and khaki, with pale yellow crescents staining her armpits. Esther Greenwood, former golden girl and winner of countless scholarships and prizes, stood at the door of Dr. Nolan's office, hesitating to take that crucial step inside.

### Asking a Question

Opening a paper with a question is another good way to engage a reader's interest. Here is another paper on Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*:

Why, one wonders, did Sylvia Plath choose only thirty years to live? She was young, beautiful and talented. Seemingly, she had everything to live for. The first stanza from Erica Jong's poem, "The Critics (For everyone who writes about Sylvia Plath including me)," aptly describes some of the torment and promise of Sylvia Plath's short life:

Because she was clamped in the vise of herself  
because she was numb  
because words moved slowly as glaciers  
because they flowed from her mouth like wine  
because she was angry  
& knotted her hair  
& wore sand in her bra  
because she had written herself into a corner  
& then got burned

because she invented the stars  
& watched them fall. . .

Sylvia Plath, the great American poet and novelist, who allowed words to flow from her mouth like wine and then silenced those words by her own hand in 1963, in many ways, remains a mystery.

Notice how this writer moves from a question, to a quotation and then concludes with a generalization.

### Narration

Very often narration can be used as a framing device for a piece of exposition. Some narrative techniques you might consider are anecdote, dialogue and interior monologue. Here are examples -- all from analytical/expository compositions on birth order theory.

- **Anecdote**

An anecdote is a short narrative of an interesting, amusing or biographical incident. This student opens her birth order essay with a personal reminiscence:

*Happy Birthday to you  
Happy Birthday to you  
Happy Birthday, dear Ann  
Happy Birthday to you!*

This was the fifth time this song had been sung to me. I just sat there basking in glory, watching the movement of multi-colored, pastel balloons bobbing in bunches from strings everywhere in the patio. My birthday presents had been opened and my wish list had been answered: a baby doll with extra clothing, a china tea set, and a book of paper dolls, complete with a pair of sharp, shiny, silver scissors. Even the cake and ice cream were my favorites -- chocolate.

The day had gone perfectly, until shortly after clean-up, when my parents adjourned to the living room with their friends, leaving me and my eight guests alone in the patio. Being the first born child in my family, and naturally gifted with the talents of a leader and entrepreneur, I successfully convinced all eight party-goers that they were in need of a hair cut and for a promissory nickel I would use my new birthday scissors to do the job. My guests were delighted with their new looks, but not so their parents -- or mine. I spent the remainder of the day in my room with several clear imprints of my mother's hand on my back end. It was a memorable birthday, but not in the way I had expected.

It was not until I read Dr. Kevin Leman's *The Birth Order Book* that I recognized the influence of birth order theory on my own life and how I have exhibited classic first-born traits even as a small child.

- **Dialogue**

Another element of narrative writing that can lend itself to an analytical/expository paper is the use of dialogue. This student took an imaginative approach to his birth order paper by setting up the introduction as if it were the opening scene in a play:

SCENE 1

Curtain opens on a rectangular formica-topped table. A family of five sit engaged in both conversation and dinner: Dad at the head of the table; oldest son at opposite end; mother and youngest to Dad's right; sister across from them.

Dad: (in a low voice) Don't reach. You know better than that.  
 Mark: (apologetically) Yes, Dad. (pause) Pass the butter please.  
 Mom: What happened at 4-H, sis?  
 Laurie: (apathetically) Oh, not much. We learned what to feed the horse and how to groom the mane. She gets so upset if we don't do it just right.  
 Mike: (bouncing up and down smashing vegetables with the fork) Learned to clean up with the pooper-scooper yet?  
 Laurie: (sarcastically) Very funny.  
 Mark: I get to direct the pep band at tonight's basketball game against Monticello. I think we'll win.  
 Dad: From drummer to conductor, huh? Good for you, son. (glancing up from his dinner to give a wink of approval)  
 Mom: Is the band any good?  
 Mark: Ah, we're okay. We need more practice. Are my pants clean?  
 Mom: (smiling) Yes, and ironed.  
 Mark: Great! Thanks, mom. (exit stage left)  
 Laurie: You iron his jeans? Oh, brother!  
 Mom: By the way, what took you so long to get home from 4-H?  
 Laurie: Julie and some other friends came by and we hung out for awhile.  
 Dad: I don't know about that group...  
 Mike: (interrupting) Can I go to the game with Mark?  
 Mom: You'll have to ask him.  
 Mike: (getting up from the table, calling through a pretend megaphone) Mark...

How can three children with the same parents in the same house grow up to be so different? Well, according to birth order theory it's relatively simple -- just be born!

- **Interior Monologue**

An interior monologue is a conversation which goes on inside someone's head. Let's listen to Deedee Hathcock's debate concerning whether she will or won't finish her birth order paper before taking off for summer vacation:

Oldest Voice: No, I have to do the paper tonight.



- Youngest Voice: You are being ridiculous. You have too many things to do for your trip even if you had two full days ahead of you, instead of just tonight.
- Oldest Voice: I said I would do it, and I will. I can't go back on my word. I must finish what I start.
- Youngest Voice: You will make dumb mistakes. The world can turn without you, you know. Do what is best for you. Two nights of being up until three isn't it.
- Middle Voice: Hang on there. There is always a way. Get up early, but go to bed by twelve. Spend just one more hour on the paper, do the best you can, and finish the rest later.

This argument was bouncing off the inside walls of my brain on the freeway as I rushed home after class yesterday, stopping for two last minute errands on the way, adding to the overwhelming feeling of drowning because I had not even taken the suitcases out of the closet to pack them for my summer vacation that was due to begin right after class the next day. Suddenly, I realized that here was a living example of the mixture of birth order traits I had discovered within my personality during this past two weeks. Birth order theorists have grouped traits most often shared by people born as oldest, youngest, or as a middle child in their families.

### Analogy

An analogy is an extended comparison between two things which correspond or resemble one another in some way. In the following paper, the student compares herself to a cinematographer and uses the analogy of the camera lens to represent the reader's perspective of a work of literature. She begins the analogy with the title "What the Lens Reveals." Her opening lines read as follows:

If I were a cinematographer called upon to delve into the very emotional center of Tennyson's Mariana and Dickens' Miss Havisham, I would surely portray my subjects in quite different lights. Let's let the camera lens reveal to us the plight of the 19th century lovelorn so indelibly presented to us by a poet and prose writer.

Note that an analogy must be a sustained comparison. So, the student continues...

With the widest possible lens and smallest aperture opening, our camera would first focus on the domicile of Mariana. Here all is black and white. There is no life to portray. All is decay and neglect with no hope of a living flower arising from the broken flower pot.

## Sharing Your Introduction

Most people wait until they have completed a first or even a final draft of a paper before seeking feedback from an outside reader. But it is often helpful to get responses to your writing while it is still in progress. One advantage of writing two sample introductions to a paper is that you can get an immediate sense of what will engage your reader's interest.

### Writing a Hook

Effective writers often consciously use an anecdote, a bit of description, a question, or other attention getting strategies as a hook to grab the reader's attention. Once you have this perspective from an audience regarding what made them want to read on, it is much easier to develop the remainder of your composition. Put Version #1 and Version #2 on the top of your two introductions and share them with at least three peer partners. Each partner should select his or her favorite version and give reasons why.

### Comparing Two Versions of Your Introduction

Here are two versions of a paper on birth order theory and other students' responses:

#### **Version #1**

Dr. Kevin Leman, psychologist and author of The Birth Order Book, contends that there is a definite pattern of personality traits for each member of the family depending on their birth order -- oldest, middle or youngest. The oldest child is usually goal oriented, high achieving, and a perfectionist or little adult. The middle child never gets the attention of the first born and is also not treated as permissively as the baby of the family. This child is usually the negotiator, not really fitting in, being sandwiched in the middle. Middle children often mediate between older or younger siblings. The youngest child in Leman's family dynamics is precocious, seeks attention, wants to be center stage and sometimes lacks discipline.

I guess you could say I'm lucky because I have had the unique experience of being in all three birth order positions. Let's look at my life to see if Leman's predictions about patterns in personality traits hold up.

Do you remember the "Leave it to Beaver" show? I was surprised when this show came out. It was special because the kids were the main characters. It was also special because I was the first Beaver!...

#### **Version #2**

"Hey, Wally?"

"Yeah, Beave."

"What's it like being an older brother?"

"Gee, I don't know. What makes you ask me something stupid like that?"

"I don't know. I just wondered."

"Well, you always have to do stuff first and the grown-ups yell if you don't always do your best."

“Yea, I know. Grown-ups love to yell.”

“Then you’ve got your little brother always asking questions and tagging along, and being a pest. And if you try to ditch him or hit him, then you’re really in for it!...You know what Beaver?”

“What Wally?”

“You’re a real pain!”

The pillow is thrown in jest; “The Beaver” ducks in the nick of time. And, sitting in my living room in the world outside the televisions set, I duck too. How true this show was for me then -- because I really was the youngest brother and I really was the first “Beaver.” But more on that later.

As Beaver would say, what is it like being an older brother? For that matter, what are the implications of being the oldest, middle or youngest child of any gender in a family? Dr. Kevin Leman, psychologist and author of The Birth Order Book, contends that there is a definite pattern of personality traits for each family member depending on their birth order. The oldest child is usually goal oriented, high achieving, and a perfectionist or little adult. The middle child never gets the attention of the first born and is also not treated as permissively as the baby of the family. This child is usually the negotiator, not really fitting in, being sandwiched in the middle. Middle children often mediate between older or younger siblings. The youngest child in Leman’s family dynamics is precocious, seeks attention, wants to be center stage and sometimes lacks discipline.

I guess you could say I’m lucky because I have had the unique experience of being in all three birth order positions. Let’s look at my life -- or you might say my three lives -- to see if Leman’s predictions about patterns in personality traits hold up.

Which of the two versions do you think had the best hook and made you want to read on? The writer’s response partners had this to say about the two opening versions of his paper:

- I’d have to cast my vote for #2! It’s great and I think you could weave in your own connection to it with no problem. That show to me epitomizes BOT.
- Version #2 is my favorite because it gets the reader’s attention immediately. Suggestions: load the dialogue to show more birth order traits in each child.
- #2. I like the use of dialogue to illustrate the roles of the oldest and youngest child. A couple of places the quotations got muddled for me.

## **Developing the Main Body of Your Composition**

### **Organizing the Main Body**

Once you have decided upon which of your introductions to use, go back to your writing plan and see if the main points and the specific examples you jotted down will logically follow from your introduction. Most introductions either directly or indirectly indicate the structure of the main body of the essay that will follow. For example, in the paper on “The Tragic Life and Death of Willy Loman,” the writer indicates that Willy’s tragic life seems to have “three phases.” The reader can reasonably anticipate that the main body of her essay will have a three-part structure -- one for each phase. Go back over your writing plan and sequence your main points and examples in the order that will be most helpful to your audience. Then, reread your chosen sequence and your introduction to determine if they are consistent with one another.

### **Distinguishing Between Summary and Commentary**<sup>3</sup>

If you are writing a literature-based analytical/expository essay, most likely, your paper will combine plot summary, supporting details and commentary. (In non-literature-based essays, plot summary might be replaced by factual statements or by commonly accepted generalizations.) Whereas plot summary reiterates what is obvious and known, and supporting detail illustrates or elaborates upon those summary statements, commentary offers opinions, interpretations, insights, analysis, personal responses, and so forth. Commentary goes a step beyond summary and support to remark upon the significance of something. In general, successful analytical/expository essays should include significantly more commentary than summary.

In the example below, note how the student successfully interweaves plot summary, supporting detail and commentary to make her point about an incident in Liliana Heker’s “The Stolen Party.”

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<sup>3</sup>For more information on the teaching of commentary, see Jane C. Schaffer’s *Teaching the Multiparagraph Essay*, (San Diego: Jane Schaffer Publications, 1995).

1 Plot Summary	<sup>1</sup> At the end of the party, Rosaura is expecting to receive a present of either a yo-yo or a bracelet, like all the other party
2 Supporting Detail	guests. <sup>2</sup> In fact, because she was the most helpful and “the best behaved at the party,” serving the cake and performing with the magician, Rosaura secretly believes she will be given
3 Plot Summary	both presents. <sup>3</sup> Instead, Señora Ines hands her two dollar
4 Commentary	bills. <sup>4</sup> This is a slap in the face of Rosaura. <sup>5</sup> Señora Ines has
5 Commentary	treated Rosaura like the hired help instead of like a guest. <sup>6</sup> To
6 Commentary	make matters worse, <sup>7</sup> Señora Ines says, “Thank you for all
7 Supporting Detail	your help, my pet.” <sup>8</sup> This is a second slap which adds insult
8 Commentary	to injury. <sup>9</sup> Rosaura is no better than the trained monkey who
9 Commentary	performs at the party. <sup>10</sup> Señora Ines treats her like she is less
10 Commentary	than human. <sup>11</sup> What a devastating blow!
11 Commentary	

### Quoting from the Text

In most analytical/expository compositions, whether or not they are literature-based, it is customary to quote from the text or other source material to support your argument. The most effective papers feature relevant quotes which are woven into the writer’s own prose smoothly and logically. Here are some conventions to keep in mind when quoting from the text. All the examples are from the essays on character and culture in Amy Tan’s “The Moon Lady” which is in *The Joy Luck Club*:

- Make quotations part of your sentence or set them apart as independent clauses.
  - Quotations can be woven directly into your sentence without punctuation.  
*Example:*  
 Ying-ying discovered too late that she “wished to be found.”
  - Quotations can be introduced with commas.  
*Example:*  
 At the beginning of the story, Ying-ying describes her life by stating, “All these years I kept my true nature hidden, running allong like a small shadow so that nobody could catch me.”
  - Quotations can be set apart as an independent clause and introduced by a colon.

#### *Example:*

The following lines from the story introduce Ying-ying’s attachment to her shadow:

Standing perfectly still like that, I discovered my shadow. At first it was just a dark spot on the bamboo mats that covered the courtyard

bricks. It had short legs and long arms, a dark coiled braid just like mine. When I shook my head, it shook its head. We flapped our arms. We raised one leg. I turned back around quickly and it faced me. I lifted the bamboo mat to see if I could peel off my shadow, but it was under the mat, on the brick. I shrieked with delight at my shadow's own cleverness. I ran to the shade under the tree, watching my shadow chase me. It disappeared. I love my shadow, this dark side of me that had my same restless nature.

- If a quotation is over four lines long (as in the example above), indent ten spaces from the left hand margin. Do not use quotation marks. Shorter quotations that are four lines or less should be put in quotation marks.
- Commas and periods go inside quotation marks. Semi-colons and colons go outside quotation marks.
- End punctuation like exclamation points and question marks go inside the quotation marks if they are part of the text being quoted and outside the quotation marks if they are not part of what is being quoted but rather part of the writer's sentence.

*Examples:*

Ying-ying is petrified as the men check her over as if she were a piece of merchandise, saying, "Is it too small. Shall we throw it back? Or is it worth some money?"

Why is woman "yin, the darkness within, where untempered passions lie, and man yang, bright truth lighting our minds"?

- Don't string a bunch of quotations together in a row. Weave them logically into your own prose.
- Don't pad your essay with quotations. Be selective.

### Showing, Not Telling<sup>4</sup>

In order to get an idea across clearly, accurately and concisely, you often have to do a lot of telling in analytical/expository writing. In other words, you need to state things explicitly and directly to ensure that your reader is well-informed by what you have to say. But, to illustrate those telling statements, you can often use vivid, concrete examples that show the reader what you mean. For example, instead of saying "The student was bored," you might say, "While the teacher droned on like a broken record, the student played imaginary drums on his desk, winked at any girl whose eye he caught, and then yawned, open-mouthed, before drifting off to sleep."

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<sup>4</sup>For more information on showing, not telling, see Rebekah Caplan's *Showing Writing: A Training Program to Help Students Be Specific* (Palo Alto: Dale Seymour Publications, 1984).

Showing, not telling -- which is primarily a descriptive writing strategy -- can be used to enrich analytical/expository writing. Consider, for example, the way this student shows you that she is a perfectionist before she tells you that she has this personality trait.

My friend, Kathy, sat on a high stool talking on the telephone. As usual, I was in the kitchen cleaning up. I tore off a paper towel to dry a bowl. To my discomfort, it tore off unevenly. While Kathy looked on in amazement, I tore off the remaining piece to even it up.

"Mom, you're not going to believe what Anne just did! She tore off a new towel so it would be even!" Kathy exclaimed, laughing into the receiver.

This small incident serves to illustrate just one dimension of my personality, a need for order and structure. Perfectionism is a trait that I share with others in my position as a first born in a family.

As you consider which examples from your own life you will use to illustrate your main points, select the ones that will enable you to show as well as tell.

### Figurative Language

Notice that in the previous discussion of showing, not telling, the telling sentence, "The student was bored," was converted into a showing sentence, "While the teacher droned on like a broken record, the student played imaginary drums on his desk, winked at any girl whose eye he caught, and then yawned, open-mouthed, before drifting off to sleep." Notice that the expression, "like a broken record," is an example of figurative language. When we speak figuratively, we speak non-literally. In other words, we identify or compare one thing in terms of another. While the majority of the prose in an expository composition should be literal and straightforward, a well-turned figurative expression can often have a powerful affect on the reader.

- Simile

A simile states a comparison between two things using like or as. Here are two examples from a description of the main character in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*:

She looked as wary as a dog who is kicked every time its owner passes by.  
Her complexion was a yellowish color and her hair, limp as seaweed,  
dripped from her head.

- Metaphor

A metaphor is a direct comparison of two things on the basis of a shared quality--as if the one thing were the other. Here is an example from the student essay on *Death of a Salesman* at the beginning of this packet:

Willy's whole existence was spent behind a fortress of lies and illusions  
that mounted until the misconceptions were too high and the walls of his  
fortress came tumbling down.

- **Analogy**

An analogy is a comparison between two things which correspond or resemble one another in some way which is extended, elaborated upon and sustained over time. For an example of an analogy, see page 16 in your packet.

- **Allusion**

In an allusion, the writer compares some present event, situation or person to someone or something from history or literature. Usually, an allusion is a brief reference that the audience is presumed to be familiar with. Here is an example from an essay *on Death of a Salesman*:

Like Sisyphus, Willy seems doomed to set out each day in search of material success only to return empty-handed and discouraged. The rock forever rolls downhill.

### Unifying Devices

To promote unity within an analytical/expository composition, it is important to order your main ideas and support information in a way that progresses logically and which builds toward your conclusion. Several devices can be used to connect this information -- between introduction, main body, and conclusion, between paragraphs and between sentences within paragraphs -- and give it a sense of overall coherence.

- **Subheadings**

Subheadings are often appropriate in a long composition as guideposts for the reader to follow along the way.

- **Repetition of Key Words and Phrases**

By repeating a key word or phrase, you can reinforce links between different sections of a composition.

- **Consistency of Tone**

By maintaining a consistent tone throughout your paper, be it serious or humorous, you can convey a clear sense of your attitude toward your topic and toward the reader.

- **Transition and Signal Words**

Transition and signal words and phrases help the reader see how your thoughts are progressing, emphasize the connections between sentences and paragraphs, and guide the reader through your composition. Here is a selected list of transition and signal words:



## Writers' Transition and Signal Words

Time/Sequence Words	Place/Direction Words	Order of Importance/ Listing Words	Comparison/ Contrast Words
after afterwards ago already always at last at that time at the same time before during eventually finally first first of all following further immediately in the first place in the meantime much last lastly later meanwhile next now once presently second secondly several sometimes soon soon after some subsequently suddenly then thereafter third to begin with today until while	above across from adjacent to ahead around away from below beneath between beyond close to down far farther here horizontally in close proximity inside near nearby next to on the opposite side opposite outside over parallel there under underneath vertically within	additionally another at first also and as well as besides first former furthermore in addition last latter likewise many moreover much next primarily second secondarily several some the following then third	although but by comparison compared with conversely despite differing from even though equally important however in comparison to in contrast in like manner in the same way just as like likewise nevertheless on the contrary on the other hand otherwise rather than similarly still unfortunately unlike yet
	<b>Cause and Effect Words</b>  accordingly as a result as if as though because consequently for that reason hence in order to it follows that on account of provided that since so so that then therefore thereupon thus	<b>Connecting Words</b>  again also and at length besides in addition in any event indeed in spite of for instance further moreover to this end with this in mind	<b>Summary/Conclusion Words</b>  accordingly as a result as has been noted as I have stated consequently for this reason hence in brief in other words in short it follows that in fact on the whole so that is that is to say therefore thus to conclude to summarize to sum up
<b>Conditional Words</b>  even though as though whereas unless	<b>Emphasis Words</b>  certainly indeed moreover obviously of course	<b>Additional Thoughts Words</b>  and moreover further furthermore also likewise similarly too in like manner again in the same way besides	
<b>Illustration/ Example Words</b>  for example for instance namely that is to illustrate			

## Writing Your Conclusion

A well written conclusion will not only reinforce the main point of the essay but add to the power of its message. Here are just a few approaches to writing your conclusion:

### Summarizing Main Points of an Essay

One way to conclude an analytical/expository composition is to summarize or restate the main points you have made in your essay. For a more powerful effect, you should avoid simply repeating yourself. Instead, use your conclusion to highlight a key idea (or ideas) that you would like to leave your reader with.

In *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Esquivel and Shakespeare show how traditions conflict with love and how these conflicts might lead to tragedy. The traditions hindered the development of relationships between people who truly loved each other. Unfortunately, the “star-crossed” lovers learned that “love doesn’t conquer all.” In these cases, it couldn’t conquer tradition and customs, especially when it was up against a mother like Mama Elena, and a father like Lord Capulet.

Notice how this writer summarizes the main point of the essay but then goes on to add a closing reflection.

### Asking a Question

Sometimes, asking a question can be an effective way to frame and focus your closing remarks. This essay, which focuses on whether or not the main character, Willy Loman, qualifies as a tragic hero in *Death of a Salesman*, closes by asking a series of questions and then implicitly answers them.

The crucial question is, Does Willy Loman find himself? Was there ever a possibility of “victory” for Willy? According to Miller, a possibility of victory must exist or the play will only achieve pathos. Is Willy strong enough to fight his oppressive home environment, his failure to achieve success in his working environment, and his own mentally dysfunctional state? In *Death of a Salesman*, the reader can only feel pity and compassion for Willy and pessimism about the environment and the society that oppresses him.

### Drawing a Final Conclusion

Sometimes, the close of a paper is a dramatic place to draw one final conclusion. This writer has been comparing two characters from works of 19th century British fiction. Notice how he uses his conclusion to point out some important differences between the two characters.

Tennyson seems to portray Mariana as much more alone than Dicken's Miss Havisham. Mariana is so totally wrapped up in her tightly woven cocoon, that it seems doubtful she will ever change. I believe Miss Havisham, although in her own little world, has learned how to use her situation to attract pity and attention from others. She, at least, is not cut off from the rest of the world, as is Mariana. But neither has the hope of anticipation that must have filled every young bride. And pity is a poor substitute for the true love both Miss Havisham and Mariana sought in their early life.

### Coming Full Circle

All good conclusions should leave the reader with a sense of completeness. But some conclusions will very explicitly create a sense of ending where you began. Notice how this writer establishes closure by addressing her reader as an intimate friend who has just come to the end of a long conversation:

Well, you've met my family, and through them been introduced to birth order theory. The theory intrigues me. I've found it applicable to my family. Through knowledge of it, I feel I'm a bit more understanding of people, and of why they behave as they do. Maybe, after having read this paper, you can begin to make your own applications.

### Aha...

This phrase refers to a sense of insight that has been achieved through the act of writing. The emphasis in this kind of conclusion is on the significance of what the writer has learned. This writer was offered a position as a television journalist if she would agree to have cosmetic surgery. Her conclusion reveals her decision as well as an important insight she made.

Despite the fact that Marcia's story was-and still is-heartening, the particulars of her case are different from mine. She apparently never accepted her nose and was, in that sense, convinced that she should undergo surgery. As for me, even as ambivalent as I am, I don't think I rejected my nose. Whether it is viewed as socially acceptable or not, it remains *my* nose. It does what it's supposed to do. And the more I've thought about cosmetic surgery, the more I equate it with a violation of the unique characteristics of my nose. Noses such as mine may someday become fashionable--even ideal. I think I'll just accept my own standards which means accepting *all* of me.

### Proposing a Solution

Conclusions also provide writers with opportunities to solve problems. This writer had been struggling with what car to buy after his “1963 Rambler went to the great salvage yard in the sky.” After examining the pros and cons of two cars, he opted for a third choice:

After giving it a lot of thought, a Ford Ranchero sounds better and better. The front half of the car is luxurious and spacious and comes with the optional equipment available for the Mazda; the rear half is similar to the pick-up truck allowing for transportation of passengers and work equipment. Surprisingly, the price is just half-way in between the two cars. But, most important to me, is that I am getting the advantages of both the RX-7 and the Datsun all wrapped up in one package. How can I lose?

As with writing introductions, there are numerous ways to bring one’s composition to a close. As you write your conclusion, make sure that your remarks are a logical outgrowth of the ideas you have presented and developed throughout your composition.

## **Criteria for an Effective Analytical/Expository Composition**

The criteria for an effective analytical/expository paper will differ according to the purpose of the writing. However, here are some general criteria that apply to most types of analytical/expository writing.

### **CONTENT**

- Clearly explains the writer's thesis, claim or main premise.
- Supports ideas and opinions with evidence such as specific examples and quotes from the text.
- Keeps audience in mind. Reader should be able to paraphrase writer's main ideas after reading the paper.
- Goes beyond summary to interpret, comment and offer insights.
- Explains, interprets or argues authoritatively and logically.

### **STYLE**

- Integrates elements of descriptive and narrative writing into exposition.
- Uses vivid, apt or precise diction. May use figurative language.
- Engages and sustains the reader's attention through lively examples which show as well as tell.
- Maintains a consistent tone and conveys a sense of the writer's personal voice.
- Varies sentence structure and length to give the prose fluency.

### **FORM**

- Is written in standard analytical/expository form:
  - Introduction--Introduces topic and contains indication of what is to come.
  - Main body--Develops ideas point by point with vivid examples that show as well as tell.
  - Conclusion--Either summarizes, comes full circle, explores significance, asks a question, goes beyond the explanatory scope of the essay to offer new insights, etc.
- Ideas flow logically.
- Contains ample transitions which tie ideas together and facilitate the flow of the paper.

### **CORRECTNESS**

- Has few, if any, errors in the conventions of written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure) that interfere with the writer's message.

Keep these criteria in mind -- particularly as you get ready to share your first draft with a partner to get feedback that will aid you in revision.

## **Sharing and Peer Response**

Sharing a first draft of your paper with a partner may enable you to see the affect of your words on an outside reader.

### **What I Really Mean Is...**

Before exchanging your paper with a classmate or peer group, take out a piece of paper, write “What I really mean is...” as an opening statement and then restate in a few sentences or a paragraph the central thrust or overall message of your composition. This strategy will help you to refocus on the controlling idea of your essay and sum up your thinking on your topic. If you communicated your main ideas clearly, your partner should be able to paraphrase your paper by writing a “What I think you really meant to say” statement. Keep your WIRMI (What I really mean is...) statement so that you can compare what you really meant to communicate with the message your reader came away with.

## **Revision**

British novelist E. M. Forster once said “How do I know what I think until I see what I say?” In other words, writing is a process which enables us to discover what we think about a given subject. You can’t expect your writing to automatically be “perfect” and “finished” at the first draft stage. Rather, the first draft gives you an opportunity to get your ideas out on the page.

Once you have completed a draft, you need to take time to reflect upon what you have written -- to rethink, re-see and reshape words and ideas. Use the feedback you gained during sharing and peer response to take a second look at your composition. What are its strengths? What needs to be improved? What information is coming across loud and clear? What have you neglected to mention?

Basically, revision involved adding to, deleting from, or rearranging what you have written.

### **Adding**

If the responses you received to the first draft of your composition indicate that you have not presented enough information to enable someone who is unfamiliar with your topic to paraphrase its premises or if the responses indicate that your examples are not vivid enough to give the reader a clear picture, then you will need to add information to your composition. Carefully consider what specific details are necessary to give the reader a more in-depth perspective on your topic.

## Deleting

Although more first drafts suffer from not enough rather than too much information, it is also possible to overwhelm the reader with examples that detract from the overall effect of the paper by belaboring the point. Too much showing writing, for example, or long extended anecdotes or dialogue may take the reader's attention away from the controlling ideas of your composition. Similarly, repeating yourself too often can lessen the impact of what you have to say. Review your paper to see if you can zero in on your argument by paring away anything that is extraneous or overdone.

## Rearranging

There are at least three reasons why you might want to rearrange elements of your paper: to promote clarity, to heighten the impact of your remarks and to enhance the style of your composition.

### Rearranging for Clarity

Once you have seen what you've said by generating a first draft and get a better idea of what it is you think about your topic, you may discover that it would make more sense to present certain ideas in a different order. If your computer is not on the computer, you may have to actually get out scissors and tape to shift your paragraphs around and see what organizational pattern follows the most logically. Remember to use the unifying devices discussed earlier to weave the newly arranged composition back into an integrated whole.

### Rearranging for Impact

In your original draft, you may have stated your thesis up front and spent the rest of your essay supporting it. After receiving response from an outside audience, you may find that you will engage your reader's interest more by withholding your thesis until your conclusion. Again, you will need to move elements of your composition around to see what has the greatest impact upon your reader.

### Rearranging for Style

You may also want to rearrange words, phrases or sentences to enhance the style of what you have written and make it more pleasing to the reader. One strategy for promoting flow and readability in writing is sentence combining. Sentence combining is one approach to improved fluency in sentence structure. It is mainly a putting together (synthetic) rather than a taking apart (analytical) activity that involves combining short, kernel sentences into longer, more fluid wholes.

For practice, try combining these short sentences into one longer, more fluid version:

**Sentence Combining Exercise**

They surged about her.  
They caught her up.  
They bore her.  
She was protesting.  
Then she was pleading.  
Then she was crying.  
They bore her back into a tunnel.  
They bore her back into a room.  
They bore her back into a closet.  
This is where they slammed the door.  
This is where they locked the door.

Then compare your version with the original by Ray Bradbury in his short story "All Summer in a Day." See the bottom of the next page in this handbook for two samples of sentences combined by students and the original by Ray Bradbury. Once you have practiced sentence combining, review your paper and see if there are sentences within your own composition that might be enhanced through sentence combining.



## **Editing**

For many writers, editing is a process that occurs automatically as one composes. For those writers, the editing stage is simply proofreading for minor errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, etc. For students who have not acquired the conventions of written English, it requires more conscious attention to correctness. Review your paper, either individually or with a partner, to ensure that your final draft is as error free as possible. Analytical/expository compositions often involve quoting from a text (usually a work of literature) to support your point of view. Review the rules for quoting from a text in this packet.

## **The Importance of Drafting and Practice**

If you are new to analytical/expository writing, you may find that it's a difficult task. Don't be discouraged if your first attempt isn't perfect. Good writing takes time to evolve. Be sure to organize your schedule so that you have an opportunity to write more than one draft. Good writing also takes practice. As you begin to experience writing the different types of analytical/expository papers required in secondary school and college, you will begin to internalize the essay structure and writing analytical/expository papers will become easier and more familiar for you.

Good luck!

### Sentence Combining Exercise for "All Summer in a Day"

Students' versions:

- They surged about her, caught her up, and bore her into a tunnel as she was protesting, pleading, then crying, and put her in a closet where they slammed the door and locked it.
- Surging about her, they caught her up and bore her into a tunnel, a room and then a closet where they slammed and locked the door while she was protesting, pleading, then crying.

Bradbury's version:

They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the door.