Rhetoric and Composition

A Guide for the College Writer

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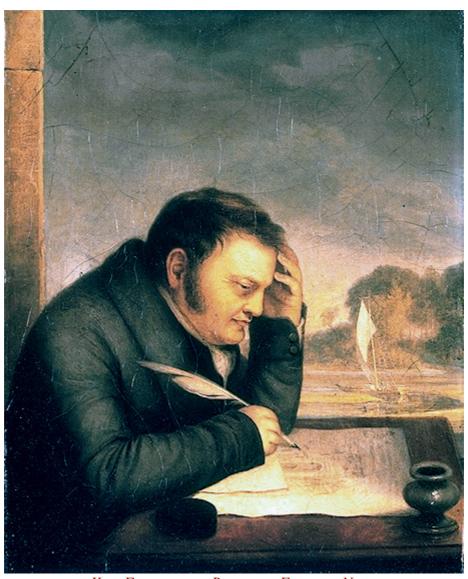the open-content textbooks collection

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UNIT 01

THE STAGES OF THE WRITING PROCESS

KARL FRIEDRICH VON RUMOHR BY FRIEDRICH NERLY

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complicated and often mysterious process. Although we may think of it as little more than arranging letters and words on a page, a few moments' reflection reveals that it is much more than that.

On the one hand, writing is an art--we don't say Shakespeare's language is "correct" but rather that it is beautiful. On the other hand, writing is a science-- we want the instructions that came with our DVD player to be accurate, precise, and easy to understand.

Then there's the matter of what makes writing "good writing." Though we might say that both an instruction manual and a play are "well written," we appreciate them for different reasons. A play written in the clear, unambiguous language of an instruction manual would not be a hit on Broadway. In other words, writing must be judged according to its context--what is its purpose, and who is it written for? Finally, even readers with a great deal in common may not agree about the quality of any particular text, just as people's opinions differ about which bands are really great. We really don't know why people have such preferences or make accurate predictions about what they will like or dislike. Simply put, writing isn't simple.

If writing is so complicated and mysterious, can it be taught? Since Aristotle, great teachers have taught complicated processes to their students by breaking them up into smaller, more understandable processes. Aristotle realized that effective communication skills, like good math skills, can be learned and taught. Math teachers don't teach integral calculus to their elementary students; instead, they begin with addition and subtraction. Everything else builds on those simple processes. No one is born a mathematician. Similarly, while luck certainly plays a role in any successful writer's career, it is wrong to assume that good writers (or speakers) are simply born into the role and everyone else is fated to flunk English class. You *can* learn to write with substance and style: it takes work, but it is within your power. You have already taken the first step.

Most of what we know about writing is also true of speaking. Aristotle wrote a famous treatise on the subject of effective communication called The Rhetoric. Though this book is meant for speakers, teachers and students have long used it to help polish their writing. This treatise is still widely read and applied today by anyone desiring to learn how to speak and write more convincingly to an audience. Your first-year composition course may even have the word "rhetoric" or "rhetorical" as part of its title. Aristotle taught that rhetoric isn't necessarily knowing exactly how to get what you want from an audience. Instead, rhetoric is the ability to determine all the available means of persuasion at your disposal. Ultimately, it's up to you to guess the best course of action, but at least rhetoric helps you make this an educated guess.

Compared to speaking, writing is a much more recent phenomenon, and for many centuries it was assumed that the best way to learn to write well was either to pray, entreat the muses, or carefully imitate writings that were already considered great. Eventually, as more people desired to write, teachers began creating rules to help them write "correctly." Unfortunately, this heavy emphasis on correctness and writing according to a narrow set of rules did little to improve student writing. Simply knowing how to write grammatically correct prose is important, yet not enough. Indeed, too much attention to correctness can result in unintentionally comical writing. Legend has it that Winston Churchill grew so irritated at pedants telling him not to end sentences with prepositions

that he told one, "Madame, that is a rule up with which I shall not put."

Since the '70s, writing instructors have been teaching writing not as adherence to fixed rules but as a dynamic process--that is, a set of distinct steps that writers follow to produce texts. Whereas before these steps were taught sequentially, now writing scholars emphasize the recursivity -- the back and forth nature -- and concursivity -- the all-at-onceness -- of the process. In other words, though we still think of writing taking place in various steps of a process, writers tend to switch frequently among them as they work. An insight gained while editing a chapter might convince the writer that an additional chapter is needed--thus, she might re-enter the drafting phase. Likewise, failure to secure a publisher for a book might lead the author all the way back to the planning and prewriting stage. In short, while it is very useful to conceive of writing as a process, it is not step-by-step. It involves a series of actions, each with their own defining characteristics.

There are five criteria we can use to evaluate any piece of writing. These criteria are Focus, Development, Organization, Style, and Conventions. Throughout this book we will be referring to these criteria and discussing how you can make your text more suitable for its intended audience. You will think about these criteria during each step of the writing process.

This wikibook contains a chapter on individual activities in the writing process. Below is a brief description of each activity and a link to the corresponding chapter.

PLANNING AND PREWRITING

Writers generally plan their documents in advance. This stage, often called "prewriting," includes everything from making a tentative outline, brainstorming, or chatting with friends or colleagues about the topic. For some writers, the prewriting stage is mostly internal--they think about their projects, but do not write until they are ready to start the actual document. Others plan extensively and map out exactly how they want their document to look when it's finished.

This chapter describes common planning and prewriting strategies and should help you "hit the ground running" when starting out your writing projects.

COLLABORATING

While there is a long history of thinking of writing as a wholly individual act, most workplace compositions (and composing in many disciplines) involve collaboration. If you're working on a collaborative text, this chapter will help you develop a collaboration plan, establish strengths and weaknesses in the group, assign roles, and do what ever else will help in producing a co-authored text.

This chapter offers some helpful tips and strategies for collaborating on documents.

RESEARCHING

Writers frequently require reliable information to support their documents. A writer's personal opinions and experience are sufficient evidence for many types of documents, but audiences will often demand more. Seeking out the information required to support your writing is called "research," and it comes in many forms.

One form of research is the interview, in which you call up or meet with someone who has information on the topic you are pursuing. Another type, "field research," involves travel to places where the topic can be studied first-hand. You might also circulate a survey. These three examples are all part of what is called "primary reserach" -- reserach you conduct yourself.

While many writing teachers assign primary research to their students in the process of writing a "research paper," much of the research that writing at the college level asks you to do is "secondary research" -- exploring other people's writing in the form of books, scholarly journals, newspapers, magazines, websites, and government documents.

This chapter describes different research strategies and provides you with the tools you'll need to properly back up the claims you make in your writing.

DRAFTING

When at least you start putting sentences and paragraphs on paper, you're drafting. Successful writers realize it's OK to write recursively--that is, they don't often start at page one and proceed all to the end without going back and changing what they wrote before. On the other hand, good drafters don't get so hung up on returning over and over to polish page one that they never reach page two.

This chapter describes drafting strategies and how to avoid common pitfalls like perfectionism and writer's block.

EDITING

You can't edit what hasn't been written. That's why editing comes after drafting. For our purposes, it's important to distinguish between deciding what needs to be improved and actually making the changes. We'll call the decision-making process "editing" and making the changes the "revising" process.

Unlike publishers, who hire professional editors to work with their writers, student writers do most of their own editing, with occasional help from peer reviewers.

This chapter describes macro editing (editing at the level of content and arrangement) and micro editing (editing at the sentence level), and provides strategies for improving your text.

REVIEWING

Having other people review your writing is essential to producing the best piece you possibly can. We often don't make the best "readers" of our own work because we are so close to it. Reviewers, on the other hand, bring valuable perspective we can't get any other way. Reviewers are anyone who is willing to look at your work and provide feedback. You're a reviewer, too -- for others' texts.

This chapter explains how to successfully review a document as well as how to make the most of the feedback you receive from other reviewers.

REVISING

Revising is making the changes you determined were necessary during the editing process. Revising is hard work, but it's probably some of the most valuable work you can do to become a better writer. Dive into the task with the willingness to wrestle with your writing and bring out the best in it, and you will learn why revising is often considered the "meat" of the writing process.

This chapter examines the revision process and identifies some strategies that will help you improve your documents and reduce the likelihood of creating even bigger problems. This chapter will also cover proofreading, or carefully scanning a document for typos and other simple errors.

PUBLISHING

What's the point of writing if no one will ever read it? Though some of us are content to write diaries or notes to ourselves, most writers desire for others to read and hopefully enjoy or benefit from their documents. This is where publishers come in: They help connect writers to readers. The Internet has introduced countless new ways for writers to publish their own documents electronically, but print publishing is still the preferred avenue for most professional writers. Of course, getting your documents accepted for publication can be a long and frustrating ordeal. We've all heard the stories of now-famous novelists who were rejected time and time again by unimaginative or overly-cautious publishers.

This chapter describes the print and electronic publishing industry, then identifies strategies that will help you distribute your documents to their intended audience. We will also discuss why so many authors fail to ever secure a publisher for their work.

CHAPTER 1.01 • PLANNING AND PREWRITING

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING AND PREWRITING

> "Writing is easy. All you do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead." **--Gene Fowler**

Although the above humorous quote is hardly the case for authors, from time to time many good writers do find it difficult to begin writing. Most authors begin working on their documents long before they sit down to type. They may first discuss their ideas with other people. Students are often advised (and sometimes even required) to talk about their intended paper topics with their instructors before investing time and energy working on them. Freelance writers typically submit a query or abstract to an editor before actually writing and submitting a full-length piece. This procedure gives editors a chance to provide feedback for the writer to consider as they prepare for submission. Queries are also a fast way for editors to judge whether a proposal is appropriate for their publication. All writers often want to know well in advance whether readers will be interested in their ideas.

Discussing your writing ideas with other people may be useful, but what if you don't have any ideas to discuss? Writers, particularly student writers, often face a significant prewriting problem: What to write about. Many college courses require essays as a major component of the course grade, yet students may struggle to find an appropriate topic or thesis to satisfy the requirement. Professors may face a similar problem: Publications may be required for tenure, but it's not always easy for an individual professor to find good ideas for articles, especially in saturated fields. Even poets and novelists may sometimes find their brains congealing as they desperately seek for new and interesting themes for their work. In short, one of a writer's greatest difficulties is simply finding something interesting or useful to write about.

Even if a writer has a good topic, other problems may still make it impossible to begin writing. Probably the most talked about problem is the infamous "writer's block". Writers suffering from writer's block may endlessly stare at the blank screen of their word processors, unable to compose a single sentence. Some writers find that this "block" is only lifted just before their deadline or due date, and they must then work frantically and recklessly to complete their document in time.

Even if a writer has a good idea for a paper and is ready to start drafting, they may discover that some of their thoughts are unorganized. What should be put in the first section? Where does this paragraph really belong? This can be especially problematic when planning large documents. Without a concrete plan, writers may find themselves repeating information, referring the reader to nonexistent passages, or blurting out ideas at random to a hopelessly confused reader. If your readers have complained about the incoherence or lack of unity in your writing, you may be guilty of rushing into draft mode too soon.

Thankfully, there are sound strategies that can help you solve these problems. The discussion will begin with some pre-writing strategies that can help you discover good topics for your papers. Next, will be some strategies to help you reduce writer's block or writing anxiety. Finally, coverage on how you can best plan your draft and thus reduce the likelihood of composing confusing or incoherent documents.

Finding a Topic

Perhaps the greatest fear of most students in a writing class is whether they will be able to come up with a good topic for the papers required by their instructor. Although students often desire a specific topic or thesis to write about, instructors may be curiously vague about what topics are acceptable. The reason for this vagueness is that the teacher doesn't want to limit the possibilities-- narrowly limiting the range of topics might prevent a student from pursuing a particularly fascinating or radical approach. Another problem is that few writing instructors care to read a stack of near-identical papers. Teachers get bored too. They want to be surprised by their students' ingenuity. Unfortunately, a student never knows whether their teacher will judge their essay as "brilliantly original" or "totally untenable." The trick is to do something new or unexpected with something tried and true.

Let's say that you are in an introductory literature course. The teacher has assigned a 3-5 page essay, with sources, on a Shakespeare play of your choice. You might try asking the teacher to be more specific, or offer some suggestions. The teacher might respond, "No, it's up to you. Surprise me." Now what do you do?

Probably the easiest thing to do is to travel to the library and start looking for scholarly journals that cover Shakespeare studies. You might also try scholarly books about Shakespeare and his plays. Browsing these sources should give you some ideas about "what's hot" or what aspects of Shakespeare, or his plays, that scholars have found worthy of serious discussion. You might find that an idea you thought was "original" turns out to be embarrassingly passe. However, you shouldn't let this worry you. Eventually, dozens of potential theses and lines of inquiry will emerge. Scholars frequently engage in complex and long-lasting arguments that span across journal articles and books. The trick then is to select an issue that you can reasonably cover given the time and space (page count) you have available and work out your own position on the issue. Then it's a simple matter of supporting your argument by bringing in relevant quotations from those who agree with you. You should also identify the counter-arguments and provide some general background on the issue.

This technique also works well for writing theses and dissertations. Instead of writing about "what's never been written about before", try to make a new contribution to one of the many ongoing conversations in the field. This approach is especially handy if you hope to publish your work since some publishers tend to favor works that fit with their existing line of publications. Readers also expect you to be familiar, and probably refer to, works of other scholars who have written on your topic. Think of your work as either extending or taking existing work in a new direction.

Even if you intend to publish fiction, it's a good idea to first familiarize yourself with the work of successful fiction writers and consider what it is about their work that appeals to publishers. There is no shame in following the same roads that led to their success. This isn't the same as "copying" or "ripping off" an author; there is a difference between duplicating techniques and duplicating content.

In short, the easiest way to find a topic to write about is to see what other writers are writing about and join their "conversation". This conversation metaphor is a very useful way to understand what scholarship is all about. Rather than thinking of essays or books as isolated units of scholarship, try envisioning them as parts of a massive network of scholars who converse with each other via scholarly documents, conference presentations, e-mail, phone calls, and other forms of communication. See what's available and where you can make the most valuable contribution.

Dealing with Writing Anxiety

Many students are concerned that even though they feel well versed about a subject they will not be able to express themselves well on paper. This is a fear that many if not all writers (not just first year college writers) will experience at one time in their lives or another. The good news is that most writers have found a way to get over this fear and move on to a point where they are actually able to write. For many writers, the whole process of writing becomes so much easier after just getting a sentence or two written.

But what if you are still stuck? Is there *ever* going to be hope for you? Of course there is!

Some writing instructors believe that students should complete long and intense prewriting exercises before they will be prepared to write. Students may be asked to complete a questionairre designed to encourage them to think about their topic. This type of exercise is called a heuristic. Other teachers assign activities like "brain storming" or "clustering," in which students are expected to write whatever words pop into their heads as they contemplate a topic. Other instructors advocate "free writing," which means to simply start writing and continue writing no matter what--even if you're forced to write sentences like "I don't know what to write next, I don't know what to write next," and so on. Some students find it helpful to just start writing about anything just to get their "writing juices" flowing and then make the jump to addressing the assigned work.

Some students find it helpful to record themselves just simply talking about the subject at hand, sharing it with someone (your voice recorder) as if you are informing a friend about what you have discovered through your research. Other students find creating an outline about what you want to share helpful (see the example below this section for ideas). Yet another technique is mind-mapping, in which you construct a map of all your ideas and how they relate to each other. Another idea is to make an appointment at your university's writing center and talk through your assingment with a writing tutor.

> "As a tutor in my university's writing center, I've often found that just talking with a student about a subject can be a great help to him or her. As the student talks, I jot down what they are telling me. They are usually surprised to find out that they actually know as much as they do, and are relieved that they have a place to *start* their writing process."

The question is, do these activities really help writers get started? Perhaps they offer the same benefit as stretching or warming up before a workout. Exercises like brainstorming and freewriting may help writers ease into the "zone," or the state of intense concentration and focus necessary to write good prose. The best advice anyone can offer is to try these things for yourself, and if they work--good. Otherwise, abandon them and try other strategies. Remember, what works for others to get started on the writing process may not be what works for you. That is fine and is completely normal. What matters is that you find a method that does work for you.

A sample outline

    I. Introduction
        Brief description of issues that arise when reading "Hamlet"
    II. Issues of Feminism uncovered through reading of "Hamlet"
        a. what other scholars have discovered about Feminism in "Hamlet"
        b. which of these discoveries was most evident to me and how?
        c. ideas of feminism that I uncovered on my own
    III. How uncovering feminism in "Hamlet" has led me to better understand what Shakespeare thought of the role women played in society

IV. Conclusion

GENERATING IDEAS

Once you have a topic about which to write, next think about the information you want to include in your work. Brainstorm for ten minutes and list ideas about your topic. If you create an outline, you can easily organize these ideas and then you can also get rid of ideas that don't fit anywhere. Talking to others about your writing is also a good way to get new ideas and a fresh perspective about your topic. This can also lead to ideas that you hadn't considered before and can help you get more ideas to research.

Methods for generating ideas for your writing

Brainstorm

Brainstorming is used to generate a large number of ideas relatively quickly. All you do is write down whatever ideas come to your head. You might try writing down each idea on a seperate piece of paper. It also helps to ask yourself some questions, such as:

1. What do I care about or enjoy?
2. What do I know that I could teach others?
3. What am I interested in?
4. What irritates me?

You can brainstorm with others or you can brainstorm by yourself (often times this turns into freewriting).

Brainstorm examples

Let's say you are in a class when your instructor tells you that you will have to write a paper on your favorite free-time activity and that you have to persuade your reader to try it.

Ask yourself, what do I *care about or enjoy*? It could be anything from gardening to ice skating. Or maybe you'd rather talk about writing poetry or playing the piano. Your list, in this example, would read:

1. gardening
2. ice skating
3. writing poetry
4. playing the piano

At this stage, anything is fine since you are just trying to come up with as many ideas as possible.

Ask yourself, what do *know that I could teach others*?

Maybe you are able to teach someone else something that you really enjoy. Good for you! If not, don't worry. You are still just brainstorming. Maybe you teach swimming lessons or t-ball, or maybe you bake really well and are able to teach some of your insights. Your list, in this example, would read:

1. swimming lessons
2. t-ball
3. baking

Anything is fine. You are still brainstorming.

Ask yourself, what am I *interested in*? Again, just make a list. Maybe you like rap music. Maybe you like doing yard work. Maybe you like going to the theater. Your list, in this example, would read:

1. rap music
2. doing yard work
3. going to the theater

If an idea comes to your head, write it down.

There are no wrong ideas in a brainstorm!!!

Let's think of another example. How about the common situation where the instructor wants you to write about "something you care about" or an "issue."

Ask yourself, what *irritates* me?

Everyone has things that irritate them, some small, some larger. An example of something small that's irritating could be people in your dorm who leave trails of toothpaste by the sink and never, ever clean up after themselves. This personal example is useful as a bridge to a larger issue that will be your topic--in this case it would be community living and personal responsibility.

In academic writing with a less personal slant, the source of irritation often is another writer/theorist who you disagree with. Your "irritation" then leads to an effective piece about why you have a better conception of what's really going on. A less direct version of this would be a writer/theorist who makes some good points, but may lack something in his/her argument that you can add to the "conversation."

Much academic writing begins this way. Go ahead! Try this or any of the other ideas for brainstorming either by yourself or in a group. Working together to come up with ideas means that there are more ideas for everyone.

Cluster

The process in which you take your main topic and draw a circle around it. You then draw lines out from the circle connecting topics having to do with the main subject. Clustering is useful in making sure that you cover all aspects of your main topic.

Cluster Example

Using the brainstorm example, let's say you decided on the topic of gardening. Your main idea of gardening would be in the center of your page circled. Anything else that you want to say about gardening would be connected to the circle with lines.

Freewrite

This is useful in generating ideas or simply to get your ideas in motion. All you have to do is start writing. I often do not look back at what I wrote until I am satisified that I have written enough. An easy way of doing this is by setting a time limit that you will write for, then just start writing. You can write anything at all, but at the end, you may find some ideas scattered throughout your writing.

Freewrite Example

1. I set my kitchen timer for a specific amount of time. Let's say 5 minutes.
2. I just begin writing without worrying about what I am putting onto the page.

> Things I like to do. Watching tv is a great way to unwind after a long day. Playing video games is too. I like talking to my friend Steph on the phone, but I get annoyed when she doesn't call me back. I like shopping. My favorite store is JC Penny. They have everything that you need there. I can buy clothing, luggage, things I need for my kitchen, wall coverings. I love that store. I like going to the theater. Last year, I saw "The West Side Story." It was amazing. For some reason, I always look forward to fall and spring yardwork. I don't know if it is the sense of accomplishment I feel when the yard is ready for the season or what, but I really do enjoy it. There are so many things that need to be done each year too. In the spring, you need to be sure to fertalize before

3. The timer went off, so I stop writing.
4. At this point, I review what I have written and decide which point to elaborate on from there.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Finding a Topic
- Developing a Thesis
- Additional Advice on Preperation
- Tips for Getting Started On a Paper
- Prewriting Strategies
- Developing a Thesis Statement
- Fighting Writer's Block

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CHAPTER 1.01 • PLANNING AND PREWRITING

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CHAPTER 1.02 • COLLABORATING

WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

Most, if not all, professional writers collaborate on the documents they write. Newspaper reporters, novelists, and magazine writers collaborate extensively with their editors. Scholars collaborate with other scholars to review and add insight to their work. Business writers work closely with colleagues, administrators, and consultants to ensure their work meets the highest possible standards set by their company. Even poets frequently meet to discuss their ideas and techniques. In short, writing does not occur in a vacuum. Instead, it is primarily a social phenomenon.

There will come a time in your life, whether during your college or professional career, when you will work with others to create a document. Professors frequently create "group projects" and require that you participate. Perhaps you will be assigned a task at school or on the job that is simply too large for one person to accomplish. As the effects of globalization continue to resonate through every level of the workforce, collaboration takes on ever-more prominent roles in the day-to-day lives of employees. If you wish to succeed as a writer, you must have an effective social process while working with others.

Unfortunately, American education tends to be a bit outdated when it comes to teaching and rewarding collaboration. You may have been taught in school that collaboration was cheating and that you should work totally alone. You may prefer to work alone and resist collaborating with others. This isn't the way that our modern economy works, however. Effective collaboration skills can make a powerful difference in the scope and quality of your work.

This chapter introduces some helpful strategies for successful collaboration. It also discusses some of the common pratfalls that can wreck an otherwise promising collaborative opportunity. There are several different types of collaboration. **Cooperation** entails a joint operation or action involving individuals working together towards a similar objective. **Coordination** is an organized and synchronized efforts towards a similar goal between individuals. **Teamwork** is a joint effort.

Individuals will collaborate in writing everything from memos to books, proposals to annual reports, and even Web sites- such as this Wiki Book.

ADVANTAGES TO COLLABORATION

Writers who collaborate can produce better documents because more knowledge is available to be used. More complex and detailed information can be the outcome when knowledge is put together.

Brainstorming with more than one person can lead to more comprehensive and accurate information. In a group there are more skills available to be used. The strength of all the members add to the overall product because the strengths of some group members will cancel out the weaknesses of others.

When individuals collaborate, they bring together more opportunity to have specialties in different areas: managing, writing, editing, designing, and producing. When a group works together there can be more discussion of ideas regarding how the audience will interpret a document. They can work together and share techniques to to create the outcome desired.

Each group member is like a different part of the audience. Every individual offers more questions and suggestions to explore. As members share ideas or ask questions the communication will also increase among employees.

Group members can learn about others in the group or organization. New employees will be acclimated in an organization and can learn how things work in that organization. Others can teach them what is necessary to ensure a productive, flowing work space.

DISADVANTAGES TO COLLABORATION

Disadvantages

- Collaboration takes more time than individual writing.
- Groupthink can happen.
- Disjointed document may be produced.
- Unequal work loads for individuals involved.
- Reduced motivation.
- Interpersonal conflict.

Overcoming the Disadvantages

- Meet early on in your project to decide its direction.
- Devise a way to **evenly** split up the work between members.
- Create a timeline for when the various sections are due.
- Set up meetings where members can gather and share progress or obsticles.
- Meet near the end of the project to make revisions.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

In order to have a successful meeting it is important to set a group agenda. More will be covered if you stick to an outline or plan. It is also important to set up efficient face-to-face meetings whenever possible. When everyone gets together and communicates openly with one another more can be accomplished. It is also a good idea to communicate diplomatically and be sensitive when critiquing a group member's draft. It is important to critique other group members, but be gentle. You still have to work with this person and you probably wouldn't like it if they said bad things about one of your drafts. Successful meetings and good group cooperation with result with a better project.

COMMUNICATING AWAY FROM MEETINGS

If you need to communicate with other members, but putting together a meeting is not possible, there are other ways to communicate. E-mail is probably the most effective since you can reach more people with one document and the recipients can respond when they have the time. The telephone works great if you only have to call a small number of people and the conversation will be short. Memos are a lot like e-mail, but will take more effort to send. A fax will also work to communicate information to other group members. All you need to do is decide which form of communication will work best for the information.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

The most important parts of effective collaboration are discussion and planning. Group members must participate in open discussion so that all have a clear understanding of the assignment. Decisions must be made from the start, such as whether the assignment will be divided among group members or if all aspects of the assignment will be shared. Continuous open discussion will also aid in overcoming obstacles because it is easier to tackle obstacles as a team than it is to do so alone. It is also important to schedule times and commit to those times to come together as a group. These times may be in person or online synchronously.

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CHAPTER 1.03 • RESEARCHING

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

Writers use primary and secondary research to answer questions they may have about their topic and to locate evidence to back up the claims they make. When you do research and include it in your writing along with your own ideas, you're participating in a conversation: finding out what others have already said, responding to them, and adding your own contributions.

Here are five key strategies for successful research writing:

1. Determine the role of research in your writing.
2. Consider your audience.
3. Understand how writers use sources.
4. Assess/evaluate sources' credibility.
5. Cite sources properly to avoid plagiarism.

DETERMINE THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN YOUR WRITING

Depending on what you're writing, you'll use research in different ways. Start by asking yourself:

- Do I have a thesis I want to find information on, or do I need to do research in order to develop a thesis?
- What is my purpose? Am I writing to inform, convince, persuade, analyze, or ... ? How can I use research to support that purpose?
- What is my topic? Different topics may require different types of research. Often, your instructor will let you know what type of research is appropriate for the discipline you're in.
- How do I want to present myself? As an expert? An objective commentator? A passionate persuader? How you use research depends directly on the type of persona you want to project in your writing.

CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

The way you approach research will also depend on whom you're writing for -- your audience. Ask yourself these questions about your audience:

- What is their age? Are you writing for young readers? Mature, scholarly readers? Peers? You will use different amounts and types of research depending on what your audience needs and expects out of the reading experience.
- What is their education and reading level?
- If you're writing to inform, how much do they know about the topic already? What issues and questions will they expect to see addressed?
- If you're writing to convince or persuade, will they tend to agree or disagree about the argument you're making? What are their values and beliefs? What are their concerns? What type of evidence do they find effective?
- What does your audience already know and think about the topic or question your paper will address? What is their relationship to the ideas you'll explore?

As you answer these questions, think about what types of research will resonate most strongly with your particular audience.

UNDERSTAND HOW WRITERS USE SOURCES

Writers work with sources all the time, but the way in which they do it and the "rules" they're expected to follow depend on the context they're writing in.

Academic research writing involves strict and formal rules. These rules are called "citation," and they're so strict, detailed, and formal because of the high value academe puts on not "stealing" others people's ideas. Citation is a way to signal to your readers what are your words and ideas and what are someone else's words and ideas. And, while the rules can be complex, remember you don't have to memorize them; you simply need to know where to find and apply them.

Sources are other voices

Even before you learn the rules of citation, recognize that you already know a lot about how to work with sources. It can be helpful here to think of sources as "other voices." You use sources when you think over an idea you heard about in a conversation. You use sources when you consider what to buy -- whether the sources are an advertisement hawking a sale, a slogan you can't get out of your head, the fact that a friend recommended a product, or that you've looked up price quotes and shopped around. You are knowledgeable and make decisions by piecing together the information from many sources. Sources are part of our lives: all around us and part of how we breathe life into the words that express what we think.

In research writing, you do much the same act of interacting with other voices, only you add another layer. Since you're writing, you're also presenting not only your sources in some organized way, but what *you* think, using your sources to show how you came to think what you do. And you don't just use any sources from anywhere; instead, you pick and choose the best sources for your purposes, and you use them strategically -- for effect.

You know more than you think

Sources play a variety of roles in your researched writing. Sometimes you use and cite sources to let people know what conversation your research is a part of. You can also use sources as examples; sometimes sources present evidence. Sources can also present an argument you want to counter. Arguments and ideas can be taken from a sources and be built upon, refined, and countered.

You do this a lot anyway. It's nothing new. Don't believe me? Try this. Spend a week paying attention to the conversations and discussions you have. Listen for sources used and the role they play. You'll hear people cite the news as they opine on politics or refer to a game or a player's quote as they talk sports. You'll hear friends catch up with friends and recount conversations with other friends who aren't there. You'll hang out and discuss things that matter, and participants in that discussion will provide reasons --sometimes facts, sometimes opinion, often a mix of the two-- for why they think the way they do (and often why you should too).

In research writing, you take that natural act of conversing with and referring to others and go further. Knowing in advance that you'll be writing to be share your work with other readers, you look for sources (other voices) while exploring an idea and planning how to appeal to those readers (other academics like you -- yes, you're an academic now) in terms and conventions they'll recognize. Don't let the part of the research process and source work that deals with conventions and formalities get in the way of doing what comes naturally, even if working with those conventions feels unnatural. Curiousity. Interest. Something to say. That's the basis of research and

working with sources. The rules come second to those, not first.

ASSESS SOURCES' CREDIBILITY

Evaluating Sources

The ability to evaluate your sources is a very valuable skill when you are researching a topic. You may be required to use primary sources only. So how do you determine whether a source is primary or secondary? Primary sources are sources that were composed in the time frame you are researching. These include letters, diaries, legislative bills, laboratory studies, field research reports and eyewitness accounts. Secondary sources are commentaries about primary sources, such as encyclopdias. A primary source may not necessarily be more reliable than a secondary source, but it is a firsthand account.

When reading documents, you must be aware of the author's bias. Even the most credible source will have some kind of interpretation on the subject. Look for political or religious leanings in the text. These views may affect the objectivity of the text. Check to see if the author or publisher may have ties to a special interest group that may allow him or her to see only one side of the issue. Evaluate how fairly the author treats the opposing views. Complete objectivity really can not be attained in writing, but try to find sources that are not incredibly subjective. Make sure you are aware of views and biases of the author or publisher when researching.

The internet is a wonderful tool for research but a researcher must also be aware of the credibility of web sources. Knowing something about the author and/or purpose of the site can help you to evaluate if the site will be worth your time. When evaluating a website, look for these items:

- **Authorship** If you can't find the author of a site, be cautious. Try looking for "about this site" or check the homepage. Research the author of the site to make sure he or she is credible. Look for the author's qualifications or a link to the author's homepage. These may provide insight to th author's expertise and credibility.

- **Sponsorship** Check to see if the site is sponsored by a special interes group. By learning about the group in which they are invlolved, you will probably learn a lot about the author's and web site's credibility. Also look at the domain name. This will tell you if the site is sponsored by an educational (.edu), commercial (.com), nonprofit (.org), military (.mil) or network (.net).

- **Purpose** Think about why the site was created. Is its purpose to inform, persuade or sell a product to the reader? For whom was the site created? Who is the intended audience? If you are not included in the intended audience, consider if the information is relevant to your research.

When you set out to write a researched paper, you have a vast pool of information available to you, including books, newspapers, periodicals, reference works, government docuemnts, your own research in the form of interviews and surveys, as well as the enormous wealth of information contained today in the World Wide Web. Is it all worth using? Definitely not. Just as important as being able to find sources for your topic is assessing their credibility -- that is, how trustworthy, accurate, and verifiable they are.

While the World Wide Web presents especially interesting challenges when determining credibility, due to the vast amount of information available and the openness of the forum (anyone can put up a web page), it's also the case that just because something appears in print doesn't make it reliable and straightforward. A good researcher will develop skills in not only finding valuable information efficiently but also in assessing the credibility of that information.

Evaluating sources is such a major component of researching because the voices you choose to include in your writing will reflect on *your* reputability as well. Here are four approaches to assessing the credibility of the sources you find.

Evaluate print sources

Remember, just because it's in print doesn't automatically make it a good source. Ask yourself these questions about the print sources you find:

Book

- *How old is it?* Different research projects will have different parameters for how old your sources can be. For example, a researched argument paper on a current controversy will likely require you to use the most current sources available, so a book on euthanasia published in 1978 probably isn't the best choice. On the other hand, the 1978 book may be a relevant source for a researched analysis on changing attitudes toward euthanasia throughout the last century.
- *Who is the publisher?* Books published by a university press undergo significant editing and review to increase their validity and accuracy. When assessing a book published by a commercial publisher, stay alert to vanity presses -- companies that authors pay to publish their works, rather than vice versa. Also be cautious about using books labeled as self-published or published by a specific organization (such as a corporation or a nonprofit group).
- *What do you know about the author?* Check biographical information included in the book itself as well as other sources to find out the author's background as a way of determining his or her stance: Find out about his or her previous works, past professional experience, affiliations with groups or movements, current employment, and degrees or other credentials.

Periodical

- *Is it a scholarly journal or a magazine?* Scholarly journals are almost always characterized by no advertisements, longer articles, and the requirement that authors cite the sources they use in writing their articles. Articles submitted to scholarly journals undergo substantial scrutiny by other professionals to increase the clarity and accuracy of the information contained in them. Most scholarly journals are not sold on newsstands but rather are circulated primarily among the academic community. In contrast, magazines are available all over for purchase; they contain shorter articles (usually), generally don't require writers to cite their sources, and contain advertising, the presence of which may or may not affect content.
- *How old is it?* As noted above, a source's age matters. Always ask your instructor if you're uncertain about how old is too old.
- *If it's a newspaper article, what do you know about the paper it's published in?* Most newspapers have a discernible political slant, which you can often tell by perusing the opinion/editorial page or researching to find how others regard the newspaper. For example, *The Los Angeles Times* is considered a more progressive news source, while its neighbor *The Orange County Register* is considered to have a libertarian slant.

Evaluate sources on the World Wide Web

Because anyone can put information on the Web, make it your first priority to know who's behind the sites you find. Individuals? Nonprofit groups? Corporations? Academics? Advocacy groups? Federal, state, or local government? Small businesses or single vendors? Depending on your topic,

you may want to avoid dot-com web sites: their primary purpose is commerce, and that can significantly affect what they publish. Of course, any web site, like any print work, has some sort of an agenda behind it or is in some way made subjective by its context; the trick is to figure out which agendas and contexts you can defend when choosing sources for your researched writing.

After you've checked out and approved who's behind the web site, check that the information contained in it is ...

- **Relevant.** Decide whether the information you are looking at is something you can actually use in your paper or, at the very least, gives you helpful background. If you can't use what you see, move on to something else. You don't want to waste time.
- **Accurate.** Can you verify the names, definitions, figures, dates, and other facts presented on the web site in other sources? If there appears to be more than one or two errors, move on.
- **Relatively unbiased.** As noted above, carefully examining the source behind the web site can clue you in to a lot of what kind of bias and agenda the site contains. Once you've okayed a source, however, continue to stay alert: Look for a straightforward presentation of the range of perspectives on an issue or conflict, as opposed to just one or two views. Take note of the language used and avoid sites that seem "off" (inaccurate or incendiary) in their word choice.
- **Comprehensive.** A valuable web site will cover a topic in-depth and lead you to additional sources.
- **Current.** When was the site last updated? Credible web sites will reflect ongoing attention by their creators to make sure that the content is as up-to-date as possible.
- **Clear.** The web site should be arranged so that it is easy to follow, and the information it presents should be relatively easy for you to understand. Avoid using sites whose information is overly technological or otherwise specialized. If you can't clearly understand it, you may end up misinterpreting it and put incorrect information in your work.

Consider your project

How you evaluate a source will differ depending on the project you're working on. Whether a source is credible, biased or relevant depends as much on how you plan to use the source and what role it will play in your research project as does the nature of the source itself.

For example, Phillip Morris has a Web site which touts the company's programs to curb smoking among young people. Now obviously, coming from a tobacco company and cigarette marketing giant, the source is biased. But is their program effective? Can the content on the site be trusted? In what context?

Would you never use the source? What if you were writing a paper that examined the smoking rates of 10 - 13 year olds? What role might the Phillip Morris site play in your paper? Does the site say one thing and their advertising campaigns and where they spend money another? Would the campaign web site be effective in your argument?

So much depends upon what your argument in your research project is going to be, doesn't it? You can not answer the question unless you know who your audience is, what you want to say, and how you can honestly and effectively use sources to help make your argument to help you say what you want to say.

Audience. Purpose. Argument. Your goals with all of these will shade how you evaluate sources and choose to use them.

Consult ADAM

A quick way to cover the essential points when faced with assessing a lot of sources quickly is to remember this acronym:

Age: How old is this source? For almost every topic, aim for the most current sources you can find.

Depth: Does the source go in-depth, or does it just skim over the surface? Does it have the many details and long discussions you expect from academic sources? Or does it seem to just hit the high spots? Always use substantive sources.

Author: Who wrote this? What do you know about their qualifications? Are they really an expert? Can you see their biases? What are they trying to get you to think or do?

Money: Follow the money. Is the source coming from a place that's trying to "sell" you something, either literally or figuratively? Is there a lot of advertising where this source appears that might affect what gets printed?

CITE SOURCES TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

After using other sources to gain information for a report or paper you might decide to use that information in your paper. If the ideas expressed in your paper are not your original thoughts you must cite where you obtained that information. If you do not cite where you obtained your information you are plagiarizing. Plagiarizing is an extreme offense. If you are caught plagiarizing in school you usually will receieve a failing grade on the assignment if not in the entire course. You could also risk being expelled from school. If you are caught plagiarizing in a workplace it could likely end up costing you your job. So make sure you cite copied inforamtion! The most common forms of citation are direct quotes and paraphrasing. After a direct quote or at the end of a paraphrase you should cite the author and page number of your source. Information on how to cite sources can be found in The Writer's Handbook: Citations If you are using other sources in your report and are unsure whether or not you need to use citation, it is better to be safe than sorry so cite the information.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Learning to Research on the Web
- Learning to Research in the Library
- The Online Books Page Lists over 25,000 free books on the web.
- Bartleby Search dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, familiar quotations, and usage manuals.
- Biographical Dictionary Searchable biographical dictionary online.
- Researchpaper.com Relief for Writer's block.

Chapter 1.04 • Drafting

> "Close the door. Write with no one looking over your shoulder. Don't try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It's the one and only thing you have to offer." --- **Barbara Kingsolver**

What is Drafting?

Drafting doesn't just refer to writing — after all, you've been writing for a project since you first jotted down some notes on your assignment sheet. Instead, ***drafting*** refers to first putting words, sentences, and eventually organizing paragraphs together to form the actual back bones of your paper. And from then on, all the written text except for the very copy you hand to your boss (professors) is drafts. You will delete it, revise it, or even start over a whole chapter on which you just spent last 3 hours. But what you are supposed to do with it. The good news is, once you start drafting, you've already got one step closer to the final product. Brainstorming may trigger solid idea for your draft. Perhaps you could pull out prewriting to find your best sentences and eventually work them into a draft. It can be built upon your plan for organizing a piece of writing. Everybody knows school assignments, in fact, truly ARE less attractive than blogging or MSN: ultimately no fun. But do less worrying and more writing, because this is, after all, the first and the only way to write.

> "*Solviture ambulando.* To solve a problem, walk around." **---St. Jerome, who spent 30 years at a desk**

Drafting: Analyze and Overcast

> "Fiction is based on reality unless you're a fairy-tale artist, you have to get your knowledge of life from somewhere. You have to know the material you're writing about before you alter it.." **---Hunter S. Thompson**

Prewriting, reflection, or planning helps you with drafting, but with one key difference: do these activities in writing, using full sentences and the tone or voice you intend to use in the paper. If you're just not ready to start drafting sentences for the final product, ***try writing in response to one or more of these prompts***. Doing so will get ideas flowing and help you get into the groove of writing full sentences that compiles them as a whole. Recognize your audience before you start your draft. The audience decides which style of writing you are required to use in your paper. In f]act, if you misunderstand the audience, they will never even lay their eyes on it. Many writers often narrow (or, sometimes expand) the topic as they write on. If you choose doing so, first try to picture a larger context into which your thesis fits, and then, heading towards the end, gradually zoom into

a specific point where it uncovers the core of your thesis. Your thesis has to make a contract with your reader. Make a claim which forecasts the main point(s) of your thesis, then deliver the source which suppports the argument. Having a clear recognition of your weak point in your composition can be noted during this stage. You may always add background information, definitions of the terms, review literature, caveats, reasons of your assumptions, and counterarguments to deepen your argument.

> "My starting point [in writing] is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. . . . I write because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I wish to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing." **--George Orwell**

Sometimes you'll find that it's easier to write the introduction after you've written the body of your paper. You certainly may avoid writing the introduction first too. But no matter how you write, it is important to stay on track. Enphasize few points that are related to your thesis by adding more information and getting closer to detail.

Let it flow

As you draft, don't stop to edit or look up small pieces of information; there will be more time for precision later. Just get your ideas out without worrying about punctuation or spelling for now. Similarly, if you notice a big gap which requires more research, skip it, and work on other sections. The important thing is to let your ideas keep coming and making progress on the page. No matter how irrelevant your words may appear, write on.

> "Write 1000 words a day. That's only about four pages, but force yourself to do it. Put your finger down your throat and throw up. That's what writing's all about." **--Ray Bradbury**

Experiment

How do you start your draft? Do you always start from introduction? Some people may find writing the introduction first difficult. While the occasional flash of inspiration can lead you to scribble out great work on the back of an envelope with a stubby pencil, paying a brief attention to not only 'what you write', but 'how you write' can inspire you to write differently or even more effectively. If you start drafting from the conclusion, for example, it could be like having the "north star" in your paper. Or you could leave the introduction and conclusion blank until the end. That said, you can make up your own approach to create your own way of writing. All the technological tools you have access to today have made it possible for you to write virtually anytime, anywhere, and however you want. Take advantage of it, if you can. Type on your computer, do research on it, record your own voice if pen is slowing down your thinking, or take a picture with your phone and put it on your paper. Experiment with your approach to write, and if you can write better and even have fun during its process, hey, it's just better world isn't it?

Writer's block?

Almost every writer suffers from writer's block, and we all know the struggle and agony of being in the deep hole for a long, long time. If you ever find yourself pulling your hair out in front of a blank page, change the mood. Take a short break, stop your hand for a moment, stand up, stretch, breathe

in deeply, or take a short, brisk walk. Refresh your mind. Taking deep breaths, tossing a ball into a hoop, or squeezing a tension ball may also help you reduce your stress. You can periodically take a break and physical stimulus or sometimes even a small, mindless action can quickly shake your brain loose and give you just enough physical/psychological outlet to let your brain kick back into higher gear. The key is to stimulate your creativity while reducing what distracts you the most so you can write more.

> "When you get an idea, go and write. Don't waste it in conversation." **--Kenneth Koch**

SAMPLE DRAFT

As you have read, drafts are not perfect. The following is an example of what a draft might look like. The example contains grammatrical and spelling erros, lacks detail, could use some rephrasing, some fine tuning, and overall expansion of ideas.

> Their are many ways in wich I've been exposed to history. Formally I've learned about history in my classes starting in grade school up to now with college. Informally I've learnd about history thru friends, television, movies, even art. Each way of learning I retain diffrent information. Learning history is classes I tend to recall more names, facts, dates, and similar things. Gaining facts from a friend I remember just won fact rather than many facts. While learning thru visual elements like displays or projects I remember information better when I see those images again. Artistically learning about history thru television, film, and artwork what I remember most is the feeling or emotion involved with the persons or events in history. I am able to make a connection to the past thru sense rather than attempting to remember specific fact. Visual learning I feel like I understand history better and am able to make a connection from the past to present.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Writing the First Draft
- First Drafts Made Easy
- Going Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay
- Transitions
- Introductions and Conclusions

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congratulations on completing

CHAPTER 1.04 • DRAFTING

live version • discussion • edit lesson • comment • report an error • ask a question

CHAPTER 1.05 • EDITING

CONTENT EDITING QUESTIONS

Now you have a stack of papers with your words on it. Since you've already got all of the key ideas on paper, it is time to revisit what you wrote. Listed below are the check points of your paper. Does your paper satisfy them all?

Rivetting Introduction

The function of the introduction is to grab the reader their neck. First, state your argument, and eventually present a thesis while giving a smooth outline of your paper as a whole. Introduction is, after all, what evokes reader's attention. You don't have to have a big introduction. Try summerising every paragraph into one sentence each, put them all together in a paragraph, and see if your introduction covers them all. (psst!)Many writers use quotes or poems to grab readers' attention and it appears to be quite effective.

Clear Thesis

Is your thesis clear? Will your reader be able to identify it and see the rest of your paper is supporting or proving the argument? Most American readers expect to see the point your argument within the first few paragraphs. To make sure you have a clear thesis, write it in a single sentence at the end of your introduction. This will feed the reader into the body of the paper.

Plain and Simple Sentences

Good writers avoid long and dull sentences. If a sentence is already plain and direct, there's no need to fluff it up. Rather, you should keep it plain and simple. Flabby words and phrases obscure your ideas: when writing being *concise* is key. For example, why say that "Cats have a tendency toward sleeping most of the day," when you could simply say "Cats tend to sleep most of the day?" How about changing "The 12th day of the month of April" to "April 12th?" Try to pick out and substite such sentences with simpler ones. The results are often 'less is more.'

Flawless Organization

Is your tense consistant throughout the paper (past, future, present)? How about narrator's emotion? Is the tone of your narration consistantly inconsistant? If so, revise it. Then you must reevaluate your claim and make sure they tie in with your thesis. Every sentence in every paragraph should suppor your claim.

Good Conclusion

The conclusion and the introduction could be similar. Some people actually restate their entire thesis in the conclusion just to reestablish what the entire paper is about.

"Most writers regard truth as their most valuable possession, and therefore are most economical in its use." **--Mark Twain**

Four strategies for shaping up your sentences

1. Use active verbs.

Be-verbs (is, am, are, was, were, be, has/have been) indicate condition, and often require extra sentence or clause to be sound. *active verbs* allow you to conpose sharply without numbing the rhythm of your writing. Read your writing with distant eyes and think:"How can I make it (be it a sentence or paragraph) simple?". The more you do this, the sharper your sentences become. English has more verbs than almost every other languages. Explore them!

Examples

*The sharp rise in fuel prices **is** a serious challenge to trucking firms. It makes it hard for them to provide timely service to customers and to meet payroll expenses.*

- Sharply rising fuel prices ***challenge*** trucking firms by causing delays in customer service and payroll.

*Primary causes of the rise in fuel prices **are** an issue of confusion for many citizens. They don't know how to fight the rise because they don't know its cause.*

- Primary causes of rising fuel prices ***elude*** many citizens, making them unaware of how to fight the increase.

2. Name the people.

Directly state *who or what group* is acting in your sentences. Note the contrast in power and clarity among the sentences below:

Examples

Without people: *A citywide ban on indoor smoking in Duluth originally caused a marked drop in bar patronage.*

With people: *When the Duluth City Council passed a citywide ban on indoor smoking, many people stopped going to bars.*

Without people: *A protest to head off a smoking ban caused the issue to be shelved in the neighboring city of Superior, Wisconsin.*

With people: *Restaurant and bar owners, as well as Our Rights Now!, a citizens' action group, protested in a neighboring city, causing the Superior (Wisconsin) City Council to shelve the issue.*

3. Tighten up wordy phrases.

Certain stock phrases are weak and wordy. They can make you sound stuffy or as if you're just trying to fill up space. Use these replacements:

because, since, why *the reason for, for the reason that, owing/due to the fact that, in light of the fact that, considering the fact that, on the grounds that, this is why:*

when *on the occasion of, in a situation in which, under circumstances in which:*

about, regarding *as regards, in reference to, with regard to, concerning the matter of, where ABC is concerned:*

must, should *it is crucial that, it is necessary that, there is a need/necessity for, it is important that, it cannot be avoided that:*

can *is able to, has the opportunity to, has the capacity for, has the ability to:*

may, might, could *it is possible that, there is a chance that, it could happen that, the possibility exists for:*

"Vigorous writing is concise." **--William Strunk Jr.,** *The Elements of Style*, **1919**

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4. Start off strong.

Avoid starting sentences with the ***empty phrases*** "There is," "There are," and "It is."

Examples

> *There are several interrelated reasons for this year's active hurricane season.*
> *It is of utmost importance to determine those reasons so that there are fewer hurricane casualties next year.*
>   Instead, **find the actor in your sentence, and start off with that.**
> *Several interrelated factors caused this year's active hurricane season.*
> *Determining those factors will result in fewer hurricane casualties next year.*

EDITING TIPS

"Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers." **--T.S. Eliot**

You don't have to fall into either of the categories mentioned above. Tips listed below will help you edit your paper.

Re-Edit
It sometimes helps to look through your paper right when you are finished and then, if time allows, look at it again a day later.

Read Aloud
When reading your writing out loud you are more able to identify small errors such as word repetition. It can also be beneficial to you to read aloud with another person. You will also be able to receive feedback if what you were saying makes sense or if you need to expand on a certain area of your writing. You may just have taken for granted that you did a good enough job of explaining a point in your paper. The reader, or in this case the listener, may not agree and may be able to provide feedback that will help you as you further develop your thoughts.

Have a Different Person Edit
It may also be helpful to have someone else review your paper. By doing this, they make pick up some editing mistakes that you made because they are looking at it with fresh eyes.

Reassess Questions
After you have corrected the mistakes you have found, look at your paper and ask yourself the above mentioned questions again.

Keep Resources Close
Gather your handbook, dictionary, thesaurus, handouts, and any other resources for editing and keep them closely on hand. This way, you aren't tempted to guess at the correct way to do something but instead can look it up quickly and easily.

Know Your Errors
Keep a list of the errors you tend to make. No writer makes every mistake all the time; instead, we tend to make the same few types of mistakes over and over. Know what yours are by looking at your instructor's comments on past papers or by working with a writing center tutor. That way, you can focus your editing on looking specifically for those errors.

Put Up Reminders
Write rules you look up frequently on index cards or post-it notes, and put these up in your wiritng space so you can check them just by glancing up.

Break It Down

Edit for one thing at a time. Instead of reading your paper through one or two times and trying to catch everything, read your paper several, shorter times, looking for one thing at a time. For example, you might go through your paper once to tighten up wordiness. Then, you'd read a second time, looking for an error you frequently make, such as comma splices. Then, you'd read a third time looking for words that may have gotten messed up when you ran spellcheck. You'd read a fourth time for another characteristic error, such as subject-verb agreement.

Reduce Visual Clutter

Use two pieces of blank paper to cover up everything but one sentence at a time. This forces you to pay closer attention to the words because they're the only thing you see. Normally, our eyes move all over a text as we're reading; this prevents that.

Go Backwards

Read backwards from the end of your paper, one sentence at a time. When we read in the regular way — forward — we tend to read quickly and are always leaping ahead, not really focusing on what we're seeing. Reading backwards helps break up that momentum and forces us to slow down, thereby helping us catch more at the sentence level.

Spelling

Do not rely on spellcheckers. They will pick up on words that are simply not spelled correctly, such as "teh" instead of "the." There are too many words that have two separate spellings (i.e. "your" vs. "you're") that a spellchecker may not pick up on. If you do rely on a spellchecker, be sure that you look closely at every word that comes up as a violation. Do not just click on "fix" without actually taking the time to read what you mean to say before fixing the spelling of the word. This give you an additional opportunity to proofread what you have written.

Buy a dictionary and use it often! Be sure that it is an up-to-date, comprehensive version. Consider one that also has a thesaurus included.

It is important to know which words to use and in which context. Many times people mistakenly use one word for another (i.e. "except" instead of "accept). It is very important to review your work before you publish it.

> "Typos are very important to all written form. It gives the reader something to look for so they aren't distracted by the total lack of content in your writing." **--Randy K. Milholland, Something Positive Comic, 07-03-05**

Sentence Structure

When reviewing your work, be sure to ask yourself questions in sentence structure. Do I have any run-on sentences? Is there a comma continuing a run-on sentence where a period should go to break it into two sentences?

Do I have any sentence fragments? Be cognizant of any words that begin a sentence that would suggest it may be a sentence fragment. Words and phrases such as "especially," "like," "such as," or "not" are commonly used in the beginning of a sentence fragment.

Do my sentences use correct punctuation? Did I insert a comma where a semi-colon should be? Are quotations used correctly, especially when I am not quoting?

In short, know the basics of grammar and sentence structure when reviewing your work.

Tense

When reviewing your work, it is also important to make sure the tense you choose stays consistent. Tense refers to the relation of details in either the past or the present. For example, one writer may tell a story about going to the mall in the present tense by saying, "I am walking around the mall when I see my third grade teacher." Another writer may choose to relate this story in the past tense by saying, "I was walking around the mall when I saw my third grade teacher." Although it is important to choose which tense best suits the particular discourse a writer is using, it is much more important to stay consistent with whichever tense you choose. Inconsistency with tense is extremely confusing for readers. It is important to review your use of tense to make sure your language is clear.

Finished!

> "I can't write five words but that I change seven." **--Dorothy Parker**

Save the final editing for the end. After you write, review, revise, re-write, and then repeat the process over and over, it is then that you should begin to seriously edit your paper. In other words, delay your editing until all the other steps of the writing process have been finalized.

When you are satisfied that each of the above questions have been addressed, you are done. Congratulations!

PERSPECTIVES ON STYLE

Prescription and description litter these pages and others. Some writers tell you how to write. How your writing should look, sound, feel. These writers prescribe rules (Writer's handbooks are their bibles.). Should you follow them? Prescription limits; it also has limited use. In some instances it may be profitable or neccesary to follow rules. When writing a legal document or a theme for your fifth grade teacher for example. It's neccesary to learn the rules if only to break them. Rules aren't static, though. They evolve. Rules are added, changed, omitted: fashion is the only certainty.

Other writers descibe how text is actually written. They analyze past and present text, highlighting similarities, differances, and respective efficiency. They define goals and purpose. It may be purposeful to apply rules. It may not. But don't be limited by prescription.

Examine your goal and determine the best approach to reach it.

Why discuss style in a section on editing? As you write you make choices. As you edit you examine the effectiveness of those choices. And yeah, some choices are more effective than others, and may reinforce your message. It all depends on your goal, your purpose. Are you writing a diseration or a birthday greeting? An instant message or a public address? Your choices determine your text's effectiveness; they help relate meaning.

As you'd imagine, as many perspectives on style exist as there are choices avaible to you while writing. The following is an attempt to present some of those perpectives.

Richard Lanham on Prose Styles

A book written by Richard Lanham titled *Analyzing Prose* is a great tool for writers to pick up ideas for new styles. Through his work, one can can learn techniques covering the following styles:

- Opaque and Transparent
- Noun and Verb
- Paratactic and Hypotactic
- Periodic and Running

Learning how to properly involve these styles into your own writing can transform your work from everyday, textbook style writing, into colorful, creative, individualistic styles.

Opaque and Transparent Styles

At the onset it is crucial to note that one reader's opacity might be another's transparency. To garner meaning from a text, any text, it is necessary to look either *at* or *through* it. Texts that require readers to look *through* words or pictures or a combination of words and pictures to understand meaning, as you could easily guess, can be labled transparent. Those that require readers to examine text, to look *at* it to understand authorial intention and/or meaning, can be labled opaque. Depending on you textual experience, some texts might appear transparent, others opaque.

There is a spectrum, though. On the one side there is transparancy, and on the other, opacity. Verbal texts most often fall somewhere in the middle and lean to one side or the other. Prose and non-fiction are typically, ideally more transparent. Poetry and fiction tend to fall toward the opposite end of the spectrum, toward opacity. To understand opaque texts it is necessary to read them critically, to examine them, to look *at* them. Transparent texts, on the other hand, do not require extensive study for understanding. Ideally, they are clear, brief, and sincere.

Very few texts, however, completely posess clarity, brevity, and sincerity (The closest readers will get to a completely clear, brief, and sincere text is a photograph). As a result, it is necessasy to consider authorial choices to understand meaning and/or intention. Even seemingly transparent texts might require critical reading to truly understand them. Below we'll consider some of the choices authors make when writing.

Noun and Verb Styles

We relate meaning primarily though nouns and verbs. Which part of speech carries the weight of meaning in your own writing? Writers who rely on nouns employ a nominal, or noun style; their writing implies stasis. Writers who adopt a verbal style, on the other hand, value strong verb selection; their writing reveals action.

How should you write? Should your writing rely more heavily on verbs or nouns to translate meaning? That depends on your purpose. Who or what are you writing for? Fiction writers and those interested in accelearating the pace of their writing generally employ a more verbal style. They convey action. Noun styles are often used by those hoping to appear scholarly. They are marked by being verbs (is, are, was, were) and prepositional phrases. Bureaucrats and others who oppose social action frequently employ nominal style to deter action and movement.

Paratxis and Hypotaxis

How do you connect elements in your writing? Do you relate them equally or unequally? Do you subordinate elements, a mark of the hypotactic style, or do you simply juxtapose them and leave the process of understanding realtionships to the reader, a mark of the paratactic style.

When you employ hypotaxis, you rank elements in your writing. You inform readers what is derived from what. For example, *A* caused *B*, *B* followed *A*. Such style emphasizes a vertical pattern, one read from top to bottom.

When you employ parataxis you leave the ranking up to the reader. You put all elements on the same synatctic level. This style appears more natural, less contrived than hypotaxis. (Although you may expand more effort in trying to write with a paratactic style.) Paraxis emphasizes a horizontal pattern, one read from end to end.

So which style should you employ? As always, it depends on your intent. If you'd rather rank the material for the reader, adopt hypotaxis. But if you'd like readers to rank material themselves, which relenquishes some of your authority, try witing paratactically. As you could guess, your style should reninforce your meaning, your intention.

The Periodic Style and the Running Style

To begin it might be beneficial to point out that the periodic style is essentially hypotactic, and that the running style is essentially paratactic. The terms periodic and running, ulitimately though, point to something else, they point and relate to time, and subsequently, experience. How do you want you audience to experience your writing?

The periodic style is a lot like the noun style. It reveals stasis. Because it is hypotactically ordered, structured into parts or components, time and experience seem contrived and frozen as if in a staged photo. A sample of periodic writing must be completly read before its meaning becomes clear; the sample's main thought will be introduced at the outset and not resolved until the final word. As a result, a periodic style builds upon itself with parrallel phrases, and climaxes at the end when all that is necessary to convey meaning has been related.

The running style is more incremental and shapeless. It doesn't appear as contrived as the periodic. Like thought, it is marked by internal qualifications and parenthetical interuptions. It reveals action, movement. Think free verse poetry, emotional reflections. Writing with a running style, as when you employ parataxis, places greater weight on your readers to make connections when inferring meaning. Will they follow your train of thought? Do you want them to?

EXTERNAL LINKS

- English Writing Style
- Style Guide
- Rhetoricainc
- Our Own Online Rhetoric and Style Manual
- The Elements of Style
- Check-Sheet for Papers
- General Editing Tips
- 12 Common Errors: An Editing Checklist
- Revising vs. Editing

Overview of Reviewing

> "No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else's draft. **--H.G.Wells**

Sooner or later, someone is going to hand you a piece of writing and ask you for your opinion. You may be asked to review another student's essay as part of your classwork. Perhaps a friend or younger brother or sister has come to you for help. If you develop a reputation for being a good writer, then the chances are good that even your boss might ask you to look over her letters or policy statements and offer your professional opinion. In any case, if you really want to do a good job in these situations, you're going to need reviewing skills. You're going to need to be able to identify problems, suggest alternatives, and, more importantly, support everything you say with reasonable claims. Furthermore, you must do all this in a convincing way that makes the writer want to make the changes you suggest. You must know what's wrong with a document, why it's wrong, and how to fix it.

You've probably heard the saying, "A writer is his own worst critic." Whoever said this undoubtedly suffered from poor self-reviewing skills. After all, it's easier to spot problems in other people's writing because our own ego (or pride) doesn't get in the way. Another problem is that sometimes we get so caught up in what we want to get across in our writing that we don't pay enough attention to how we're expressing it--a sentence that makes perfect sense to us might be total gibberish to someone else. Thankfully, these are all problems that can be overcome. You can learn to fairly and accurately review your own work. One way you can get better at self-reviewing is to spend time reviewing other people's work. Eventually, you'll develop a knack for spotting errors that you will serve you well as you edit and revise your own work.

Writers, particularly new writers, often find that letting other writers review their work is tremendously helpful. Most universities have writing centers, where students can have their essays reviewed for free by experienced student writers or tutors. These tutors can work with you one-on-one to improve your writing and earn better grades.

You should realize that reviewing your work, like planning, drafting, or revising, is a recursive process. It is not something a writer does just at the end of his work. For instance, you may want to write an introduction to an essay and have it reviewed by a teacher or classmate before trudging forward. If you're on the wrong track, you'd be better off knowing about it sooner rather than later-- especially if a deadline or due date is looming.

In the academic world, journal articles and books are nearly always "peer reviewed" before they are accepted for publication. Sometimes these reviews are "blind," meaning that neither the writer nor the reviewers know each other's identities. This process is meant to make the process fair and ensure that every scholar gets a chance to get her work published. Academic reviewers must evaluate a work, recommend that it be published or rejected, and (hopefully) offer the writer substantial advice about how his work can be improved.

In this chapter, we'll talk about how to develop the skills you'll need to become a star reviewer. We'll start by discussing "criteria," or the standards you'll stick to when writing reviews. We'll talk about what to look for in a document and how to provide the very best advice to the writer. Finally, we'll talk about how to handle criticism from reviewers who evaluate your work.

ESTABLISHING CRITERIA

Let's suppose that you just gave your paper to your roommate and asked her to look it over. You explain that you've been working on the paper for three days and that you really want to earn an A. "I want your honest opinion," you say. "Don't worry about hurting my feelings. What do you think?"

You watch your roommate's face as she reads your paper. She grimaces. Laughs. Yawns. Finally, she hands you the paper and says, "This sucks."

This may be the type of "review" you are accustomed to receiving--overly critical and not very helpful. Perhaps you agree that your paper is in trouble and needs help, but without a better understanding of what's wrong, you aren't likely to be able to do much about it. Furthermore, how can you trust your roommate's judgment of your paper? What if just so happens that your roommate is neurotic about starting sentences with "But," and, seeing such sentences in your paper, decided right there that the paper was terrible?

Ultimately, what makes an evaluation worthwhile is the soundness of its criteria. As a writer, you want to know not just whether someone likes your paper or not, but what factors they are taking into consideration when they review your paper. Both the reviewer and the person being reviewed need to be as clear as possible about the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work. Are your reviewers only looking at your grammar, or are they also determining the rationality of your arguments? Does a comma splice make a bigger difference than a rough transition between paragraphs? All of these matters should be spelled out clearly beforehand.

Some good criteria to use when judging papers are Focus, Development, Style, Organization, and Conventions.

WRITING HELPFUL COMMENTS

"There are two kinds of editors, those who correct your copy and those who say it's wonderful." **--Theodore H. White**

In the example above, you really were not able to gain any insights or knowledge from your roommate letting you know that your paper "sucks." What you wanted was some kind of feedback that would help you improve your paper so you could get a good grade. You don't know if your paper "sucks" because it was lacking a strong thesis, if it sucks because your writing strayed from assingment, or if it sucks because of grammatical errors. You can be a better self and peer reviewer than your roommate was. Really, given the previous example, how hard can it be? When you are reviewing your own paper or the paper of a friend or classmate, there are a few questions you could ask yourself:

1. Is the paper focused to the assignment? Does it follow the same thought throughout the paper or does it jump from subject to subject? Do I feel like I am still learning about/thinking about the same subject at the end of the paper that I was at the beginning of the paper?

2. How is the development of the paper carried out? Does it start with a broad subject and then move to something more specific?
3. In what style is the paper written? Does it *work* for the subject matter and assingment?
4. How is the paper your are reviewing organized? Again, does it start with the broad and move to specifics? Do all paragraphs support the paragraph's topic sentence, and so all paragraphs support the thesis? Is there an *Introduction* that draws in the reader or does it pretty much restate the assingment? Does the concluding sentence draw the argument of the paper to a close by bringing together the main points provided in the paper, or does it just end?
5. Are common or acception writing conventions followed?

While reviewing the paper, make notes in the margins of any problems you find. If you believe that developing a paragraph a little bit more would be helpful to the argument, write <more>. If you are unclear of something, write <? not sure>. If you notice a missing comma, insert it in the correct spot but be sure to set it off somehow so that you or your friend will notice the correction.

RESPONDING TO CRITICISM

> "I am forced to say that I have many fiercer critics than myself." **--Irwin Shaw**

Nobody likes to be told that what they are doing isn't right. But what seperates good writers from other writers is that the good writers are able to take criticism, realizing that nobody is perfect, and use the criticism to help them either with the assingment at had or with writing assingments they will have in the future.

If your roommate tells you that your paper *sucks*, you probably want to ask her what about your paper is so bad? If she says that you are continually writing run-on sentences, ask her how to correct them or look in a writing guide to learn how to fix them. By handling critism constructivly, you will be more aware of your common errors and will be less likely to repeat them, or at least will know how to find and correct them the next time you write.

If, while meeting with a tutor, you learn that you need further development of some of your ideas for clarity, revist your writing and judge for yourself whether or not you do. Ask yourself if you understand since you are the one who did all of the research and *know* what you mean (probably a good indication that the tutor was right) or if you are comfortable that a reader would understand what you are saying without more information.

Remember that as the writer, you are in control of your paper. When people offer critism, they are usually just trying to help you. Try to remember that. Take the suggestions when you think they make sense, and forget about the ones that don't.

External Links

- The Peer Review As Per Wikipedia
- Friendly Advice for Reviews
- Peer Reviews: Responding to a Draft

OVERVIEW OF REVISING

> "Rewriting is when writing really gets to be fun. . . . In baseball you only get three swings and you're out. In rewriting, you get almost as many swings as you want and you know, sooner or later, you'll hit the ball." **--Neil Simon**

When you edit a document, you are deciding what you'd like to change about it. When you actually make those changes, you are revising. You can see how closely the editing and revising processes are linked--if you're doing your own editing and revising, then you may wonder why we even bother to call them different names. However, in the publishing world, the editor performs a much different task than the writer. The editor only suggests changes--it's up to the writer what to make of them. By no means is this always a peaceful process. Writers will sometimes argue incessantly with editors and vice versa. After all, it's the writer's name that will go out on the article--she has a stake in ensuring that it hasn't been changed so much that it no longer reflects her views. Even writers who heartily agree with their editor's suggestions may discover that their revised version is much worse than their original. This can happen for many reasons, but seldom to writers who really understand the revising process and know how to avoid its dangers.

This chapter will give you sound advice about the revising process. We'll talk about how to get the most out of your editor's suggestions and how to avoid introducing new errors into your work.

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

> "I write one page of masterpiece to ninety one pages of shit. I try to put the shit in the wastebasket." **--Ernest Hemingway**

Before you have completed your document, or have even thought about completing your document, look at the thoughts you have conveyed on paper. Ask yourself if your sentences flow, your paragraphs or even the paper as a whole. If you find that there are somethings that need to be changed throughout the creation of your document here are some helpful hints:

- Arrange and re-arrange your sentences and paragraphs - Look at what you have already written. Decide if there is a better way to say what you need to say. Try rewriting your sentences on a different piece of paper. If you are using Microsoft Word or another word processor, move your sentences around by copying and pasting what you already have.
- Be your own critic - You are obviously your best critic. Take advantage of that. When writing a document, most people do not turn in there first draft. So take advantage of your first, second and third draft to write your opinions in the margins. Highlight the things you really like, and circle the things you would like to change. Step outside of yourself read your document from a different perspective.

- Understand that revising your paper should not be the last thing you do - The revision process should be ongoing throughout the creation of a document.
- After writing a document, read and then re-read it (Proofread) - The first read is to think about overall meaning and clarity. The second read is to think about the organization, logical development and correctness.

When using a word processor, three tools are available to help generate ideas and point out errors: spell checker, grammar checker and thesauri. However, a writer should not rely on these tools- they are not always accurate.

Basically, there are three main things a writer should do while drafting a written document:

- Let it sit - taking a break from the document and looking at it later will help you see it as your readers will. A good rule of thumb is waiting a day before revising.
- Read it out loud - listen for awkward phrases, missing information, weak points, or illogical reasoning.
- Use checklists - use other writing books or papers you have previously written to decided what you need to work on as a writer. For example, look at what past professors have told you about your written documents.

After doing all this by yourself, seek help from others. Find an individual who knows about the topic being discussed in the document, and then have someone similar to the audience the document is aimed at read it.

When others have read your document, test them. Ask them if everything was clear and understandable, phrases were worded correctly, the document followed a logical order, etc.

One technique you may want to try while revising your work is to put yourself in the shoes of your reader. Look at your own work through *their* eyes. Did you introduce your topic and then get into the meat of the information, or did you just jump into it feet first? Does your document flow, or are you jumping around from topic to topic? Does it sound coherent and make sense? What kind of tone are you setting? Is it confrontational? Educational? Humorous?

After all of this is done, you will want to check it one more time. You may find that you strayed from your original topic or had other ideas pop into your head that you want to incorporate into your paper. Adding text and deleting text are acceptable forms of revision. But be sure to review after every modification.

> "Books aren't written; they're rewritten. Including your own. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn't quite done it." **--Michael Chrichton**

BEFORE AND AFTER REVISION EXAMPLES

Example Before Revision

Household Chore Divisions When We Get Married

My mom does almost everything at our house. She cooks, cleans, does laundry, vacuums, and when my sisters and I were younger, she did most of the child care – not fair! My father,

on the other hand, clips the hedges, waters the lawn, and snow-blows the driveway. He makes more money than my mom. My sisters and I take care of mowing the lawn, washing dishes, cleaning the bathrooms, and scrubbing the floors. I was interested to know how Pete and I will split chores once we are married because there (ideally) will not be as large of a earning gap between the 2 of us as there is between my parents.

Pete and I discussed and debated a lot as we went through the "list of chores". I tried to stand my ground on percentages of time that I should do a chore unless Pete was able to give me a reasonable explanation of why I should do a greater percentage of something than he does; he did the same, and so this assignment was a great communication tool and gave us the opportunity to confer on possible problems which may occur somewhere down the road.

My boyfriend Pete and I talk a lot about getting married. We are now college seniors, so it just seems like the next step in the progression of our relationship. We figure, however, that we will wait until I am done with law school and he has his PhD before we do it. Although that brings us to at least 6 years from now we agree that it will be better if we are financially stable before getting married.

Pete and I have decided to split chores almost evenly. I will be doing 44.43% of the total things that will need to get done. He will be doing 43.24% of them. We decided that our son, who will be named Christian, was old enough to help with some of the chores. Some of the other things, we decided, would be worth paying an outside sourse to do. Income tax returns, for example, we concluded could be better and more efficiently taken care of by a CPA. We found that I will be doing 50.25% of the housework, while Pete will be doin 43.17%. We also found that I will be doing 10% of the occasional work while Pete will be doing 63.33%. I will do 60% of the child care, and Pete will do 40%. I seem to be doing more daily tasks, and Pete seems to be doing more occasional tasks.

I think that this assingment was a good starting point for a discussion between myself and Pete. I am going to be a lawyer and he is going ot be a chemist. Both of our schedules will be tight, and we will have to find a better compromise in real life then we did in our imaginary one. If we do not, neither one of us will be truly satisfied.

From the results of this assignment, I will be doing more of the traditionally "female work", and Pete will be doing more "male work". I think that our assigned careers play a part in this but not as much as I would like. I think that although we have broken many of the stereotypes that control my parents, we are still following some of them. When I look over the results it seems odd that Pete will be doing more of the ironing than I, but he taught me to iron and his job calls for more ironed clothes than mine. We also figured that he will have a little more leeway on time as a manager than I will as a lawyer. Thus, he will be getting the kids ready for

school. We broke a couple of stereotypes, but we still have a ways to go before reaching equality.

Example After Revision

Household Chore Divisions When We Get Married

My boyfriend Pete and I talk a lot about getting married. We are now college seniors, so it just seems like the next logical step in our relationship. We figure, however, that we will wait until I am done with law school and he has his PhD before we do it. Although that brings us to at least six years from now we agree that it will be better if we are financially stable before getting married.

My mom does almost everything in the home where I was raised. She cooks, cleans, does laundry, vacuums, and when my sisters and I were younger, she did most of the child care – harly fair or equal! My dad, on the other hand, clips the hedges, waters the lawn, and snow-blows the driveway. My sisters and I take care of mowing the lawn, washing dishes, cleaning the bathrooms, and scrubbing the floors. My dad does make more money than my mom, but it seems to me like she is somehow "making up" for her lack of earning by being a servant. I was interested to know how Pete and I will split chores once we are married because there (ideally) will not be so large an earning gap between the two of us as there is between my parents.

Pete and I discussed and debated a lot as we went through the "list of chores." I tried to stand my ground on percentages of time that I should do a chore unless Pete was able to give me a reasonable explanation of why I should do a greater percentage of something than he does. He did the same, and so this assignment was a great communication tool and gave us the opportunity to confer on possible problems which may occur somewhere down the road.

Pete and I have decided to split chores almost evenly. I will be doing 44.43% of the total things that will need to get done. He will be doing 43.24% of them. We decided that when our child was old enough to help with some of the chores, he or she will be. Some of the other things, we decided, would be worth paying an outside sourse to do. Income tax returns, for example, could be better and more efficiently taken care of by a CPA. We found that I will be doing 50.25% of the housework, while Pete will be doing 43.17% of the housework. We also found that I will be doing 10% of the occasional work while Pete will be doing 63.33% of the occassional work. I will do 60% of the child care, and Pete will do 40% of the child care. I seem to be doing more daily tasks, and Pete seems to be doing more occasional tasks.

From the results of this assignment, I will be doing more of the traditionally "female work," and Pete will be doing more "male work." I think that our assigned careers play a part in this but not as much as I would like. I think that although we have broken many of the stereotypes to which my parent subscribe, we are still following some of them. When I look over the results it seems odd, gender-task speaking, that Pete will be doing more of the ironing than I, but he taught me to iron and his job calls for more ironed clothes than mine. We also figured that he will have a little more leeway on time as a manager than I will as a lawyer. Because of this, he will be getting the kids ready for school in the morning. We

broke a couple of stereotypes, but we still have a way to go before reaching equality.

I think that this assingment was a good discussion starting point for me and Pete. I am going to be a lawyer and he is going ot be a chemist. Both of our schedules will be tight, and we will have to find a better compromise in our real life then we did in our imaginary one. If we do not, neither one of us will be truly satisfied.

Notes

Notice how much more nicely the Example After Revision reads than the Example Before Revision read? Only a few things were changed from one example to the next.

1. The order of a few paragraphs was rearranged.
2. Punctuation was included **inside** of quotation marks rather than **outside** quotation marks.
3. "6" was changed to "six."
4. Some material was added to the Example After Revision for clarity.

That is it!

EXTERNAL LINKS

- 18 Revising Tips
- Revision Checklist
- Paradigm Online Writing Assistant Revision.
- Revision: From First to Final Draft

OVERVIEW OF PUBLISHING

> "One of the signs of Napoleon's greatness is the fact that he once had a publisher shot." **--Siegfried Unseld**

We are writing a Rhetoric and Composition Wiki Book. But why are we doing this? We want students to be able to learn from the information we have gathered and benefit from our collective knowledge. But what is the intention of doing this project if we had no intention of being published in print? Our information is still made available in electronic form without the use of publishers or paid editors. However if you are interested in being paid for your writing, there is more work involved.

Getting your work published may seem scary and overwhelming, but there are readily available resources to help you. The "Writer's Market" is probably one of the most easily accessible and helpful tools. This resource will be explained later. First it is important to decide which category your work is classified as, or which category you are interested in before you begin writing. Once you know which market you are aiming for you can research the company to find their location, materials they are interested in, requirements, payment, and rights. You are going to want to pay close attention to their requirements and policies. If the company does not accept unsolicited manuscripts and you send them one, you have just wasted your time because they will send it back, unread, that is if you have remembered to include a self addressed stamped envelope.

If you want to send an idea to an editor you may do this through a query letter. A query letter should be short and to the point. The point is to interest the editor into buying your idea or article or at least requesting a book proposal or entire manuscript. Included in a query letter is strong opening lead about the article, book, or piece, a description of the development or structure and content, any other information or images you intend to include, what skills you have to be writing the piece, and a solid closing requesting to write or submit the piece. It would be wise to include a deadline for reply.

Types of Publication

Print Publication

There is the traditional way to be published...in print. This can be easier than you think. All it really takes to "get published" is the ability to reproduce and distribute your work. If you have access to a printer you can see your work in print. While publishing in established print venues is usually considered most prestigious, there are several other forms of print media that are more accessible and, some might say, more radical and full of potential.
Zines are one of the more multimodal, grass-roots forms of print media. Aesthetically, zines revere the found, the somewhat sloppy, the everyday, the mix. Zines repurpose, combine, and arrange existing text in new ways. Zines are sometimes typed, sometimes handwritten, sometimes "artsy," and at other times dead serious. Without exception, though, 'zines circulate writing and ideas that have not been sanctioned by edited print journals, magazines, or other publications. For this reason, publishing your work in your own zine (or someone else's) is generally seen as less prestigious than publishing in an established organ such as the The New

Yorker magazine or equivalent.

Academic Publishing

Academic publishing is a way for scholars to share research and is also a way to review other works. This type of publishing most often includes journals and books in academic fields such as the sciences and humanities, but pretty much covers any topic imagineable. You are probably most familiar academic journals in electronic form. Many colleges have online journal indexes which include scholarly journals that have been peer reviewed. They are called journals but are really just papers or articles. Categories for journals range from physics and geometry to education and art.

Commercial Publishing

Commercial publishing is the not so academic approach to publishing. This type of publication could include academic or scholarly information, but that is not usually the overall focus. Basically anything that is not purely academic is probably commercial. Commercial publishing is focused on profit rather than sharing or reviewing research. Commercial publication can inlclude books, articles, journals, magazines, and more. Sometimes the work is supported by an advertiser. Advertisements can even be part of the package, such as with magazines.

Electronic Publication

One can also be published electronically. While working on a contract it is important to acknowledge whether the work will be made available in electronic format. Electronic publishing is quite different from paper publishing. Some argue that writers deserve more of the share of profits when dealing with electronic publishing because high costs of printing, storing and shipping. Fees involved with electronic publishing include formatting of devices, upgrading files and equipment, and security. Electronic publishing also includes fees in favor of the writer or publisher. There are fees from licensing electronic rights like e-book distribution fees.

One concern is that works published electronically do not stand the test of review by peers, as a print journal does.

Know Your Rights

As a writer seeking publication it is important to know your rights. Did you know that there are more than five different types of rights? It may seem extreme, but if you do not know them you may not be getting paid as much as you should and publishers may take advantage of your work. Some rights are clearly specified and are considered to be expected rights. If you are unclear on what rights you are giving away or keeping, you will want to clarify them before signing a contract.

There are first serial rights which basically is summed up as the rights you give to a newspaper or magazine to publish your work for the first time. One-time rights means the publisher has the right to publish the work only once and you can also be giving that same piece to another publication at the same time. Second serial rights or reprint rights are the rights given to a publication to publish a work that has already been published in another newspaper or magazine. You may choose to give up all rights to the work, meaning you give up your work and cannot publish it again. Electronic rights iclude online magazines, databases, games, and CD-ROMs, you will want to clarify which of these rights will be used. Subsidary rights include works possibly associated with your work such as movie, TV, audiotape, electronic, and translation right.

The Writer's Market

The Writer's Market is a very valuable resource for freelance writers. Writer's Market offers market information, tips for getting published, advice from agents and editors, and formatting information. These services are available in the "Writer's Market" book and is offered at WritersMarket.com. There is an annual or monthly fee for the services online, but it is minimal considering all that is offered. The Writer's Market is a direct link to searchable databases for more than 5,600 writing markets for writer's to submit work for publication. Or you can search through the information page by page in the book version. Either version will give you valuable information for contacting publishers, leading you one step closer to publication.

TIPS FOR GETTING PUBLISHED

> "That's very nice if they want to publish you, but don't pay too much attention to it. It will toss you away. Just continue to write." **--Natalie Goldberg**

> "I'd like to have money. And I'd like to be a good writer. These two can come together, and I hope they will, but if that's too adorable, I'd rather have money." **--Dorothy Parker**

Revise your work
Make sure you are using a writing style that people will enjoy and be able to follow.
Cut out an extra parts that do not add to the overall story or point.
Look for inconsistencies in the work.
Watch out for repetetive phrases or words and rewrite them.
Don't forget to check for typos and grammar errors.

Have someone else revise your work
Someone else may be able to check some things that you were not able to catch. Someone else can also tell you if there are any unclear parts. This may mean hiring a professional copy editor to look over your work. The more professional your work is, the more seriously it will be taken by publishers and agents.

Consider attending writer's conferences
Publishers, agents and other writers who attend these conferences can give you valuable feedback or tips.

Find an agent
For many fiction pieces it is likely that you will need an agent. Some publishers will not even look at your work without an representative agent. Be sure to research your agent to make sure he or she is legit. Watch out for any hidden or unsuspected fees.

Find someone to publish your work
If you have an agent and they are willing to help you get published, consider yourself lucky. If not, you will have to do some research to find a publisher willing to publish your work. Look into the company and be clear on what types of work they publish. You wouldn't want to send a children's book to a company that only publishes nonfiction.

Consider entering writing/publishing contests

Some magazines offer contests that may result in cash prizes and having your work published. Not only do you have the opportunity to win prizes, but more importantly you will get your work out there and noticed.

Don't give up

Being rejected by multiple publishers is discouraging, but you shouldn't let this stop you. Thousands of writers are trying to get published. Your work may be overlooked from time to time. Just keep sending out your work because you never know when someone is going to decide that they want to publish your work.

"Manuscript: something submitted in haste and returned at leisure." **--Oliver Herford**

"For several days after my first book was published, I carried it about in my pocket and took surreptitious peeps at it to make sure the ink had not faded." **--Sir James M. Barrie**

EXTERNAL LINKS

- A Literary Agency Offers Advice
- An Article on Possible Steps to Publishing Success
- Additional Advice for Aspiring Writers

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CHAPTER 1.08 • PUBLISHING

UNIT 02

WRITING APPLICATIONS

Book of Hours

CHAPTER 2.00 • OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The first part of this book is about the stages of the writing process. Now it's time to shift gears and start thinking about the kinds of assignments you're likely to encounter in college. Each "writing mode" requires a different way of thinking, and that's why teachers and professors often ask for different kinds of writing--they want you to think about a subject in a variety of ways. But generally, assignments will require you to apply several modes, simultaneously, to accomplish a well-rounded body of writing. Few professors beyond the first-year level of coursework require an assignment that merely focuses on description or narration; other modes are required to generate a well-rounded piece of writing that entertains, informs, and persuades (i.e., narrative, explication, argument).

Most of the time, you'll find yourself switching among all of these modes as you write. You'd have a hard time, for instance, reviewing a car without spending any time describing it, and the strength of an argument depends on how well you've evaluated its evidence. What's important is that you recognize the difference between them. Many students lose points each year when they offer their teacher a description instead of the evaluation or argument called for by the assignment. Below, we first give you some hints about analyzing assignments to find out what different types of writing task you need to do. Then, we break down some common writing modes, telling you their characteristics and what makes them unique, then offer examples of informal and formal writing that show them in action.

ANALYZING ASSIGNMENTS

Writing successfully for your college classes depends a lot on finding out as much as possible about what you need to do to fulfill the assignment each time you write. While many instructors try hard to clarify their expectations, the final responsibility for making sure you know what it takes to fulfill an assignment is yours. Be your own advocate!

This chapter will give you strategies for interpreting assignments successfully and break down eighteen words commonly used in assignments to help you understand what critical and writing tasks you need to do.

DESCRIPTION

Probably the key difference between a good writer and a bad one is the ability to write vivid, detailed descriptions. What does something look like? Sound like? Feel like? Good descriptions make all the difference when you're trying to hook readers and keep them interested. We don't want to read, "The house was scary." We want to read a great description of the house that actually makes us feel that fear for ourselves. This can only be accomplished by observant writers who are willing to "show" as well as "tell" their readers about their subject.

This chapter will introduce you to description and offers some good advice about writing highly descriptive essays.

NARRATION

"Narrative" is really just a fancy way of saying "story." When you are narrating, you are describing an event, step-by-step, usually in the order that it happened. In other words, a "narration" is a "description" of something taking place in time. As you can probably guess, narration and description are highly related--you can't narrate very well if you lack the ability to describe accurately and vividly what it taking place.

This chapter will introduce you to narration and some strategies for telling good stories.

EXPOSITION

Expository writing is writing that explains or informs. You may encounter expository writing in an assignment that has you describing a process or developing a set of clear instructions. You aren't just describing a "what" ("What is fishing?") but explaining a "how" ("How do you fish?") Writers with excellent exposition skills are generally good learners, since describing processes well requires a thorough understanding of the process.

This chapter offers tips and suggestions for expository writing and some helpful examples.

EVALUATION

Magazines like *Consumer Reports* and movie reviewers like Roger Ebert are famous for the quality of their evaluative writings. They give people the information they need to determine if a car is worth buying or a movie is worth seeing. You'll also find lots of evaluations in business, where they are used to determine an employee's eligibility for promotion or a manager's effectiveness at overseeing an important project.

This chapter will tell you all about evaluative writing and the strategies you'll need to do it right.

ARGUMENTATION

Some people think of arguments as a lot of shouting and cursing--but that's not what college professors mean when they use the term "argumentation." What they have in mind is a clear-headed, logical, and convincing style of speaking or writing that makes a valid point and supports it with good evidence. An argument isn't just summing up what overs have said about an issue. You'll need to research the issue, evaluate the evidence, reach a conclusion, figure out the best way to support it, and arrange your thoughts effectively. Writing a good argumentative paper is probably the most difficult of all types of writing assignments, but we'll give you advice and discuss some strategies that will get you on the right track.

This chapter describes what college professors mean by the term "argumentation," and discuss some methods that will earn good grades on these common but challenging assignments.

CHAPTER 2.01 • ANALYZING ASSIGNMENTS

SAVE YOUR ENERGY!

Make sure you clearly understand your instructor's expectations **before** you start work on a writing assignment. This will let you spend less time guessing and reworking and more time strengthening your work. Also, if you read your assignment well ahead of time and find you do have a question, it's not too late to ask those questions! Don't wait until the night before the assignment is due to try to understand it.

SNOWFLAKES, FINGERPRINTS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Writing assignments in college differ as much as instructors. There is no one guidebook, approach, or set of rules that every college teacher has to consult when putting together assignments. This means that although some assignments may resemble others, each one is unique. That's why you will want to devote some time to thoroughy understanding an assignment before you start working on it.

FOUR STEPS FOR ANALYZING AN ASSIGNMENT

1. The first step is to **read the assignment thoroughly**. Even if it's long, resist the temptation to skim; you don't want to miss any guidelines or points and risk turning in an incomplete or off-base work. As you're reading, underline the words describing *what* you need to do and *how* you're supposed to do it. Mark all the places where you have questions.
2. To **get answers to your questions**, stay after class, email your instructor, stop by during his or her office hours, or make an appointment with him or her. This is a crucial factor in turning in a good assignment; if you do this one thing, chances are you'll be head and shoulders above your classmates.
3. After you're sure you understand the assignment and what you're supposed to do, refer to your assignment sheet and **make a list** of the following: the points you need to cover, the elements or parts you need to include, the questions you need to answer, and/or any other notes about what you must have in your final draft in order to fulfill the assignment.
4. Keep this list visible whenever you're working on the assignment, and **check it frequently** to make sure you're on the right track and not leaving anything out.

INTERPRET COMMON ASSIGNMENT WORDS

These words appear frequently in college writing assignments. Each one directs you to do specific things.

- **Address/Cover**: Be sure to include and focus on specific points listed after these words.
- **Analyze**: Break something down into its parts. For example: break down a theory into its components, a process into its stages, an event into its causes, a problem into its effects. Analysis usually requires you to identify the whole, identify the parts, and show how the parts relate to each other or to the whole.

- **Argue**: Make, support, and defend a contestable claim, assessment, or hypothesis.
- **Articulate/Explain**: Spell out. Make a concept, thing, reason, position, etc. clear and intelligible with such other tasks as analysis, definition, assessment, and so on. This may involve relating the unfamiliar to the more familiar.
- **Assert**: Create and express a position or a judgment, or make a well-reasoned opinion. Similar to argument.
- **Assess/Criticize/Evaluate**: Make a judgment. Determine and express the value or importance of something. This often requires you to describe clear criteria for judging the thing and applying them to the thing and/or parts of the thing.
- **Classify**: Sort/divide something into main categories. This may require you to defend the categories you create.
- **Compare/Contrast**: Identify important similarities (comparison) and/or differences (contrast) among two or more things in order to reveal something significant about them.
- **Defend/Justify**: Make clear the reasons for a position you take. Most academic writing requires you to use verifiable facts, expert testimony, and well-reasoned assessments when defending or justifying a point as opposed to beliefs, popular testimony, and personal anecdotes.
- **Define/Identify**: Give the special characteristics by which a concept, thing, event, place, activity, etc. can be recognized: Say what it is and what it is not. This might involve placing the thing in a general class or category and differentiating it from other things in that class.
- **Describe**: Illustrate with words the characteristics by which something can be recognized or visualized.
- **Discuss/Examine**: This often signals a task in which you take more leadership in deciding what to write about and how. In general, it calls on you to decide how to write about an issue, event, person, text, or other thing in a way that goes beyond summary to making substantive points about the thing.
- **Illustrate**: Use vivid language, concrete examples, and tightly focused descriptions to clarify something (a concept, a problem, a term, a situation, and so on) for the reader. Paint a picture with words.
- **Interpret**: Go beyond summarizing what someone or something else (not you) says or does to making and defending, in detail, the case that the person or thing is saying or doing something beyond the superficially observable. Involves using evidence from the person's text or speech or the facts surrounding the thing to defend your interpretation of what they/it are saying.
- **List/Enumerate**: Give essential points one by one in a logical order.
- **Outline/Trace**: Describe the organization of something, noting main and subordinate points, elements, events, or characteristics. Omit minor details and focus on identifying the development of an event, object, or issue.
- **Propose**: Similar to "Assert" but calling specifically for you to produce a concrete, detailed plan for doing something. Often requires a researched defense of your proposed course of action.
- **Prove/Validate**: Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence or giving clear, logical reasons for believing the truth of something. Evidence must be of the type acceptable in the assignment's particular context, e.g. chemistry, mathematics, physics. This task is generally found in the hard sciences.

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CHAPTER 2.01 • ANALYZING ASSIGNMENTS

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GENRE ANALYSIS, GENRE AND COMPOSITION

While "the modes" (description, narration, analysis) have long been productive categories for student writers to work with, since the publication of Carolyn Miller's "Genre as Social Action" (1984), many writing teachers have begun to think that understanding genre can be a place to begin in planning what to write.

Genre Analysis Often Consists of Gathering Samples of Genres and Asking:

- Is it a genre? Is it considered one by its users? Does it have a name?
- What type of genre is it? (A speech genre? A gestural genre? A written genre?)
- Where is the genre in circulation and use?
- Who is involved? Do participants have different roles in the genre?
- Are there conventions in the genre? Is it highly conventional?
- What are the roles of invention, imitation, originality, and plagiarism in this genre?
- Is it a rigid genre or flexible genre?
- Is it a regulatory genre?
- What social action gets performed through this genre?
- Does the genre interact with and/or "help" produce other genres?
- How has the genre changed?

WHAT IS DESCRIPTION?

> "When your writing is filled with detail, it has a lot more impact." **--Ivan Levison**

Description is the process by which a writer describes things he or she senses in order to evoke those same senses in the reader. Consequently, much of descriptive language makes use of sensory language, or language that appeals to one or more of the five senses (touch, sight, smell, taste, and sound). As a descriptive writer, the more accurately you are able to describe what you have sensed, the more your audience will be engaged with the text. Grammatically speaking, description uses nouns and adjectives in order to most specifically and efficiently describe a particular sense. You may use description in order to allow your reader to truly sense what you are writing about, and therefore make the language more powerful for them. Much of description deals with making the abstract more concrete. For example, the abstract idea of freedom may have many definitions for different readers. When described in terms of the freedom given slaves through the Emancipation Proclamation however, the idea of freedom becomes much more concrete. Description then, in general, is used by writers in order to allow their respective audience to see exactly what they are talking about.

HOW TO WRITE DESCRIPTION

In order to write descriptively, you must take a topic and decide how to make that topic most vivid for your audience. If the topic of the piece is merely to describe a particular place, you must decide

what elements of that place when described in text, will become most vivid for your audience. The first step in any descriptive writing is to choose a topic and begin to work out a thesis statement. Like aforementioned, you may choose to describe a particular place.

Thesis

Sample Thesis Statement: *Although Minnesota may seem drab and cold to outsiders, natives of the state find it a wonderful place to live.*

We can see in this thesis statement that the writer will attempt to show the aspects of Minnesota that make it a great place to live in the eyes of the native. After detailing a thesis statement, you should come up with a list of sensory words that provide vivid detail and support the thesis. You may start by thinking about the five senses. How does your particular place look, smell, feel, taste, and sound like? How can you best describe these senses so the reader feels what you feel? By organizing the elements of descriptive language into easier to handle sections, like the five senses, you are able to more specifically engage in what elements of the description are most useful.

Sensory Words

Examples of Sensory Words:

Sounds?

Example of sound imagery:

> Quiet solitude,
>
> grasshoppers chirping at night,
>
> trees rustling in the wind,
>
> the howl of a wolf,
>
> birds singing,
>
> leaves crunching,
>
> fire crackling.

Smells?

Example of smell imagery:

> Chlorine at a pool,
>
> freshly cut grass,
>
> flowers in spring,
>
> morning dew,
>
> freshly baked banana bread,
>
> acrid campfire smoke.

Textures?

Examples of touch imagery:

> Snow falling on your nose,
>
> sandpaper,
>
> paper-like birch bark,
>
> sand beneath your feet,
>
> falling off water skis.

Sights?

Examples of visual imagery:

> The brilliant rays of sunset,
>
> The churning blue waterfall,
>
> Powerful deer racing across the field,
>
> Clean snow falling softly in the sun,

> Corn stalks rustling in the breeze.

Tastes?

Examples of taste imagery:

> Lutefisk or Lefsa during the Holidays,
>
> steaming, bitter black coffee,
>
> fresh, succulent strawberries,
>
> crunchy chocolate chip cookies,
>
> cotton candy, sweetly melting in your mouth.

After deciding what senses you wish to invoke, make a list of all the words you wish to include. You should also begin to plan a way to present the information that will drive home the thesis statement in the most profound way.

Order

Example of Order of Presentation: The writer in this case could choose to present the positive aspects of Minnesota in terms of the seasons and weather changes. The details could be presented linearly, starting with spring and going through the winter, highlighting the aspects of each season that most closely support the thesis, that Minnesota is a great place to live.

Prior to starting the essay, give some thought as to who the audience of your piece will be. Who is going to read the essay, and what effect would you like it to have upon them? An awareness of audience is important to choosing the level of formality you take with your writing. Knowing your audience will also help you distinguish which details to include throughout your essay. Assume that your audience knows very little or nothing about your subject matter, and include details that may seem very obvious to you.

Audience

Example Audience: In this particular essay, the writer wants to show an outsider to the state why Minnesota natives are so happy to live there. The essay should help break down stereotypes for those outsiders about Minnesota's cold weather and apparent drabness. Because the essay is designed for those who do not live in Minnesota, and maybe have never been there, it is important to include details about the state that may seem obvious to a native.

With the preparatory work complete, it is time now to begin writing your essay. Use your thesis statement to begin to construct an introductory paragraph. The introduction should set up the basis for your essay, and the thesis statement should state its purpose.

Introduction

Example Introduction: *Many who have not traveled to the state of Minnesota only hear of its cold weather and boring reputation. They are sure missing out on the great opportunities that Minnesota affords. Each season offers different senses that native Minnesotans and tourists know and love. Although Minnesota may seem drab and cold to outsiders, natives of the state find it a wonderful place to live.*

With the introduction complete, it is time to start constructing the body parpagraphs of your essay. Each body paragraph should have a central theme in itself, and that theme should be represented in a topic sentence. Consequently, each sentence of the paragraph should relate to and support the topic sentence. The body paragraphs are where the majority of the details should be represented. When writing the first draft of your descriptive essay, include as many details as entirely possible. You can always eliminate the ones that do not serve the essay as well when you are revising your draft. In the case of our example essay, we have decided to set up the body paragraphs in terms of season, starting with spring.

Body

Example Body Paragraph:

Spring in Minnesota brings new life to the state after the long winter season. The rain washes the landscape clean, leaving its fresh aroma for all to enjoy. The flowers soak up the golden sun's rays and begin to show their vibrant colors. The first birds can be seen and heard throughout the woods and fields, telling their stories in beautiful songs. The lakes begin to show their glossy finish as the ice melts away slowly under the heat of the season.

With the body paragraphs complete, it is time to bring the essay to a close with the conclusion. The conclusion should return back to the thesis and provide coherence to the essay. The conclusion should restate the main points of the essay in order to give the reader a final sense of what the essay was meant to portray. There should not be any new material introduced in the conclusion, and the way it is worded should give the reader a sense of finality.

Conclusion

Example Conclusion:

By examining what each of the seasons in Minnesota has to offer, it becomes clear that the state is a truly wonderful place to live or visit. Minnesota is much more than the cold and drab state that many people give it credit for. One visit to the state and anyone can see the great things about Minnesota.

With the essay complete, it is time to reread and revise your essay (see also revision sections of this textbook). Read your first draft and pinpoint all of the descriptor words you used. If possible, go back and add more after the ones you already used in the essay. If you can, read your essay out loud to a friend and have them tell you what images are vivid for them, and what images are a little more cloudy. Rework any images that are cloudy with more descriptions. Also check to see if your descriptions have made use of all of the five senses: sound, smell, texture, sight, taste. Repeat these steps as many times as necessary until you are happy with your product.

External Links

- A Brief Guide to Writing Descriptive Essays
- Checklist of Things to Consider when Writing Descriptive Essays.
- Generating Sensory Details

WHAT IS NARRATION?

Narration is the process by which a writer tells a story through the use of text. An event or series of events is retold, often times, but not neccessarily, by a first-hand witness. As a narrative writer, you may make use of chronological structure, or you may unfold the story through alternative temporal means. Any way you choose to write it, make it your own! It's your story. Use your own style to tell it.

HOW TO WRITE NARRATION

There are many, many different ways to write a narrative. Everybody has a different style and will tell their stories in their own way. Here are some general things to keep in mind when writing narration.

A good narration will typically use strong description and sensory language in order to give your reader a vivid picture of the setting and the events which took place.

Like nearly all forms of writing, narration typically starts with a thesis or main idea. Your particular narritive is then used in succession with the thesis to institute a purpose to the story. Your story may support a lifestyle or philosophy, or may just explain why something is the way it is. Although a story may just be a story, good narration allows for your reader to understand the thesis and the aspects of its importance.

In close relation to the thesis of your narrative, is your awareness of audience. Because your thesis deals directly with the purpose in telling your story, a discussion of audience will inherantly follow in order to apply that purpose to a group. When storytelling, you must give thought to what you would like your audience to leave the piece with. Your purpose should relate directly to the target audience so that the implicit rhetoric does not go unnoticed.

Thesis

When writing narration, you must rely on your inherent storytelling ability, as well as your sense of purpose. Select an event that has had some significance in your own life. If told well, the event will take on significance in your reader's life as well. Start with a thesis statement that sets up what the narration will detail and also gives your reader of sense of the purpose of your story.

Example Thesis Statement:

My experience playing college football taught me skills which will benefit me throughout the rest of my life.

Audience and Purpose

After establishing the thesis of your essay, think about what you want the reader to gain from reading your essay. First, think about who the audience of your essay will be. Is it a narrow audience, or will you have a wide array of readers? As with any discussion of audience, it is

important to ananlyze how your writing style will affect their reading of your essay. Is your audience one in which an informal style will have a greater effect, or should your writing be more formal? Would your audience gain greater understanding from a first person narrative, or a third person? Once you have determined your primary audience, make sure your thesis states what your purpose will be in discussing your narrative with your audience.

Example Audience and Purpose: In the case of our example essay, the writer may want to express the values of participating in collegiate athletics to a potential employer. The writer may use the narrative as a type of interviewing process in which he details a few of the events of his career and what they taught him about life. In this case, a certain level of formality should be used, because the writer is making an impression upon a potential employer. A first person narrative will be useful because it will be a direct representation of the writer's personal experiences and what they have taught him.

Time Constraints

It is important also to have a temporal sense when writing narration. How much time will the events related cover? Will you be able to describe all of the pertinent events in the time span you have chosen? Because narration tells a story, it is important to have an idea of the story's beginning and end. This will provide you a framework with which to work, and allow you to more accurately and efficiently choose which events will tie most directly with the purpose of your essay.

Example Time Constraints: In the example essay, the writer will likely choose to relate his entire time playing college football, four or five years, and choose the events that best describe any skill-building activities he encountered. This story will cover events over a series of years, relating the most influential aspects of his situation as a college football player.

Events of the Story

Now it is time to begin listing the major events of the story. Which events best illustrate your purpose in telling the story? Which events are clear in your mind, and will be most easily related? What is the best order to relate the events? Treat this step like a brainstorming process, and list as many events as you can remember. Then narrow your list to the most pertinent to your thesis statement and inherent purpose.

Example Events of the Story:

In our example essay, the writer may start with the events of his freshman year, going all the way through to his senior year.

Events of the Narrative:

- Freshman:
    - I learned to manage my time with practice, schoolwork, and my social life.
    - I learned what it means to earn your status within a group atmosphere.

- Sophomore:
    - I learned to deal with adversity, as I was injured throughout most of the season.
    - I learned to ask for and rely on the help of others when I could not do things on my own.

- Junior:
    - I learned to truly work together to achieve team goals, as we had a very successful season.
    - I learned to present myself as a role model, as I gained some community notoriety.

- Senior:
    - I learned how to present myself as a true leader of a group, as I was elected team captain.
    - I learned to take pride in everything I do because it is the most rewarding.

Once you have stated the purpose of your essay, come up with a thesis, selected an audience, identified a temporal framework and brainstormed the events of your story, it is time to begin writing. Keep in mind that the more detail and description you can fit into your essay, the more the story will come alive for the reader. Also, your conclusion should relate how the events in the story changed you as a person with regrard to your purpose.

EXAMPLE ESSAY

My experience playing college football taught me skills which will benefit me throughout the rest of my life. It all started during the fall of my freshman year at St. Cloud State University, when I quickly found out how important time management is. I had my schoolwork, which was fourteen credits including an extremely difficult Calculus class. I had football, which included meetings and practice every day and running and lifting a couple times of week. I also had my social life, another important aspect, especially to an eighteen year old.

My sophomore year taught me how to deal with adversity. I broke my leg during the second game of the season against North Dakota, and I learned how something that seems devastating can be seen in a positive light. I learned that life will always have something unexpected in store, but learning to deal with it makes us stronger people.

My junior year taught me how to set goals and achieve them in a team atmosphere. Our team that year had a mission to make the playoffs, and we were not going to let anything get in our way. We really came together that year because we all had a common goal. I learned that a group can achieve wonderful things if all of the group members work together and believe in each other.

My senior year in football taught me how to be a leader. I was elected team captain by my teammates, which showed me that my peers respected me and knew they could rely on me. Leadership does not come easily however. I learned that leadership must not only be earned, but it also must be kept. I was always concious of the way I acted and spoke, because I knew my teammates were looking to me for strength.

Each year I played collegiate football taught me something not only about myself but also about the nature of the world and the people who inhabit the world. I learned how to balance my time, deal with adversity, the true meaning of teamwork, and how to be a respected leader. These skill-building activities will benefit me throughout the rest of my life.

Closing Remarks

Like any form of essay, it is always important to go back and revise the first draft. Proofread the essay carefully, and look for ways to improve its overall appearance. In the case of narration, make sure the story flows for the audience. Do the events of the story make sense? Also, look to make sure that each event relates directly back to the purpose and thesis. Does this particular event reinforce my thesis? When writing a narration, it is also important to look for ways to make the story more vivid for the audience. Go back and include as many descriptive words and details as possible. Once you are satisfied with your product, make a clean and neat final copy.

External Links

- A Brief Guide to Writing Narrative Essays
- Narrative Essays

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Chapter 2.03 • Narration

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CHAPTER 2.04 • EXPOSITION

WHAT IS EXPOSITION WRITING?

Exposition can either be oral or written. It is used to describe, inform, explain, or to give information about a subject. When writing an exposition, the person writing must assume that the person that is going to be reading or interpreting the information has no previous knowledge on the subject. This means that you have to fully explain how things work and why things are. You can leave *common knowledge* out when explaining things, though--you probably are not writing for first graders.

Types of Expositions

- Informative - Tell audience all about your subject

- Descriptive - Describe more in-depth about your subject than an Informative essay

- Analytical - Tell audience the good and bad points of subject and how effective it is

Criteria

As stated before, you need to assume that the reader does not know anything about your subject beforehand. This is the main criteria for your paper. You also need to have a solid subject and need to be able to explain the ins and outs of it very clearly. If you do not know how to explain it, then do not write about it.

STRUCTURE

An exposition starts with an introduction that contains the most important aspect of the piece--the *thesis*, the main point that the author wishes to convey to the reader. This is usually split up into several sub-arguments or categories. It is then followed by the body where the writer clarifies the different aspects of the thesis in detail. The last part of an exposition is the conclusion, where the thesis is restated and the writer ties up any loose strands from what they had written.

Introduction

The introduction should start with an attention-grabbing device. This can include quotes, jokes, personal experiences, or startling facts. After this, intoduce your topic and briefly state the main areas of information that you will go over in the paper. Somewhere in your introduction, you need to state your thesis. The thesis is usually the last sentence in the introduction, however it doesn't always have to be. Your thesis should state exactly what your goal of the paper is (which should be *informing your audience about a subject*).

Body

The body needs to have lots of explanation in an exposition paper or essay. Remember, you need to assume that your audience has no prior knowledge on your topic. If you are writing about Law Enforcement, you cannot simply dive right into the process of arresting a suspect and bringing him/her to court. You need to lay down the basis of our laws and how and why our laws exist in order to make the reader know *why* a person has been arrested. If you do not do this, one may think that people get arrested for no reason at all. Make sure to separate the subtopics that you write about very clearly with your paragraphs in this type of essay, becuase if you are not carefule you could easily confuse a reader.

Conclusion

The conclusion should restate the thesis and wrap-up the information you presented in the body. Remember to leave your audience with a good taste in their mouths. That means, do not simply say that the paper is over, but go over some of the more interesting points of your subject again. Just like in your introduction, use a gimmick to really drive home the ending of your work.

SAMPLE EXPOSITION ASSIGNMENTS

Here are some sample assignments to prepare you for a real exposition paper or essay. Remember that your audience has no knowledge of your topic before reading your paper!

- Write an informative expostion essay on the many uses of duct tape.

- Compose a descriptive exposition essay about your room.

- Type an analytical exposition essay that analyzes your computer keyboard and the how effective it is at its job.

SAMPLE EXPOSITION ESSAY

Here is a short and simple exposition essay sample using cell phones.

"Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind." - Rudyard Kipling

One of the best ways to spread this "powerful drug" is through the simple act of talking to another person. Everybody wants to talk and everybody also wants to listen and learn. How is one man or woman supposed to communicate with another from across the city, state, or even country without a very powerful tool? This powerful tool, while seemingly simple, is called a *cellular phone, or cell phone for short*. The cell phone has revolutionized the way that the world communicates with each other and spreads the good word. One might be asking just what a cell phone is--well, listen up and find out.

The cell phone has its roots with the telepgraph and telephone. These are both devices that are able to send messages through land-based wires called *phone lines*. That means that a coded message or a voice is sent through phone lines in order to make it to its destination. The recieving person can then translate the code or listen to the voice on the other end. On a telephone, people were capable of having a conversation from across the nation while it sounded like they were in the same room as each other. In order for them to be able to make a call to each other, though, there would have to be a web of phone lines connecting them over thousands of miles of land. Laying all of these phone lines was very cumbersome, as was only being able to send or recieve calls from a stationary place, like a house or office. While the Telephone made broad communication more accessible, it still did not have entirely enough freedom for the people.

This was all changed in the year 1973. A man named Martin Cooper invented the first Cellular Phone while working for Motorola. It was about the size of a brick and weighed over 30 ounces (or 1.8 pounds). While big in size, it was even larger in potential. Cooper made his first call on his cell phone while walking in the middle of a New York street. There were no wires connected to his phone. There was nothing restricting his movement and could send or recieve calls from anywhere.

How does a cell phone work if it is not connected to the phone lines? The short answer to that question is: *satellites*. The cell phone emits a signal to one of the many satellites that are orbiting Earth. The satellite catches the signal and sends it back to Earth to the person that was meant to recieve it. This does not mean that cell phones cannot communicate with land-line telephones. If a cell phone calls a land-line, the signal is sent to the satellite and then back to a satellite dish on Earth where it is then re-sent through landlines to the house or office. This also works in reverse for a land-line that is calling a cell phone.

The cell phone is much more than just a unwired phone in the present day. It has evolved much since Cooper's phone of '73 and they now weigh an average of 3 ounces. Cell phones can now store all of the phone numbers that a person needs. There is no more having to find the list of phone numbers on a piece of paper and to dial the number everytime a call is placed to somebody. With cell phones, one simply just has to find a person's name on the phone and press *send*. They can even store schedules, set sleep alarms, take pictures, play music, browse the Internet, and much more.

The cell phone has come a long way in 30 years to set a world free of wires. There is nothing holding anybody back from walking down the middle of the street while having a conversation with somebody 2000 miles away anymore. The cell phone is a marvel beyond what was imagined when Alexander Graham Bell first invented the telephone. It is a very powerful tool for getting our words around, and will take us places in the future that we have never dreamed of.

- Information in this essay was provided from About.com.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Information about Expository Writing With writing samples.
- Exposition Within the Four Modes of Rhetoric
- GUIDELINES: Expository Essays

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CHAPTER 2.04 • EXPOSITION

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CHAPTER 2.05 • EVALUATION

WHAT IS EVALUATIVE WRITING?

Evaluative writing is a type of writing intended to judge something according to a set of criteria. For instance, your health might be evaluated by an insurance company before issuing a policy. The purpose of this evaluation would be to determine your overall health and to check for existing medical conditions. The better your evaluation, the less the insurance company might charge you for coverage.

Criteria

The key to effective evaluative writing is starting off with clear and precise argument. Your main argument is what you will use to perform the evaluation. You may want to argue that a Chevy Tahoe is better then a Ford Expedition based on its horsepower, gas mileage, capacity, warranty, etc. Other evaluators might argue the difference between their towing capability. What ever the main argument may be for your evaluative essay make sure that your argument is clear.

Things to remember:

- Make sure you have a well presented subject. Without one, you will lose your readers.

- Create a thesis statement. Thesis statements help you and help your reader to understand what is being evaluated or judged.

- Give only information that is imperative to the decision making process. If it looks like unneccessary information, it probably is.

- Do not be biased when creating an evaluative essay. Give both good and bad examples of the topic.

- You are the "expert" in an evaluative essay. Go with the facts, not with opinion.

How to Evaluate

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

If you are evaluating a piece of writing, then you are going to need to thoroughly read the work. While you read the work, keep in mind the things you are evaluating it on. The evaluative aspects may be: grammar, sentence structure, spelling, content, usage of sources, style, or many other

things. Other things to consider when evaluating a piece of writing is whether the writing appealed to its target audience. Was there an emotional appeal? Did the author engage the audience, or was the piece lacking something? If you can, write on the piece of work so you remember what you want to write about in your essay.

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

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

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

STRUCTURE OF THE ESSAY

Introduction

The most important things to put into the introduction of your evaluative essay are: to clearly state **what you are evaluating**, and to clearly state **what things you are evaluating your subject on**. The subject needs to be introduced to the reader so that they understand what is being discussed. Let your readers understand the purpose of your evaluation. The evaluation criteria is also important so that your audience knows what parts of the subject you are judging and how you are judging them.

For example, you cannot just say that you are judging the taste of an apple. You must say something along the lines of that you are judging the sweetness, bitterness, and crispness of the apple.

Body

Apart from many other types of essays, the introduction is **not** the most important part of an evaluative essay. Most readers already want to read about the subject that you are writing on, so you don't need to draw them in with a fancy intro. Your audience just wants the information!

Be sure to be very descriptive and thorough when evaluating your subject. The more you leave out of the essay, the more unanswered questions your readers are left with. Your goal should be to cover all aspects of the subject and to tell the audience how good or bad it is.

Conclusion

The conclusions for evaluative essays are pretty straight-forward. Simply go over the main points from your body of your essay. After that, make an overall evaluation of the subject. Tell the audience if they should buy, eat it, use it, wear it, etc. and why. After that is done, your essay is over. Good job!

SAMPLE EVALUATION ESSAY

Here is short and simple evaluative essay using the video game *Mario Bros.* as the main topic. Notice how the introduction paragraph says what the game is being evaluated on and then how the following paragraphs break down each of the evaluation topics.

Mario Bros. for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) is a superb video game for people of all ages. *Mario Bros.* is a side-scrolling, platforming, action game. The graphics are great for its time and it is easy to pick up and play. The basic point of the game is to rescue Princess Toadstool from a dragon, named Bowser, by jumping around, collecting coins, and defeating enemies. In order to help people decide whether or not to invest their money into this title, the game will be broken-down and evaluated based on its: presentation, graphics, sound, gameplay, and lasting appeal.

The presentation Nintendo has done on this game is simplistic and to-the-point. The menus are text-only with the only color being put into the game's title. Besides the bland look of the menus, they are easy to navigate and very functional.

Mario Bros.' graphics are awesome. Mario, the main character who is a plumber, actuallly looks like a real person. He is a far cry from digital people in the past days of the Atari 2600. A person can see his blue overalls, his red shirt, and even his moustashe! The world Mario is portrayed in is usually very vibrant, with the exception of the castle dungeons, and the enemies are creatively put together. The animations have such to be desired, but the grand scale of things is amazing. Just wait until the showdowns with the arch-nemisis, Bowser; he is huge!

One word can describe *Mario's* music: CLASSIC. The sound in this Nintendo game will go down in history. Besides the great score, the sound effects are pretty simple. It is hard to understand why shooting a fireball sounds like shooting a laser gun, the fireball should sound more threatening, but then again--this is a family game.

The gameplay is really what defines *Mario Bros.* Mario can run, jump, and shoot fireballs. It's basic, but it does it well. To defeat enemies, Mario can either jump on their heads, throw turtle shells ar them, or shoot them with fireballs if the player makes him pick up a "Fireflower" power-up. Much of the game involves jumping very precisely to far ledges and manuvering past enemy obstacles. The best part is when Mario finds a "Star" power-up. It temporarily makes Mario invincible and enemies will die if Mario touches them. Running through a level on Star-Power is an experience beyond words.

The lasting appeal of this game is expected to be very long and can be played over and over numerous times. The game has over 100 levels and three difficulty levels. There is even a two-player mode for people with an extra controller (player-two plays as Mario's brother, Luigi). Players switch turns playing through the levels and compete for a high score. All of these factors combine to make one long-lasting game.

> Overall, it is safe to say that *Mario Bros.* is a must-have game for anybody in the family. Besides the presentation, everything about this game has been done masterfully. The gameplay has been built around a solid graphics engine that keeps begging to be played. The Mario Bros. have set a new standard for platform-gaming. Why wait? Go buy it now!

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

Here are some sample assignments to get your blood flowing:

- Evaluate the plans for a new Minnesota Twins ballpark (found here: New Ballpark Plans). How does it compare to the current Metrodome in Minneapolis in terms of seating, concessions, cost to build, etc.? In the end, is it probable to build their proposed park?

- Evaluate your backpack. Test its durability, comfort level, ease-of-use, storage capacity, fabric quality, manufacturing quality, etc. Compare it with one or more of your former backpacks and/or one of your friend's backpacks. Also compare it to a different type of backpack (example: duffle bag VS. two-strap backpack). Take notes on each backpack and rate them against each other. Is your backpack the better one?

EXTERNAL LINKS

- A Brief Guide to Writing Evaluation Essays
- Useful Phrases for Use in Evaluative Writing
- Important Elements to Consider When Writing a Critique
- A Six-Step Process for Writing Critiques

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CHAPTER 2.05 • EVALUATION

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CHAPTER 2.06 • ARGUMENT

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

An argument is a structure that can be either written or presented orally in which the statement of a "claim" (main idea) is supported by various well-reasoned pieces of evidence. Above all, the aim of a composition structured as an argument is to create a tight, coherent statement, which is then carefully supported with logically valid reasons. Both sides of the issue should be illustrated. At the end of the essay, the reader will have considered your arguement, and even if they don't come to agree with it, they should have a clear understanding of the reasons why they might be persuaded.

The great thing about the argument structure is its amazingly versatility. There are whole books written about the structure and strategy of arguments. In this wiki we won't be covering the topic quite as thoroughly, but don't worry: Once you become familiar with the basic structure of argumentative essays, there are very few things you can't argue about!

On this page we will be covering general written argument structure, and then the **Position** and **Proposal** variations of that basic form. If you want to make a claim about a particular (usually controversial) issue, you can use the Position argument form. If instead you would like to offer a solution to a particular situation that you see as problematic, such as the rising cost of education, you can get your idea across using a Proposal argument. By adapting one of these three methods, you will be well on the way to making your point.

> "If you can't annoy somebody, there's little point in writing." **--Kingsley Amis (1922 -)**

BASIC ARGUMENT ESSAY STRUCTURE

Introduction

Use the first paragraph of your argument to introduce your topic and the issues surrounding it in easily understandible language. Your reader needs to know what you're writing about before they can decide if they believe you or not.

Once you have introduced your general subject, it's time to state your claim. Make sure that you use clear and precise language: your reader needs to understand exactly where you stand on the issue. Since your claim will serve as the thesis for your essay, it's a good idea to highlight what you plan to cover.

Body

Background Information

Once your position is stated, establish your credibility. Try to establish common ground with the audience, especially those that are not on your side or those that are on the fence about the issue. Take the audience's values into consideration as you introduce your topic, they may be more likely to listen to your argument with an open mind.

Developing Your Argument

Back up your thesis with logical and persuasive arguments. During your pre-writing phase, write out the main points you might use to support your claim, and decide which are the strongest and most logical. Eliminate those which are based on emotion rather than fact. Your corroborating evidence should be well-researched, such as statistics, examples, and expert opinions. You can also reference personal experience. It's a good idea to have a mixture. Avoid leaning too heavily on personal experience, though, as you want to present an argument that appears objective even as you are using it to pursuade your reader.

There are a couple different methods of developing your argument. Two variations of the *basic argument structure* are the **Position Method** and the **Proposal Method**.

Position Method

The **Position Method** is used to basically try to convince your audience that you are *in the right*, and the other view of your argument is *wrong*.

1. **Introduce and define your topic.** Don't assume that your reader is familiar with the issues surrounding your topic. This is your chance to set up the premise you want to use. This is also a good time to present your thesis statement.

2. **Background information.** After doing your research, you are now able to provide your reader with information that will allow them to read your paper with the same knowledge you possess on the topic.

3. **Development.** You have your argument, and you may have even stated your thesis. Now, start developing your ideas. Provide evidence and reasoning.

4. **Be prepared to deal with the "Other Side."** There will be those who oppose your argument. Be prepared to answer those opinions or points of view with knowledgeable responses. If you have done your homework and know your material, then you will be able to address any opposing arguments with ease and authority.

5. **In conclusion...** Now is the time to drive home your point. Re-emphasize your main arguments and thesis statement.

Proposal Method

The **Proposal Method** arguments are used when the writer would like to offer a solution to a problematic situation. The structure of the Proposal method is very similar to the above Position method, but they both have their differences.

1. **Introduce and define the nature of the problematic situation.** This seems simple, but make sure that you are focusing on the actual problem and its causes, not simply the effects.

2. **Propose a solution, or a number of solutions, to the problem.** Be specific about these solutions. If you have one solution, you may choose to break it into parts and spend a paragraph or so describing each part. If you have several solutions, you may instead choose to spend a paragraph on each scenario.

3. **Describe the workability of the various solutions.** There are a variety of ways that this could be done. With a single-solution paper you could break the feasibility down into short and long term goals and plans. With a multiple-solution essay, you may instead highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the individual solutions, and establish which would be the most successful, based on your original statement of the problem and its causes.

4. **Summarize and conclude your proposal.** Summarize your solutions, re-state how the solution or solutions would work to remedy the problematic situation, and you're done.

Dealing With the Opposition

When writing an argument, expect that you will have opposition. Skeptical readers will have their own points of view and beliefs. When conductiong your research, make sure to review the opposing side of the argument that you are presenting, and be prepared to counter those ideas. Remember, in order for a person to give up their position, they must see how your position is more reasonable than their own. When you address the opposing point of view in your essay, and demonstrate how your own claim is stronger, you neutralize their argument. By failing to address a non-coinciding view, you leave a reason for your reader to disagree with you, and weaken your pursuasive power. Methods of addressing the opposing side of the argument vary-- You may choose to state your mainpoints, then address and refute the opposition, and then conclude, or conversely, you might summarize the opposition's views early in your argument, the revisit them after you present your own side, showing how your information is more reasonable than their own.

CONCLUSION

You have introduced your topic, stated your claim, supported that claim with logical and reasonable evidence, and refuted the view of the opposition. The hard work is done. Now it's time to wrap things up and tie the bow. Restate your thesis, briefly summarize your support, and you're done. One word of caution: avoid introducing any new information in your conclusion. If you find that there's another point that you wanted to include, revise your essay so that you can insert it into the

body of your essay, where it belongs.

STRENGTHENING YOUR ARGUMENT

Phrasing

While it is important to clearly state and support your position, it is just as important to present all of the information that you have gathered in an objective manner. Nothing will undermine the strength of your argument faster than using language that is demeaning or non-objective when you introduce opposing opinions. For example, a student writing an argument about why a particular football team has a good chance of "going all the way" is making a strategic error by stating that "anyone who doesn't think that the Minnesota Vikings deserve to win the Superbowl is a total idiot." Not only has the writer risked alienating any number of her readers, she has also made her argument seem shallow and poorly researched. In addition, she has committed a third gaff: making a sweeping generalization that cannot be supported.

Mistakes that could ruin your argument:

- Alienate any part of your audience

- Make an argument that is poorly researched or shallow

- Make an unsupported generalization

Objective Language

Unless you are an expert in your field on a given topic, you should avoid using "I" and "my" (subjective) statements in your argument, instead choosing more objective language to get your point across. Consider the following:

I believe that the United States Government is failing to meet the needs of today's average college student through the underfunding of need-based grants, increasingly restrictive financial aid eligibility requirements, and a lack of flexible student loan options.

"Great," your reader thinks, "Everyone's entitled to their opinion."

The same sentence becomes a strong statement of fact without your "I" tacked to the front:

The United States Government is failing to meet the needs of today's average college student through the underfunding of need-based grants, increasingly restrictive financial aid eligibility requirements, and a lack of flexible student loan options.

"Wow," your reader thinks, "that really sounds like a problem."

A small change like the removal of your "I"s and "my"s can make all the difference in how a reader perceives your argument-- as such, it's always good to proof read your rough draft and look for places where you could use objective rather than subjective language.

Sample Essay

PGA Tour, Inc. v Casey Martin

"All I ever wanted was the chance to play and to see how good I could be" (Faces 1). Casey Martin was born with a degenerative circulatory disorder that makes his right leg very weak. "Walking not only causes him pain, fatigue, and anxiety, but also created a significant risk of hemorrhaging, developing blood clots, fracturing his tibia so badly an amputation might be required" (PGA Tour 9). This disorder prevents Martin from walking the golf course, so he will always have to use a cart. The PGA Tour has a rule saying players must walk the third and final stage of the golf tournament. While in Q School, a qualifying school for professional golfers, Martin submitted a request to be able to use a golf cart throughout the entire tournament. The PGA Tour denied his request. The PGA thought that if Martin used a golf cart it would fundamentally alter the nature of the tournament, and would give Martin an unfair advantage. The PGA felt that walking is an integral part of the game, and being allowed to use a golf cart would give the individual an advantage over the rest of the field (Finchem 2). Martin filed a lawsuit under the American's with Disabilities Act, which reads, "Prohibits discrimination on the basis of employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation and telecommunications" (United States). Martin filed his suit specifically under Title III of the Act which requires public accommodations to make reasonable modifications for the disabled. The PGA Tour is a recreational facility and activity which is considered a public accommodation. Casey Martin won this battle in the lower courts and the Supreme Court. Casey Martin had a right to use a motorized golf cart under the ADA because the PGA Tour is a public accommodation, and it would not fundamentally alter the nature of the tournament.

The PGA Tour and Q School are considered public accommodations under Title III of the ADA. The events, such as the PGA tournament or any other tournament, that occur on the golf course are specifically identified as a public accommodation. ". . . golf courses, including play areas, are places of public accommodation during professional golf tournaments" (PGA Tour 2). Casey Martin was discriminated against because of his disability. He was told by the PGA Tour that they would not accommodate his disability for many reasons. The PGA feels that the playing field must be the same for every player, and allowing Martin to use a cart would give him an advantage over other players. The PGA argues that walking, and the loss of concentration due to fatigue, is part of the challenge of playing professional golf at its highest level (Finchem 2). The PGA also argues that using a golf cart would take out much of the physical conditioning factor of the sport. The PGA Tour claimed they were not required to allow Casey Martin to use a cart, but in the end it turns out that the PGA was required because the tournament is a public place.

The golfers pay for privileges such as Q School and to compete in the tournaments. Since Martin paid to play professional golf, and also paid his way through his qualifying school, he should not have been discriminated against. "Any member of the public may enter the Q School by submitting two letters of recommendation and paying a $3,000 entry fee" (PGA Tour 1).

The golfers of the PGA pay to be a part of the PGA, therefore they are considered

customers, and would make the PGA a public accommodation. The Supreme Court ruled that Martin was a customer of competition when he practices his profession. Martin was a customer to this public accommodation, therefore the PGA Tour should be required to make reasonable modifications, and allow Casey Martin to use his golf cart.

Casey Martin using a golf cart would not "fundamentally alter" the nature of the tournament. The main purpose in the game of golf is aiming for the hole. The game of golf is based on where the ball ends up; not on the endurance of walking. The PGA Tour argues, "While carts have become commonplace for recreational golf, walking had been an integral part of the tournament competition throughout the game's history. Walking is a fundamental part of tournaments in championship competitions . . ." (Finchem 2). Golf is a game of strategy; attempting to put the golf ball in the hole in the fewest strokes possible. Golf is not a mellow version of cross country running, and is not based on how far you can walk. "The use of carts is not inconsistent with the fundamental character of golf, the essence of which has always been shot-making. The walking rule contained in petitioner's hard cards is neither an essential attribute of the game itself nor an indispensable feature of tournament golf" (PGA Tour 3).

The golfers participating in the PGA Tour tournament do not need the walking stage of golf, because it is not essential to the game of golf. The PGA will argue that it is essential to the game of golf because of the endurance factor. However, walking the distance of the course was not part of the formal rules of golf (DREDF 2). It is the golfer's choice to walk the course, just because it will keep them warmed up. The PGA will argue again that, "Using a cart would be somewhat of an advantage all the time and could be a great advantage in many circumstances . . .rain delays . . .the temperature and the humidity are both in the nineties . . ." (Finchem 2). In this case however, the variety of conditions the player would have to deal with would only matter if they were playing a multi-day tournament (DREDF 2). Walking is not essential to the game of golf because the fatigue factor of walking is generally minimal compared to the other factors.

Casey Martin would be enduring enough pain as it is with his disorder, that it can be compared to other golfers walking the final stage of the tournament. Martin's disability causes him enough pain going from cart to shot that he would not have an advantage (DREDF 2). The PGA tour argues that it would indeed be unfair because other golfers would be walking, and that Casey Martin would have an advantage over everyone else walking the course. The Supreme Court says, ". . . that even with the use of a cart, the fatigue Martin suffers from coping with his disability is greater than the fatigue his able-bodied competitors endure from walking the course" (PGA Tour). As it is already with the cart, Casey Martin must walk over a mile during an 18-hole round of golf. Martin would be carrying enough pain as it is that the other golfers may actually have an advantage over him.

All Casey Martin ever wanted to do was to be the best he could possibly be. Does the PGA Tour have the right to shatter Casey Martin's dreams because he was unable to walk without extreme pain? Casey Martin says, "Without the ADA I never would have been able to pursue my dream of playing golf professionally" (Faces 1).

(This essay is from Stephanie Wolf)

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Effective Academic Writing: The Argument
- Essentials of Effective Persuasive Essays
- Logical Fallacies
- Support Your Argument
- Paradigm Online Writing Assistant Occasions for Argumentative Essays.
- Three Ways to Persuade

UNIT 03

Advanced

TOPICS

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE - THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS BY RAFFAELLO SANZIO

CHAPTER 3.00 • OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW OF ADVANCED TOPICS

Now that you have learned some of the basics of college writing it is time to dive into the advanced topics of writing. The tools you have learned from previous section will help you to be successful writer with advanced topics. There are many different reasons for which one writes. It could be for school, work, or even the community. The topics discussed in this section are writing for the humanities, sciences, and business. This will show how these three especially differ, and will give examples of what the differences are.

WRITING IN THE HUMANITIES

Writing in the Humanities includes theoretical writing, creative writing, interpretive writing and analytical writing. Each of these are under the topic of writing in Humanities, but each is a different style of writing.

Theoretical writing includes historical and philosophical writing. This topic focuses on the ideas of past cultures and people. It also includes writing about your own theories.

Sample Theoretical Writings:

- John Milton's theories on Free Speech

- The philosophies of Buddha

- Einstein's theories on Nuclear Physics

Creative writing uses a more imaginative approach such as with storytelling. Poetry, song lyrics, short stories, non-fiction and fiction novels are all included under creative writing. In creative writing there is more freedom for the writer to explore interesting ways in which to express feelings or ideas.

Sample Creative Writings:

- A science-fiction story

- A biography of what the US would have been like if it lost WWII

- A story about your future life

Interpretive writing involves asking a lot of questions in order to understand something better. If

writing about a book the writer will have to question what the author was thinking about while writing the book, and try to explain that in his or her own writing. In interpretive writing you will have your own ideas, but you must back them up by referring to another source.

Analytical writing is much like interpretive writing, but goes a bit further. Not only will you provide information, but also analyze it. This includes asking "how" and "why." You will need to take a critical approach to develop an understaning of the topic before writing about it.

This chapter will expand on the differences of theoretical, creative, interpretive, and analytical writing, and will share tips on how to write successfully while using those different approaches.

WRITING IN THE SCIENCES

Writing in the sciences focuses on informing the reader of new discoveries, and assisting readers in discovering truth through facts. This form of writing should not leave anything open to interpretation by the reader. Information should be presented with solid data given in detail. Sciences writing is generally written in past tense, and should be concise. Common forms of science writing includes lab reports and literature reviews.

Writing in science includes two categories, natural sciences and social sciences, which can also be broken down. Natural sciences include pure science and applied science. Pure sciences are life sciences, physical sciences, and earth sciences. Applied sciences include medical sciences, engineering sciences and computer science.

Social sciences focus on human behavior and societies. Social sciences involve documenting actual events as they happen as with case studies. Categories of social science include psychology, anthropology, political science, sociology, education, business, and economics.

- Story regarding global warming.
- Story based on the research of estrogen.

This chapter will explain the differences of writing for the sciences.

WRITING IN BUSINESS

Writing in Business has many aspects to it. Most of the time, you are writing to explain something or persuade a person or group to take action.

Writing in business can include: memos, cover letters, resumes, project reports, proposals, thank-you letters, emails, and business plans.

This chapter will give you the techniques needed to build a resume as well as many important documents used in a business setting.

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CHAPTER 3.00 • OVERVIEW

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CHAPTER 3.01 • WRITING IN THE HUMANITIES

INTRODUCTION

Writing in the humanities includes posing questions dealing with human values. The ultimate goal in writing in the humanities is to explain or share the human experience. It's the tough questions about life that the writer tries to describe or explain when writing in this discipline. One who writes in the humanities is referred to as a humanist, and the subjects they write about include philosophy, history, and literature.

In certain situations performing arts and fine arts are included in humanities writing, including music, film, drama, and artwork. Writing about these fields may include the analysis of a poem, a performance or a play, or even a painting, or the review of a film or even a musical review. As previously stated, the arts can be included, but these are generally grouped away from the former three.

Most of the information that you will find when writing in this discipline can be found in a library. But that is certainly not the *only* source of information. Writing about the arts may include a visit to a museum. Writing about history might bring you to the courthouse or a church.

There is a great difference between writing in the Sciences and writing in the Humanities. Writing in the Sciences is working toward finding a specific answer to a specific topic. Writing in the Humanities is working toward simply finding an answer.

CATEGORIES OF HUMANITIES WRITING

Writing in the Humanities can fall into three categories. Theoretical writing, creative writing, and interpretive and analytical writing. Term papers and research papers can also be included in this discipline of writing.

Theoretical Writing

Theoretical writing includes historical writing and philosophical writing. As opposed to other types of writing styles, theoretical writing analyzes and interprets. This type of assignment may be a reaction paper. Many art history papers take on a theoretical approach. There are many avenues that can be taken when writing a theoretical paper, but be sure to stick to the basic elements that are covered in *any* paper, such as a strong argument, a summary, etc.

Creative Writing

Some of the words that have been used to define creative writing are storytelling, expression, and imagination. Creative writing can include poetry, non-fiction, short stories, novels, and even song lyrics. It is a way to express what you feel inside your heart or the ideas that are in your head. It gives the writers an outlet for expressing themselves and their views of their surroundings and their world. This is where the uniqueness lies in creative writing; one work will never be the same as another. It is a personal expression that comes from each individual writer. However, the true test of the creativity occurs when the writing can be said to give readers an experience, for that is the reason the writing is called *creative*: it creates an experience in the minds of its readers.

Interpretive and Analytical Writing

Interpretive Writing

- Interpretive writing can be a very difficult experience due to the fact that it asks many questions. It tries to assist the reader in understanding specific events rather than just sum up the information. For example, if a student is writing an interpretive paper about a specific book, he may try to explain the author's attitudes or views on a specific subject matter. The writer of the paper then uses that book to back up his claims. A book report can be an example of interpretive writing.

- Interpretive writing might ask questions such as, "Why did these events happen?" or "What was the significance of these events to the author or main character?" as opposed to, "How did these events come about?" The former encourages the writer to explore his own thoughts or delve into the mind of the writer of the piece, or even attempt to put himself in the shoes of the protagonist. The latter is less challenging, as the book or piece of literature will plainly lay this type of information out for the reader.

Analytical Writing

- Analytical writing takes all the components of interpretive writing and blends them all together. The writer needs to do more than just provide information; he needs to analyze this information with supporting material. The writer will take the information, deconstruct it, and reconstruct it in order to describe it so that the reader can make sense of it. Analytical writing focuses on the words "how" and "why." The writer must make sense of a work before he can attach his feelings to it.

- Analytical writing happens in four steps. The *first* step is to clearly identify the problem, question, or issue. The *second* step is to define the issue. The *third* step is the actual analysis of the topic. Finally, the *fourth* step defines the relationship between the issue and the analysis of that issue.

Research Papers and Term Papers

Term papers have a variety of elements that make them stand out from other papers. They carry three distinct characteristics. First, there is a lot of research that goes along with a term paper. But not just research to gather facts. Researching and gathering data must include understanding that data once it is compiled. The second characteristic is the amount of preparation time it takes in gathering, compiling, analyzing, sorting through, and finally writing about your data. Finally, the third characteristic involves knowing the rules that must be followed when writing a specific term paper in the humanities discipline. These rules will generally be conveyed by your instructor.

Writing the research paper involves a bit of detective work. While there is much reading to be done on the chosen topic, reading is not the only pathway to gain information. As a writer in the humanities, you can also conduct interviews. You must research and discover as much information as you can about the given topic, and learn enough from it to form a coherent and valid opinion.

ELEMENTS OF THE HUMANITIES PAPER

Many styles of documentation are used when writing the humanities paper. Choosing the style depends on the subject being addressed in the paper, and the style your instructor may prefer you use.

When it comes down to actually writing your paper, be sure to include the following elements: an introduction, a thesis statement, the body of the paper (which should include quotations, and, of course, the citations), and the conclusion.

Introduction

Like most papers and essays, an introduction is absolutely necessary when writing in the humanities. There can be some confusion as to which should come first; the introduction or the thesis statement. This decision could probably be clarified by asking your instructor. Many writers include the thesis statement in their introduction. Generally speaking, however, the introduction usually comes before the thesis statement.

The introduction should grab your reader and make them interested in continuing to read your paper. Ask a question, say something powerful, or say something controversial. Be specific, not vague. Say something interesting, not mundane. Relay something the reader may not know, not something that is public knowledge. The idea is to get the reader's attention, and keep it.

After the introduction has been written, you can then go into your thesis statement. Many people regard the thesis statement as a continuation of the introduction, only in the next paragraph.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement should come at the beginning of the paper. It will introduce the reader to the topic you intend to address, and gives them a hint of what to expect in the pages that follow. Thesis statements should avoid words and phrases such as, "In my opinion..." or "I think that..." Start your thesis by taking a stand immediately; be firm in your statement, but not pushy. You'll either be given your topic for your paper or you will choose it yourself. In either case, after the topic is chosen, write a thesis statement that clearly outlines the argument you intend to address in the paper. The thesis statement will be the center of your paper. It should address one main issue. Throughout the paper, whatever you write will be focused on the thesis statement. As your paper develops, you may find you will want to, or need to, revise your thesis statement to better outline your paper. As your paper evolves, so does your thesis. In other words, when writing your thesis

statement, keep your paper in mind, and when writing your paper, keep your thesis statement in mind. Your paper will defend your thesis, so write your paper accordingly.

For example, if the topic is "Analyzing Mark Twain's 'Huckleberry Finn,' your thesis statement might address the social implications or meanings behind the characters chosen for the story. Keeping the thesis statement in mind, you would then write your paper about the characters in the story. Let's say you are writing a philosophy paper. Your thesis statement might include two opposing arguments, with the hint that you intend to argue or prove one side of the argument. Many thesis statements are written in such a way as to try to prove an argument or point of view, but challenge yourself; make your thesis statement a statement of how you plan to *disprove* an argument. Maybe you want to attempt to show your readers why a specific point of view does *not* work.

Your thesis statement should address one main issue. It takes a point of view or an argument, and the paper is the development of this argument. If your thesis statement is too simple, obvious, or vague, then you need to work on it a little more. You should try to write it in a way that will catch your reader's attention, making it interesting and thought-provoking. It should be specific in nature, and address the theme of the entire paper. The thesis statement may be written to try to convince the reader of a specific issue or point of view. It may also address an issue to which there is no simple solution or easy answers; remember, make it thought-provoking. Many thesis statements *invite* the reader to disagree.

Don't be alarmed if you find yourself midway through your paper wanting to change your thesis statement. This will happen. Sometimes a writer will start out thinking they know *exactly* the point they want to make in their paper, only to find halfway through that they've taken a slightly different direction. Don't be afraid to modify your thesis statement. But a word of caution; if you modify your thesis statement, be sure to double check your paper to ensure that it is supported by the thesis. If you have changed your thesis statement, it would be wise, even advisable, to have a third party read your paper to be sure that the paper supports the thesis and the revised thesis describes the paper.

Body

The "body" of your paper contains the *evidence, analysis,* and *reasoning* that support your thesis. Often the topic of the paper is divided into subtopics. Typically, each subtopic is discussed in a separate paragraph. It is good practice to begin each paragraph with a *topic sentence* that introduces the subject of the new paragraph and helps transition between paragraphs. A topic sentence will help keep you focused while writing the paragraph, and it will keep your reader focused while reading it.

Conclusion

The purpose of a conclusion is to "wrap up" the discussion of your paper. Especially if the paper is a long one, it is a good idea to "re-cap" the main ideas presented in your paper. If your paper is argumentative, you'd likely want to re-enforce the standpoint introduced in your thesis statement; however, rather than repeating your thesis, offer closing statements that make use of all the information you've presented to support your theis. Try to "echo" your thesis so that your reader understands that you have fulfilled the "promise" a thesis statement implies, but give your reader a sense of *closure* rather than simply restating everything you said above just ending it

Here are some strategies for closing your discussion:

After summing up your main points/thesis you might

- Comment on the significance of the topic in general: why should your reader care?

- Look to the future: Is there more work to be done on the topic? Are there predictions you can make about your topic?
- Ask something of your reader: Is there something your reader can do? Should do?

RESOURCES TO USE

The humanities category offers many good sources from which to gather information. The Internet is fast becoming an important source of information for humanities writing. These sites include history sites, journalism and news sites, sites focusing on the history of film, sites dedicated to womens' issues, and the list goes on. Traditional, physical resources include dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographies, indexes, abstracts, and periodicals.

As you can see, there are many resources from which to choose when writing your paper. The idea is to start at the most basic level and progress from there. For example, if you are writing about a specific work of a famous author, you will want to begin with a search through an encyclopedia. After you have found the information you need there, you would then search a through a card catalog for specific books. You may find that while searching for one specific book you will stumble upon many other useful books on the same subject. You can then begin to look through book reviews for information on your subject. The book review is especially informative in that it will tell you what can be found *in* the book. Next, you may want to try searching for articles in periodicals, and even abstracts of articles, which will provide a summary of the content of the potential article.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- General Advice for Writing in the Humanities
- Four Keys to Writing in the Humanities
- Academic Writing Support Materials for Humanities Students
- Conventions of Writing Papers in Humanities

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CHAPTER 3.01 • WRITING IN THE HUMANITIES

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CHAPTER 3.02 • WRITING IN THE SCIENCES

INTRODUCTION

Writing in the sciences searches to fulfill two goals:

1. Inform a reader of new discoveries
2. Assist a reader in finding the truth through facts

A comparison: Writing in the humanities explores the human condition, while **writing in the sciences** examines nature.

This leads to the two major types of papers written in the sciences:

1. Lab report
2. Literature review

Writing in the sciences requires elements not necessarily needed when writing in the humanities. It requires precision, which in turn requires details. It also requires data, evidence, and facts. Unlike writing in the humanities, writing in the sciences is usually done in the past tense. Think of it as reporting what you discovered or what you did. The goal is to find your data and present it in detail, using language that backs up your data. The language should follow the nature and subject matter of the ideas and information in your paper. Leave little to no room for interpretation on the reader's part; use words that will present your paper in a factual style.

As previously stated, the two major categories of scientific writing are lab reports and literature reviews. Writing in the sciences may also include peer reviews and grant proposals. Because writing in the sciences requires a great level of detail, it is easy to get caught up in using highly technical language and jargon. Avoid getting caught up in using words the reader will not understand, or sentences that get too long. Avoid using unnecessary words.

When writing a paper in or for the science, space is usually an issue. Grant proposal applications provide the bare minimum for space, as do abstracts. So get to the point. In short, be succinct.

There are basic tips to keep in mind while writing your scientific paper. Be detailed in your paper, and remain focused, always keeping your facts and evidence in mind. Leave figurative language out; your science paper should be based on facts, not emotion or opinion. Writing in the sciences involves and demands precision. Do not bring in any unnecessary information; including other information (straying from the topic) may confuse your audience.

There are two categories of sciences writing; **social sciences** and **natural sciences**.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

When writing in the social sciences, the writer will spend less time in the library researching data, and a majority of time documenting actual events. Writing in the social sciences is the study of human behavior, the value systems of people, and the interactions between people, whether in the family unit or simply in a group setting.

Writing in this discipline can be a very challenging experience. Gathering the data and interpreting the information can be tedious. Interviews are conducted, and attitudes must be examined and

recorded. But recording data gathered from studying human beings is difficult because the human mind is an ever-changing thing.

One key element to writing a paper in the social sciences is the art of taking a stand. Choose your topic, make your claim, provide evidence to support your claim, and finally, convince your reader that your claim is the one with which to side. Take a hard look at both sides of the issue you intend on addressing. Doing so will prepare you to defend arguments in opposition to your viewpoint. Because issues in the social sciences are subjective, the writer should expect some degree of opposing opinions and even, possibly, some controversy. This is why it is suggested that when you write a social sciences paper you choose a topic that you either possess first hand knowledge, know a great deal of information on, or simply a topic about which you are passionate.

Charts and graphs are common elements included in the social sciences paper. A valuable source of information for the social scientist is a government document. These documents contain the most up-to-date information in a variety of fields.

Writing in the social sciences uses a technical vocabulary.

Social sciences attempt to study and describe human behavior and societies. The social sciences can be broken down into further into the following categories:

Psychology

The case study is one of the main writing choices in psychology. Writing and examining patient cases is one type of focus.

Places you may want to look for current information include psychology encyclopedias and abstracts and mental health journals.

(Further resources to consider follow at the end of this section.)

Anthropology

Presenting a case study is a common form of presenting the anthropology paper. The writer is looking at and analyzing the past.

There are specific guidelines to follow when writing an anthropology paper. Stick to the facts and document these thoroughly in the reference list. Quotations are important, but not as important as data.

Because anthropology is such a specialized field, be sure that you re-read your paper several times to be sure that it is comprehensible to a person who may not be a specialist in the field. In other words, can your average college student understand what you are talking about? The trick here is to find a balance in this paper; it must be scholarly, yet understandable.

Political Science

Writing case studies is the main type of writing in this discipline. When writing a paper in political science, you will probably be analyzing how different political organizations function, both individually and as a group. While many of the other categories of the social sciences involve directly observing the group dynamics, writing a paper for political science involves indirect observation. You will pick one specific behavior to observe and focus your paper on that chosen behavior.

Writing for political science can include any level of the government; city, state or federal. Places you may want to look for current information include government documents and newspaper

articles. You should expect to be able to support and defend the chosen topic or argument that is the subject of your paper, and do so in a convincing and scholarly manner. If you accomplish all this, and make it a sound political argument, you have then written a solid political science paper.

Sociology

Writing a good sociology paper includes a clear thesis statement. While this is important in all papers requiring a thesis statement, the field of sociology carries with it a potential danger; taking sides.

Writing about sociology is about studying human behavior and the interaction between individuals or groups. An effective sociology paper will analyze these interactions and remain objective. The pitfall that many writers fall into when writing a sociology paper is that they take sides; they will slant their terminology toward one view or another. This is the trick to a successful sociology paper; staying on the median.

The case study to be the primary focus in sociology writing. In this discipline, writing about group dynamics is a key element.

Education

Many topics are covered in the education section of the social sciences, including students with special needs and child development. The instructor may choose to assign a topic for each individual student or the class as a whole. This gives the group the opportunity to work together and developed a more refined paper. The case study is a common type of paper chosen for a group assignment. Other times, the education instructor may allow each student to choose his or her own topic related to the education field. If that is the case, choose a topic that is of interest to you. You may not have a lot of knowledge about your chosen topic, but if you are genuinely interested in it, the information will be easy to come by and just as easy to understand.

Some of the possible types of papers you may be required to write include literature reviews, an analysis paper, case studies, research papers and lab papers. There are many more types of papers to write in this discipline, so be sure to clarify with your instructor what he or she expects.

Economics

When writing a paper in the economics discipline, the goal is to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the different (or specific chosen) areas of economics. It also seeks to define the many areas of economics, such as goods, services, and simple the state of economics in our society.

The economics paper may be as simple as a journal review (the Wall Street Journal, for example). Academic journals will be used often, as will statistical data from government sources.

One important thing to remember when writing in this discipline: be sure your vocabulary reflects the nature of the subject. Use topic-specific words and avoid personal observations. Be as factual as possible, avoiding jumping to unsubstantiated conclusions.

Elements of the Social Sciences Paper

When it comes down to actually writing your paper, be sure to include the following elements: an introduction, a thesis statement, the body of the paper, and the conclusion. Many social scientists use these headings in their paper.

One element of the social science paper that greatly differs from the humanities paper is that it

should be written in such a way that the reader can take any section from the paper and read it independently from the rest of the paper, without having to look back at any other section. It is this type of technical writing that sets the social sciences paper apart from the humanities paper; each section is its own mini-paper. Knowing your audience members will greatly assist you in writing your social sciences paper.

A social science paper include many elements such as a title page, an abstract, thesis statement, introduction, body, conclusion and bibliography.

Your **title page** should include the subject or title of your paper, your name (and, if required, your address and phone number), and the current date. Some instructors also require you include the name of the course along with course number. An *abstract* is a short summary of the ideas you will be proposing in your paper. It is the place to state the argument you intend to address. You can do so by writing an outline of the background information for the paper. When writing your abstrat condier what experiments you did and what kinds of interviews you conducted. The abstract will be set aside from the rest of the paper, usually in the beginning. It will be the only element of the paper on its own page. An effective abstract will be able to summarize the paper with anywhere between 100 and 300 words.

The **thesis statement** will also come at the beginning of your paper. It will state the purpose of your argument and will introduce your claim to a specific type of human behavior. Your thesis is generally a part of your introduction. Your *introduction* will introduce your paper's main ideas. Keep them succinct, but make them interesting. Some questions to answer in your introduction may include: Why did you choose this topic? Is there a need for the general public to know about this issue, and why? How does this issue affect you, if at all? Define the problem clearly. Give examples so the reader knows exactly why this is a problem and how it affects society. Your instructor may want your introduction to be a seperate element of the paper or a part of the body of your paper.

Toward the beginning of the **body** of your paper you will put your hypothesis. If you conducted experiments, what did you think would happen when you first began them? Working through the body of the paper you should cover the testing of the hypothesis, along with the discussion of any research conducted. The body of the social sciences paper will include many elements: the background of the problem or issue you are addressing, which addresses the issue of topic importance; your rationale, which justifies your choice of topics; your statement of qualification, which outlines why you, as a writer, as qualified to write on the subject; a survey of literature, which denotes the sources you used in forming your hypothesis; the methods of research used; the time estimate outline (for completing your experiments/projects); and any information about budget limitations. The body is where you will include any charts or graphs that will assist you in reporting your information. Supporting discussion should be written to explain these elements.

In the **conclusion** of the social sciences paper, you should recap the information you addressed in the body of the paper, keeping in close contact with the thesis. Did your test results differ from your hypothesis? If so, why? The conclusion should explain how the data supported or did not support your hypothesis. During your entire conclusion, you should always back up the main theme of your paper.

You will certainly need to include a works cited page (**bibliography**) to credit any sources used in your paper. Also, many education research papers include an appendix. You may include charts, graphs, and definitions. Most social sciences papers use the APA (American Psychological Association) format for documentation style, however, you will want to discuss style with your instructor before you begin your paper.

Resources to Use

Different resources you will use in order to complete your social sciences paper will provide

different levels of information. An encyclopedia will provide basic information in pretty general terms. The information here will be in a the form of a summary, and will not be very comprehensive in nature. This is where books, a better source for information, will be beneficial. When you search for one specific book, this search may lead you to several other valuable books that you find you will want to reference in your paper. Finally, journal articles should be the final source you should rely on for information. Journal articles will provide the most comprehensive and up-to-date information in the subject you are researching. This is one of the reasons that it is important to use the journal article as your *last* source of information; the journal article is written in such a way that it assujes the reader has prior knowledge on the subject matter. So read your encyclopedia first (general and summative information), then research your subject in books (dedicated material), and finally in journal articles (comprehensive and scholarly).

In any case, you should steer yourself away from the mainstream media for your information. Stick with the scholarly print sources.

Natural Sciences

Writing in the natural sciences means writing about the natural aspects of our world. Theories are tested in order to solve problems. The natural sciences paper is the result of this testing.

Writing in this discipline is a detailed, tedious process. Specific steps must be taken to ensure accurate data. This data must be gathered and organized. But keep in mind...anyone can gather data and organize it. One of the critical parts of the natural sciences paper is in the presentation. You have your data, you have organized it, so now it is time to present it in a factual, knowledgeable way.

Natural Sciences can be broken down into 2 categories: **pure sciences** and **applied sciences**.

Pure Sciences include the life sciences, physical sciences, and earth sciences. Life sciences focuses on how plants animals, and organisms (living things) relate to each other and how they interact with their surroundings. Biology is one area of the life sciences. Others include ecology, molecular biology and genetics, and food science.

To write about the physical sciences is to write about matter (any one thing that occupies space) and energy (what causes matter to move), not living things. There are many, and a vast array, of topics in the field of physical science. The list continues to include aerodynamics, thermodynamics, chemistry and even astronomy.

Earth science, quite simple, is the study of the earth and its history. There are four main areas of earth science: *geology* (the structure of the earth and how it formed), *meteorology* (the study of weather), *oceanography* (the study of the ocean and the creatures living in it), and *space science* (the study of the planets, stars and everything else out there!). Possible earth science topics may include volcanoes, tornadoes, the study of rocks, our atmosphere, earth minerals or the solar system.

Applied Sciences include medical sciences (i.e. forensics), engineering sciences (i.e. electrical engineering) and computer science.

Elements of the Natural Sciences Paper

Keep in mind that when writing in the sciences, fact is preferred over fluff. Write about the facts - the experiment outcomes, the process of information gathering, or a succinct hypothesis. Focus *on* the "what" and keep away from *describing* the "what."

There are seven steps to writing in the Natural Sciences:

1. The problem being addressed must be stated in an objective fashion.

2. Unbiased relevant information must be gathered.
3. The information gathered must be analyzed.
4. A hypothesis is formulated.
5. Experimentation (the fun stuff) to prove your hypothesis. Remember that keeping a journal of experiment outcomes is important for your final steps, so be detailed.
6. Analyze your journal notes.
7. Arrive at your conclusion, which may or may not prove your original hypothesis.

When it comes down to actually writing your paper, be sure to include the following elements:

Title

The title of the natural sciences paper is very important. It should be concise and clearly describe what your paper is about. You may choose to introduce what you tested.

Abstract

This is a brief description of your paper. Take the main ideas and summarize them in 250 words or less.

Introduction

The paper should begin by introducing and forming a question in the introduction. In other words, this is where you introduce your hypothesis. A brief description of the experiments conducted would be outlined in the introduction also, saving the details of the experiments for the body of the paper.

Thesis Statement

Defining your topic is critical in the thesis statment portion of your paper. You need to be as clear and concise as possible.

Body

Since the goal of the scientific paper is to present facts supported by evidence, there are general rules to follow in the paper. Avoid adjectives and adverbs, and instead focus on the nouns (the focus of the paper) and the verbs (how it acted).
Structure your sentences so that they are clear and easy to understand. Overuse of technical jargon will only result in confusing the reader.
The body of the paper will include the following

Methods and Materials

Include the steps you took in your experiments. List tools used and the methods you used to collect your data.

Results

Be sure this information is clear and concise.

Conclusion

In your conclusion, you should focus on the data you presented. Share and discuss your results. Avoid linking your findings with other, unexplored subject matter. If you didn't cover it in your paper, leave it out of the conclusion!

References Cited Page

Follow the specific documentation style chosen or required. You should also include your lab manual in this section.

Resources to Use

Seeing as writing in the natural sciences is technical in nature, you will find that your resources are going to have to be scholarly, comprehensive, and up-to-date (the only time you should use a reference that is several years old is to do comparisons). The first step is to educate yourself on your topic by locating information through a simple search. Information and data can be compiled by doing a search and writing down the information you find to familiarize yourself with the subject. When you feel comfortable with the level of knowledge of this information, you can move on to the next step in the research process.

That next step is finding encyclopedias, textbooks, reference books, and the like to continue filling in the details on your topic. These resources will be dedicated to the chosen topic. They will provide more detailed information and help you fill in any holes in your research or to simply answer questions that may have popped up during the information gathering stage.

Finally, you will turn to review articles, lab reports, and research reports to get the most up-to-date information. This is the most important resource you will use, and the most challenging. These articles and reports provide information that reveal the most recent discoveries on the chosen topic. But they also tend to be technical in nature and are written in a way that assumes the reader is familiar with technical jargon associated with the field or subject. Keeping this in mind, however, review articles and research reports will round out your resource selection nicely.

Don't be afraid to search the Internet for information. There is a great deal of good stuff out there, but you should be careful in what you use. Be sure to gather any internet information from a scholarly source, such as an educational site or a non-profit site.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Writing Guidelines for Engineering and Science Students
- The Mayfield Handbook of Technical and Scientific Writing
- Online Technical Writing: Online Textbook
- EServer Technical Communication Library
- Writing Lab Reports
- The National Academy of Sciences
- Exercises in Science: A Writing Course

CHAPTER 3.03 • WRITING IN BUSINESS

Writing for business includes multiple types of formats including, but not limited to, cover letters, resumes, memos, e-mails, letters, proposals, business plans, and formal reports. This section will focus on how to be a successful business writer.

PURPOSE OF BUSINESS WRITING

The main purpose of business writing is to *convince*. For example, as a professional business writer, you often find yourself explaining the value of a comples idea in order to obtain agreement among readers. Or, you find yourself crafting a document intended to persuade people and rouse them to action.

In other respects, business writing is much like any other form of writing. The process includes prewriting or brainstorming, writing and revising. The most important aspects of business writing are clear and concise writing and getting the message across in the best way. As with all writing it is important to keep the audience in mind when coming up with the best format to get the message across.

AUDIENCE

Every business document has a purpose. You could be trying to pursuade your boss that you are due a raise in one instance and trying to pursuade the HR Department that the company picnic would be better attended if it were held at a lake in another instance. Tailoring the message to meet the needs of its audience is crucial to getting yourself heard and getting what you want. If you address the document's specific target audience in terms it understands, your document will have a better chance of achieving its goal.

DEADLINES

Much, if not all, professional business writing is performed against a deadline. In fact, making a deadline with time to spare is the hallmark of a pro. That act alone inspires a sense of confidence in a business that is often as persuasive as the document itself. So, a good rule of thumb for business writers would be 'better a B+ document that arrives on time than an A that's late.'

MEMOS AND E-MAILS

Writing memos and e-mails in a business setting is slightly different than writing to a friend or family member. The biggest difference is that in a business setting, the writing must be professional or formal. A big misconception about e-mailing in business is that formality is not important. Grammar and composition are both important aspects. Memos and e-mails have a similar approach. The purpose of both is to get a certain message across. This section will cover deciding when it is appropriate to use either a memo or e-mail, content, pre-writing tecnhiques, and effectiveness.

Memos

There are a few types of memos. The standard memo is most effective when attempting to inform many people within the same organization of upcoming events, changes, thoughts, or ideas.

Most memos will have five basic elements:

- The organization's logo or letterhead
- The "to" line
- The "from" line
- The subject line note: When writing your subject line, make sure it is called something accurate, unique and specific. Name your memo something informative.
- The date line

The first sentence of your memo you should clearly state your purpose. Be concise and direct.

Example: The purpose of this memo is to request authorization to travel to Minneapolis to visit the Museum of Natural History to learn more about dinosaur fossils.

Use headings throughout your memo to help the reader to decide what they want to read and to help them to understand the information they are being presented. Headings can also help the reader to understand the purpose of the section (i.e. summary).

If your memo has a lot of information or if it is really long, you may consider summarizing the memo. This can help readers to understand the body of the memo, allow readers to skip information that is not relevant to them or to remind the reader of the memo;s main points.

Keep in mind your audience when writing your memo. You may need to provide background information or explain the events that led to the situation to which the memo is regarding.

E-mails

Emails are fast, cheap, easy to use and digital. Because of its widespread use, here are some things to keep in mind when writing "business" emails.

- Use an appropriate level of formality.
- Keep messages brief. If you are replying to an email, don't repeat information from the email, instead establish a general context of the email. ALso, if sending the email to more than one person, you may want to consider blocking the original author's name for privacy's sake.
- Be careful when writing. Because email is often informal, it is easy for them to become sloppy. Make sure you read your email before sending it.
- Use the subject line. Especially business emails should have a subject so the reader can decide quickly whether or not they need to read the email.
- Don't use all capital letters or use annoying backgrounds. Keep your emails simple. Try to stay away from using italics, bolds or underlining. Even if your email supports these options, others may not.
- Don't forward a message without the permission of the author.
- Above all, have something to say. DOn't send emails just for fun or just to reply agreeing with the writer. Don't send a message just to feel like you are part of the conversation.

Cover Letters and Resumes

Writing a resume or a cover letter is basically a sales pitch to a potential company. You need to acknowledge that they have a need (an empty position), and that you are *the* perfect fit for them or at least close enough of a fit to bring into their office for an interview.

Cover Letters

The first thing about you that your potential employer will see is your cover letter. You should, therefore, attempt to make sure that it is without errors (grammatical, spelling, punctuation, etc).

In your cover letter, you are able to expand on any specific points in your resume that deserve more attention and tie into your desired position. Remember, there are probably a lot of other people that are applying for the same position. Use your cover letter effectively to present your self and make yourself stand out from the rest of the applicants.

Here are some specific points that you'll want to address in your cover letter.

- Let they know the reason you are contacting them. It may seem obvious what you intent is, but tell the employer you are interested in a job at their company. Opening a letter without stating this may be awkward.

- Let the employer know how you heard about the open position - you are interested in a position that you heard about online/in the newspaper/from one of their a current emloyees. Many times a company will have more than one open position. Make sure you identify the specific position in which you are interested.

- Include a detailed description of your eductational or work experience. Be sure to highlight the areas in your work or educational history that will apply directly or closely to your hopeful position. You can put either paragraph first but you may want to put your strongest information first. If you have a lot of work experience related to the job, then put your work experience first. If your education make you more strongly qualified, consider putting your education first. Remember, extra-curricaular activities can be very valuable, if they are applicable to the position.

- Use terms from the ad that are clearly relevant to you. Take a cue from the job ad and emphasize how you are specifically qualifed for the position. If the job requires a degree in Management and you have a Master's Degree in Management, you should emphasize that point. If you write your cover letter specifically for the job for which you are applying, you will stand out more than a person who has a generic cover letter for any job for which they apply.

- Reemphasize your interest in the position. Include a polite but confident request for an interview. Ask that they contact you and be sure to include how you'd like to be contacted ex. give your phone number and/or your email address. You may also want to state the best time you can be reached. It is also a good idea to reference your resume, if you haven't already done so.

- Remember, be confident! If you don't sound like you think you are qualified for the position, why should a potential employer? Your cover letter needs to persuade the employer that you have skills and abilities that are useful to the company.

Cover Letter Example

1234 Spring Drive
Anytown, MN 55432

May 25, 2005

Northern Newspapers, Inc.
5678 Fall Way
Othertown, MN 56789

Dear Ms. Nelson:

I am interested in applying for your Administrative Assistant opening I found posted on the Career Builder website. Please accept the enclosed resume as my application for the position.

I am accustomed to a fast-paced environment where deadlines are a priority and handling multiple jobs simultaneously is a requirement. As a Committee Legislative Assistant for the MN House of Representatives, I demonstrated my ability to multi-task jobs for two representatives and the committee for which I was responsible. I enjoy a challenge and work hard to attain goals. Constant communication with all levels of management, as well as constituents and customers, has strengthened my interpersonal skills.

I know I can contribute to the success of the Northern Newspapers.

I would welcome an opportunity to expand on my qualifications, which include:

- Extensive editing and proofreading skills

- Working both independently and as part of a team

- Substantial computer experience

- Have held various positions that emphasized problem-solving, multi-tasking and attention to detail; and

- Bachelor of Arts degrees in English.

I am enthusiastic about and genuinely interested in this position. I know that my background and skills fit the qualities you are looking for in a candidate. Please contact me at (555) 555-5555 or at my e-mail address (j-j-doe@msn.com) to set up a time for us to meet in person.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Resumes

Unlike cover letters, resumes are a brief outline used by hiring managers to *scan* a potential employee. Just like your cover letter, you want to bring out aspects of previous positions that relate to the one you are hoping to get.

Resumes need to be brief and descriptive at the same time. How are you going to manage that? You will need to be very selective in your word choice. Each resume usually gets under a one minute chance to make an impression. You should generally be able to get everything that you need to say in one or two pages. Make sure the pertinent information really stands out. If you glance at your resume and can't find what's important right away, someone else will have a hard time finding the information that's important.

Hiring managers expect that your resume be typed or printed, neat, easy to read, clearly outlined. Don't use bright colors of ink or paper. Make sure it looks professional.

There are several elements to a resume:

- Identification - Include your name, address, e-mail, phone number.

- Objective - Write a clear goal, avoid generalities. Objectives are not necessary, but they are really helpful when applying for a volunteer position, internship or other positions that are a little more vague than a job opportunity. If your objective states you want a job, don't include it.

- Employment - Include your skills and responsibilities, with what equipment you worked. The most important thing to include here is what you gained from your employment, the results of your experience. Use an active voice and strong verbs.

- Education - Include information about your degree and the institution. Again, make sure you
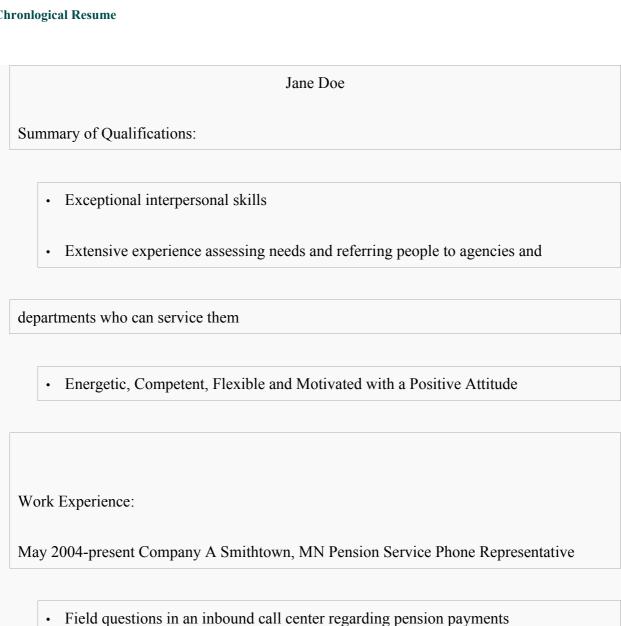
talk about the results of your education, not just that your received an education.

- Interests and Activitied - Make sure these are relevant to the job. Don't just include random hobbies.

- References - You can list your references or write "available upon request". If you list your references on a separate sheet of paper, make sure your name is on all sheets in case the pages get separated.

There are a few different forms of resumes. One gives a chronological breakdown of your work experience while the other shares your skills and prior positions based on function.

Resume Examples

Chronlogical Resume

Jane Doe

Summary of Qualifications:

- Exceptional interpersonal skills

- Extensive experience assessing needs and referring people to agencies and

departments who can service them

- Energetic, Competent, Flexible and Motivated with a Positive Attitude

Work Experience:

May 2004-present Company A Smithtown, MN Pension Service Phone Representative

- Field questions in an inbound call center regarding pension payments

- Provide customers with necessary paperwork for specific concern.

- Assist departmental leaders in various time sensitive projects

Nov. 2001-May 2004 Company B Jonestown, MN Editor

- General editorial work, including proofreading, formatting publications and layout design

- Work with products through all stages—from conception to publication

- Experience with working under deadlines

- Opportunity to work on projects both independently and with small groups

Nov. 1999-Nov. 2001 Company C Hugestown, MN Committee Legislative Assistant II

- Met with individuals or groups to identify needs and briefed the Representatives on meeting details

- Organized volunteers to campaign for state representative candidate

- Maintained successful constituent relations, which lead to the continued support of my Representatives

- Assisted in scheduling people to testify at committee hearings

- Arranged travel information for representatives and committee

- Worked as part of a team

- Learned importance of time management, supervisory, selling, and organizational skills

June 1998-Nov. 1999 Company B Jonestown, MN Customer Service Representative

- Facilitated and communicated effective solutions to internal and external customers

- Received customer appreciation notice in the form of letters to my manager

- Acquired better people and organizational skills

- Opportunity to sharpen quick-thinking, problem-solving skills

Sept. 1996-May 1998 College Y Sharp, MN Peer Tutor

- Provided writing instruction and acted as a resource for college and graduate students

- Served as a liaison between faculty members and students

Education:

May 1998 College Y Sharp, MN English with a Political Science minor (cumulative GPA 3.6)

References available upon request.

Functional Resume

Jane Doe

Career Objective: Obtaining a challenging position as an administrative professional

Education: B.A. awarded May 1998 College Y, Sharp MN Major: English Minor: Political Science Cumulative G.P.A 3.6

Administrative Experience:

Nov. 1999-Nov. 2001 Company C Hugestown, MN Legislative Assistant II

- Met with individuals or groups to identify needs and briefed the Representatives on meeting details

- Organized volunteers to campaign for state representative candidate

- Maintained successful constituent relations, which lead to the continued support of my Representatives

- Assisted in scheduling people to testify at committee hearings

- Arranged travel information for representatives and committee

- Worked as part of a team

- Learned importance of time management, supervisory, selling, and organizational skills

Other Experience:

May 2004-present Company A Smithtown, MN Pension Service Phone Representative

- Field questions in an inbound call center regarding pension payments

- Provide customers with necessary paperwork for specific concern.

- Assist departmental leaders in various time sensitive projects

Nov. 2001-May 2004 Company B Jonestown, MN Editor

- General editorial work, including proofreading, formatting publications and layout design

- Work with products through all stages—from conception to publication

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- Received customer appreciation notice in the form of letters to my manager

- Acquired better people and organizational skills

- Opportunity to sharpen quick-thinking, problem-solving skills

Sept. 1996-May 1998 College Y Sharp, MN Peer Tutor

- Provided writing instruction and acted as a resource for college and graduate students

- Served as a liaison between faculty members and students

Interests and Organizations:

- Administrative Assistants of America

  - member 1997 – current

  - secretary 2003 – current

- Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer

References:

Betty Smith Manager Company C 135 Lane Road Hugestown, MN 55559 (555) 444-3333

John Bill Department Leader Company A 246 Street Lane Smithtown, MN 55558 (555) 666-5555

Professor Nancy File Department of English College Y

Sharp, MN 33562

Follow up or thank you letters

After an interview, take that time to write a thank you letter. The follow up letter can do more good for you in less time than most other aspects of the application/interview process. Thank the interviewer for taking time out of their schedule to meet with you. Also, make sure to emphasize your particular qualifications and/or restate your interest in the position. This letter puts your name in front of the interviewer again and also shows that you are truly interested in the position. Plus, if you are basically **tied** for the job with another person, the thank you letter may tip the scales in your favor.

Probably a good idea to mail out your thank you letter within a day or two of your interview. Not only will this help you in remember the details of your interview, it will also help to ensure that your potential interviewer **sees your thank you letter** before making a final decision on who to offer the position to.

Thank you letter example

1234 Spring Drive Anytown, MN 55432

May 26, 2005

Northern Newspapers, Inc. 5678 Fall Way Othertown, MN 56789

Dear Ms. Hall,

I would like to express my appreciation for your courtesy in extending to me an interview this Monday for the position of Administrative Assistant with your Editorial Department.

As a result of our interview, I am convinced that the position of Administrative Assistant at Northern Newspapers, Inc. is exactly the kind of challenge and opportunity I am seeking. As you may recall, my experience in editorial work at Company B coupled with my Legislative Assistant expertise with Company C will be a real benefit to you and the rest of the Editorial Department at Northern Newspapers, Inc.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon. I can be reached at (555)555-5555 for another interview or to answer any more questions you may have for me.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

OTHER BUSINESS LETTERS

Besides writing a letter to express appreciation for an interview, there are several other types of follow up letters. Here are some tips for these types of letters.

- Letter accepting a job offer - Express appreciation for the offer. Show enthusiam for the position. Repeat the major terms of your employment such as start date, job title, or salary.

- Letter of rejection in response to a job offer - Again, express your appreciation for the offer. If it's appropriate, explain your reason for declining the offer. Remember, at some point in the future, you may want to work for this company, so be polite with your rejection.

- Letter acknowledging a rejection - Why bother? This letter maintains good relations with the company. You might get a phone call later on saying that the first choice candidate wasn't able to take the position.

PROPOSALS, BUSINESS PLANS AND FORMAL REPORTS

Proposals, business plans and formal reports can be a critical part of your business career. All of these may deal with important outcomes. The goal of all of these is to persuade the readers into agreeing with your ideas. Often times you are trying to gain something from the readers, such as money, equipment or help.

Considerations

When starting a proposal, the first thing to consider is what your goals are. If you are asked to write a proposal for someone make sure you are clear on what their goals and requirements are.

There are four main elements that must be considered with your goals.

1. What are the immediate goals and how do they relate to the long-term goals?
2. What costs or risks are involved with writing the proposal? This includes time and people needed. Do not forget to exlpore hidden cost opportunities.
3. What kinds of resources are you going to need? Are those resources readily available?
4. What will come from an unsuccessful proposal? Will it be helpful if only some goals are

met?

After considering your goals there are still many more things to think about. You must take into consideration the readers, your argument, feasibility, and action.

Readers

The more you know about your readers, the more you can tailor your report to appeal to them. If you are lucky, you already know a lot about the reader because they wanted you to write the proposal and have given you specific guidelines. However if you do not know much about your readers, then you better do some research on them. It is important to know what form of research they will be the most receptive to. Surveys may satisfy one reader while another reader may not find it to be as credible.

Argument

An argument can be summed up as what the issue is and the importance of that issue. You need to prove to your readers the significance of the issue. You must convince your readers that you issue needs their attention or help. You need to inform them of the issue, tell them why they should care, what they can do to help, the benefits of their help, and why they should find you credible.

Feasibility

In your report, often as part of your argument, you will have to convince the readers of the feasibilty of the issue. Included in this would be offering alternative plans, addressing the costs and risks involved, as well as the resources needed. You should be able to identify why your plan is the best option.

Action

You will also need to include a plan of action in your report. Most proposals are asking the readers for something. You will need to tell the readers exactly what it is that you want them to do.

What is included in a proposal?

Cover, cover letter, table of contents, exectutive summary, appendix, and graphics.

Cover

The cover page should include the title of the proposal, who the proposal is for, who the proposal is by, and the date.

Cover letter

The cover letter is used to introduce the formal report. It is often less formal than the report itself. The letter usually includes an introducion of the topic and how it was authorized, a brief description of the plan, highlights of the report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Table of contents

The table of contents is just as it sounds, a table of the proposal's content and page numbers. In the table of contents you should include section headings/topics and the page they can be found on. Be sure to include leaders(dots) to link the section with the corresponding page number.

Executive summary

The executive summary is a brief overview of the proposal. You should summarize your main points, you should begin with your purpose and follow the order of your proposal. Make sure to avoid including nonessential information. The exective summary should not be longer than 10 percent of the length of the proposal. With proposals that are 10 pages or less it may not be necessary to include an executive summary.

Appendix

An appendix is pretty much any supporting material that you either reference in your proposal or may be supporting sources that be relevant to some readers and not others. You may choose to include survey forms, other reports, tables of data, or any related material. They are named Appendix A, B, C, etc.

Graphics

While graphics are not a must, they are greatly appreciated. Graphics help to break up all of the text in order to give the reader's eyes a little break. You may choose to include a few small charts or graphs in your reports also. Just be sure that the graphics are relevant to the proposal.

Some tips to consider while writing your proposal...

1. Be clear on your topic. Do not try to cover too many aspects in one proposal. Stick to the most important so that you can be clear and concise.
2. Create a phrase that will draw in your readers. Pick an aspect of your report that should interest you readers and mention it early on to gain their interest.
3. Make sure to include any background information that may be necessary in order to understand the proposal.
4. Give yourself enough time to finish the proposal to the best of your ability. You do not want to be in a time crunch while writing such an important document.
5. You should not start writing until all of your research has been conducted and you have reached all of your conclusions.
6. All basic writing standards apply... you should revise and edit, be consistent with verb tense, and avoid using "I" or "we" because you want the proposal to be objective and credible.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Business Writing Introduction
- Bull's Eye Business Writing Tips
- Cover Letters
- Guide to Basic Business Letters
- Business Letter Formats
- 10 Secrets of Business Letters
- Letter Writing Rules
- Resumes
- Writing a CV Resume
- Writing Memos
- Business Report Writing
- Tips for Writing a Business Proposal

congratulations on completing

CHAPTER 3.03 • WRITING IN BUSINESS

live version • discussion • edit lesson • comment • report an error • ask a question

CHAPTER 3.04 • ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Many people have reservations about speaking in public. If you are one of these people, chances are good that you have heard a lot of advice along the lines of "Imagine your audience is naked." While such a strategy may help you feel more comfortable as you approach the podium, the best way to assure that your speech is a success is very simple: give yourself adequate time to write a presentation that is organized, interesting, and easy to follow, and then practice your delivery until it is smooth and confident. Lack of preparation, more than anything else, makes for underwhelming speeches.

Now that we're clear on how to avoid giving a lousy speech (Prepare! Practice!), how do you go about writing a presentation that works? No problem! Oral Presentations borrow many of the same techniques that are used for rhetorical writing. Planning your topic, researching, editing, reviewing, and revision are all important steps in producing an effective oral presentation, just as they are when writing an essay or research paper. In fact, creating an outline of the material you intend to present or writing out note cards is often a requirement for entry-level college Speech classes. Depending on the complexity of your topic, you may even choose to write everything you plan to say word for word, to avoid muddling your details. Regardless of your method of pre-writing, remember that what you will be graded on is the end product: the speech. An oral presentation is not published as a material object; it is a vocal and visual distribution of ideas and information.

INTRODUCTION

Once your topic has been decided upon and research is underway, it's time to think about how you plan to present your information.

Preparation

Of the several angles that need to be addressed in regards to delivering a speech that is both easily understandable and engaging, the most important is, quite simply, "Who is my audience?" While this might seem an obvious question, don't underestimate the power of knowing your audience. If you're planning to present information about new advances in interactive role-playing games on the internet to a group of senior citizens, chances are good that you will need to use different terminology and examples than you would with a college-age audience made up of aspiring Software Engineers. If your audience can't understand what you're trying to say, you'll find it much harder to accomplish your objective.

Consider the following characteristics of your audience:

- Knowledge Base
- Age
- Gender
- Occupation
- Values & Morals

This brings us to consideration number two: what is the purpose of your speech? Is it a call to action? Strictly to inform? To persuade? Just as you will adjust your language for various

audiences, so will you use different rhetorical strategies to achieve different goals.

In tandem with keeping your information audience-appropriate and on topic, your decision to use visual aides such as Powerpoint, charts, or any kind of props (in the case of demonstration presentations) will have a sizable impact on your audience, and as such, should be given careful thought.

A question that you may want to ask yourself is, "How do I want to present the information?" You might want to give a bare-bones speech, have a Powerpoint presentation, or use exhibits to add character to your information. You also may ask, "How much information can I present in the allotted amount of time?" Be sure to "trim the fat" off of your presentation if you are pinned for time. If you are running far over the amount of time that you have been granted, you may need to re-assess your information and further narrow your scope. One of the most important things your should ask yourself is, "What ideas and thoughts do I want to leave the audience with?" These are the key points that you want to center your presentation around.

Knowing your audience gives you the key to gain and hold their attention, which is a central task for any presenter. Use your knowledge of your audience's demographic to draw them into the presentation from the very first sentence. By knowing what sorts of examples and illustrations you can use to make the contents of your presentation relevent and interesting, you have unlocked the door to understanding and pursuasion.

Ways of Beginning a Speech

When you begin your presentation, you are going to want the audience to feel a sense of "WOW". The more interested you get them right off the bat, the more they are going to pay attention throughout the rest of the presentation. This can be done in a mulititude of different ways.

Opening with a quotation:

Quotations is a tried-and-true way of introducing a subject if it is done correctly. Here is an example using Albert Einstein:

> "After the nuclear bombs were dropped during World War II, the leading creator of this destructive force said, 'I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.' Albert Einstein stated this after finally seeing the bombs' full power; for he knew that he very well may have created the end of the world."

Opening with a statistic:

Startling statistics might open the eyes of your audience. Here is an example concerning incarceration rates:

> "By the end of 2004, 724 out of every 100,000 U.S. residents were incarcerated. The United States of America has the highest jailing rate in the entire world."

Opening with a personal anecdote:

Sharing a personal experience is a great, but risky way of opening an oral presentation. Use this option only if it is a right fit for your audience. For example, if you are presenting to a group of Video Game Design students at your school on the topic of fun gameplay elements, you might use a personal experience like this:

> "A couple years ago, there was this game that had just came out. Everybody was talking about how awesome this game was and how sweet the graphics were. So, I did what any gamer would do--drove directly to the store, picked up a copy of the game, brought it home, and popped it into my Xbox. My excitement heightened as the game loaded and the intro sequence played. When the game started, I was absolutely astonished... at how bad the gameplay was. The game looked cool, but all you did was run around and hit the enemies in the head with a sword over and over again.
>
> That game was not fun; Let's make a game that is fun."

Opening with humor:

Using a joke to start a presentation is often a good idea. You just better hope that your audience thinks its funny! Also, try to make the joke pertain to the subject you are presenting on. Here is an example that you might use when doing a presentation on football:

> "Anyone who makes a bad call against the Detroit Lions risks ticking off their last remaining fan."

Opening with an overview:

If the presentation is more formal, you may just want to give an overview of the main topics you will cover in your speech. Here is an example using college dropouts:

> "Today, I will be discussing college dropouts. I will be going over the current rate of dropouts as well as the many common reasons for it. I will also talk about the reasons to stay in college, like better knowledge, life experiences, and more pay in the future."

METHODS OF PRESENTING YOUR SPEECH

When it comes time to present your speech, there are several methods of delivery to choose from. In most cases, your subject matter will be the main criteria for deciding whether to read verbatim, memorize your script, or work from cue cards. In the case of a scholarly presentation with an extensive amount of detail, you may choose to write out your speech and deliver it as written. If your goal is to persuade your audience through high energy speaking and eloquent prose, you may choose to script and memorize your argument. When introducing an informal topic with which you are familiar, you may find that index cards and an outline will suffice. No matter which way you chose to present your speech, you need to be **prepared**!

Manuscript Speaking

Writing the content of your speech out word for word may be appropriate for certain situations. For example, when you will be presenting critical facts or statistics, having the data at your fingertips helps to prevent errors. While misquoting information might sound like a minor offence, under certain circumstances it can have grave repercussions, such as being sued for slander. Though in most cases incorrect information will only confuse your listeners and embarrass you, it's good to remember that such mistakes cannot be tolerated in many professions, including law and politics.

The drawback to a scripted speech is that the audience will almost certainly know that you are reading word for word. This has several drawbacks, including decreased eye contact and stilted delivery, both of which leech power away from your presentation and tend to create a feeling of disconnect between the listeners and the speaker.

If giving a manuscript speech is necessary, practice is the best way to avoid a bad presentation. By reading your speech aloud several times, you will become more comfortable with the rhythm and inflections of your writing. Make sure that you are thinking about where and when you can make eye contact with your audience to underscore your points and add emphasis to important parts of your speech.

Memorized Speaking

When a presenter memorizes a speech, it is basically a manuscript speech minus the paper. Memorizing a speech can improve eye contact with an audience. Body language may also improve because the speaker has more freedom to move about the area since papers/notes will not be used.

A problem with memorized speaking is when the presenter forgets the speech. This can cause an embarrassing, awkward situation and make the speaker seem inept. Plus, the speech tends to sound artificial- not natural.

Extemporaneous Speaking

An extemporaneous speech (extemp speech) is delivered from a prepared outline or note cards. The outline and/or note cards include the main ideas and arguments of the speech. The only information that is typically copied word for word are quotes. Outlines and note cards should be used for keeping the presentation organized and for reminding the presenter of what information needs to be provided.

Extemp speaking has many advantages compared to the other methods of delivery.

For one, an extemp speech sounds spontaneous because the presenter is not reading word for word. Glancing at an outline or a note card that has key ideas listed allows the presenter to add detail and personality to the information being presented.

Second, similar to the memorized speaking, eye contact and body language can increase. The speaker's head is not down, buried in a manuscript.

Third, the speaker is able to respond to audience feedback as it occurs. An audience tends to change moment by moment, and a good speaker can tell when more or less detail is needed for different parts of the presentation.

In order to ensure an extemp speech's strength is to practice presenting with the outline or note cards being used. Inexperienced speakers tend to worry they will forget important information if they do not write it out on their outline/note card.

Practicing your speech, even if it is just to your pet or mirror, will help increase the confidence level you have of yourself in both delivary and knowledge of your subject.

Notecard example:

Minnesota Twins History Notecard #1

 I. Intro-Personal Experience

II. Creation

   A.President of Org.-Calvin Griffith

B.1960 - Move from "Washington Senators" to MN Twins

C.Metropolitan Stadium, built in '56

D.Show pic of 60's uniform

III. Historic Twins' Players

A.Killebrew

B.Kaat

C.Oliva

Do's and Don'ts

Now that you have familiarized yourself with the various methods of preparing and delivering oral presentations, it is time to discuss the best way to present your information. You may be familiar with Marshall McLuhan's adage "the medium is the message." Don't forget that in the case of an oral presentation, you ARE the medium. In other words, no matter how well researched and cunningly written, your speech will only be as professional as your look and manner suggest it is. Your appearance and delivery are just as important as the content of your presentation.

Dress Code

You've no doubt heard this from your High School guidance counselor, your parents, and a dozen brochures about successfully interviewing for employment, but it bears repeating: **First impressions are important.** It is imperative that you dress to impress. For most situations in which you will be delivering an oral presentation, this means "Business Casual."

For **men**, business casual consists of a button-down shirt, tie, dress slacks, and dress shoes (blazer is optional). Men should also be clean-shaven, or properly groom their facial hair. For **women**, business casual includes a nice shirt or sweater set, and a knee-length skirt, hose, and dress shoes. Dress pants are also acceptable.

If the speech will be presented for an audience that will be dressed formally, *wear a suit*. If you are able, get plenty of sleep the night before your presentation, so that you will be fresh and well rested. Before approaching the podium, take a quick look in the mirror-- hair tidy? Teeth clean? Tie straight? Under no circumstances should hats or anything that obstructs eye contact with the audience be worn.

Delivering The Message

When speaking to the audience, act poised and confident, even if that's not how you feel on the inside. Some of the most common "tells" that a person is ill at ease include fidgeting, throat clearing, and speaking too rapidly. Stand with good posture and stay relatively still. Keep your hands quiet, and avoid putting them in your pockets. Concentrate on keeping your breathing slow and even, and try to relax. Most importantly, make eye contact with the audience, not the floor. You should be as confident in your vocal delivery as you are in your posture. Avoid saying "Um", "Uh", or "Like". These words make you seem at the least, uncertain, and at the worst, unprepared, and eat away at your credibility. Vary the tone of your voice and talk at a steady, conversational rate. Last, but not least, do not chew gum or suck on candy while speaking. If you are afraid that your mouth will go dry, it is acceptable to have a small glass of water at hand to sip discreetly.

CONCLUSION

Leaving the audience with a bang is necessary in order to ensure a lasting impression. Remember, the last thing presented tends to be what the audience remembers the best. The ending of a speech can be as important as the beginning and body. The conclusion should do what the introduction did, except in reverse.

Ways of ending a speech

After completing the presentation, the presenter should summarize the main points again without repeating verbatim what was said in the introduction. After that, you want to "Wow" your audience again with one of the techniques for introducing your speech. This can include: a quotation, a startling statistc, a personal experience, a joke, or a formal closure.

Thank Your Audience

While this is one of the most important things to do at the end of a presentation, it is also one of the most forgotten things. Remember that the audience has given up their time to listen to you. They could have been anywhere else in the world doing anything they wanted to, but they were there with you. You should appreciate that. An example of thanking your audience could look like this:

> "That is all I have for today. I appreciate you giving me your time. Thank you very much and have a great day."
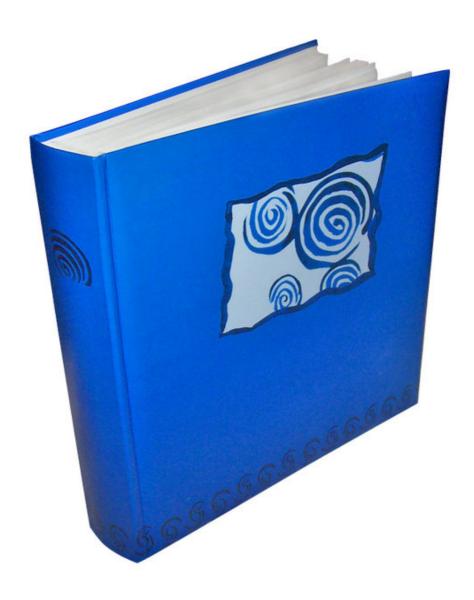
EXTERNAL LINKS

- General Information and Advice
- Managing Nervousness During Oral Presentations
- An Online Handbook
- Presentation Tips for Public Speaking

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CHAPTER 3.04 • ORAL PRESENTATIONS

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WRITER'S

HANDBOOK

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF GRAMMAR

Grammar is the study of how words and their component parts combine to form sentences. Grammar is the scientific study of language that includes *morphology* (also "accidence" or the forms that words take) and *syntax* (the relation of the words to other words). Grammar also studies the different parts or elements of speech (for example nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc, etc, etc) the relations of those elements and provides ways to discuss how the language works.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- St. Cloud State University has a great website that is very useful for writers called LEO: http://leo.stcloudstate.edu.

    It is especially great because it is written based on college writing. It is quite in depth and is broken down into many categories so a writer can find what they need. Access is available for anyone, not limited to students of St. Cloud State University.
- A writer can utilize many different reference tools through St. Cloud State Univeristy's website. Among these references includes free access to the Oxford English Dictionary. Go to http://lrts.stcloudstate.edu.

    Click the "Library" link then the "Online References Resources" drop down menu. Here, there will be a list of many useful resources. Some of these resources are limited to student only use.

SECTION 1.02 • PARTS OF SPEECH

NOUNS

A noun is the part of speech that names a person, place, or thing, or idea. Some examples of nouns are: Tom, table, classroom, conscience.

Determiners

Determiners are used to indicate the presence of a noun.

- *a* table
- *all* classrooms
- *no* conscience

Articles

There is also a special class of determiners called articles. These are the words *a*, *an*, and *the*:

- *a* cup
- *an* ice cube
- *the* plate

The words *a* and *an* are called indefinite articles, because they do not identify a particular person, place, or thing. *The* is called a definite article, because it does specify a particular person, place, or thing.

Using *a* and *an*

Determining which word to use, either *a* or *an*, is based on the first letter of the word that follows it. When a word starts with a consonant, use *a* before it. When the word begins with a vowel or an unpronounced *h*, use *an* before it.

- *a* show
  - *an* amazing show
- *an* octopus
  - *a* huge octopus
- *an* hour
  - *a* house
- *an* apple
  - *a* red apple

Singular or Plural

In order to show whether a noun is singular or plural, change the noun's spelling.

- boy/boys
- child/children
- woman/women
- man/men
- syllabus/syllabi

If you are unsure how to change a word into the plural form, check your dictionary.

Possession

Nouns also undergo a change to express possession by using an apostrophe followed by the letter "s" ('s).

- girl/girl's
- children/children's
- man/man's

PRONOUNS

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun in a sentence.

> Example: The dog is old, *it* walks slowly. In this sentence, the word *it* replaces dog.

There are several types of pronouns: personal pronouns, possesive pronouns, intensive and reflexive pronouns, relative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and indefinite pronouns.

Personal Pronouns are those that refer to specific people or things. Examples: I, he, she, we, us, they.

Possessive Pronouns indicate ownership. Examples: My, mine, your, our, theirs.

Intensive and Reflexive Pronouns Intensive pronouns exmphasize a noun or another pronoun.

> Example: The President *himself* called to congratulate me.

Relfexive pronouns look the same as intensive pronouns but serve a different function. They name a receiver of an action. Example: We shopped *ourselves* to death.

Relative Pronouns introduce subordinate clauses and function as adjectives.

> Example: The man *who* yelled at us to get off his lawn did not even own the property!

Interrogative Pronouns introduce questions.

> Example: *Who* was that?

Demonstrative Pronouns identify nouns and function as adjectives.

> Example: *This* is my dog.

Indefinite Pronouns refer to non specific people or things.

> Examples: All, both, any, few, everyone, each, nobody, some, several, neither.

Pronouns most often replace a noun but can sometimes function as an adjective. These are called pronoun/adjectives because they are in the form of a pronoun but function as an adjective.

> Example: *This* material was new to me. *This* functions as a pronoun/adjective.

Pronoun Problems

Pronouns can cause many problems for writers. Here are some tips to help you.

- Make sure the pronoun and its antecedent (the noun or pronoun to which the pronoun refers) agree. They must both be singular or plural.

>Examples: My *dog* finished her *food*. (Both are singular) The *dogs* fought for *their* food. (Both are plural)

-Collective nouns should be used as singular unless they are obviously plural.

>Example: The *jury* gave *its* verdict.

-Compound antecedents connected by *and* should be used as plural.

>Example: *Jack and Jill are* getting married.

-Make sure the antecedent is clear.

>Example: When she set the picture on the glass table, *it* broke.

By using *it* after two nouns, the reference is unclear. Which item broke? The picture or the table? When reading your writing, ask yourself these questions. If you are unclear as to which noun is the antecedent, it will be unclear for the reader as well.

-Deciding whether to use we or us

If you are unsure as to which pronoun to use, try ommitting the antecedent.

>Example: *We/Us* workers would like to have more breaks. It makes much mores sense to say *We would* instead of *Us would*.

VERBS

A verb is the main word in the predicate of a sentence, it expresses an action, describes an occurance, or establishes a state of being.

an action would be: Josh *threw* the ball.
an occurance would be: a hush *descended* on the crowd.
a state of being would be: Jill *was* serious.

Principle Parts

The principle parts of verbs are the different forms that verbs take depending on how they are used in a sentence. For example, take the verb escape.

base form: to escape
past tense: escaped
present participle: am escaping
past participle: escaped

ADJECTIVES

Adjectives modify (limit the meaning of) nouns or pronouns, usually by desccribing, quantifying, or identifying those words.

a describing adjective would be: Josh threw the *yellow* ball.
a quantifying adjective would be: We caught *several* sunfish last weekend.
a identifying adjective would be: Carol tried hard to win *that* race.

Besides being used to modify a meaning, adjectives can be used to compare items.

a comparative adjective would be: This year's graduating class was *smaller* than last year's class. another comparative adjective would be: This year's offensive line was the *smallest* in the past few decades.

Finally, adjectives can be pronouns. Pronouns used as adjectives usually show ownership.

a pronoun used as an adjective would be: Shelia bought *her* first car yesterday. another pronoun used as an adjective would be: The Smith's saw *their dreams crumble when they were denied a mortgage.*

ADVERBS

Adjectives and adverbs are modifiers or descriptive words, phrases, or clauses that bring detail to your sentences. Once you figure out what word you want to modify, you are able to choose with modifier you need.

Difference between adverbs and adjectives

Adjectives and adverbs answer different questions. An adjective modifies a noun or pronoun and answers these questions:

- Which: the latest magazine arrived.
- What kind: a huge different remained.
- How many: the three books were different.

An adverb modifies a verb an answers these questions:

- When: tomorrow, the storm will quit.
- How often: students change majors frequently.
- Where: the class is held here today.

When choosing between an adjective and adverb, determine the word being modified and the figure out its part of speech.

Forming adverbs

Often adverbs are formed from adjectives, but some are not derived from other words such as again, almost, always, never, here, there, now, often, seldom, well. The adverbs that are derived from adjectives can be formed by adding the suffix -ly to the ending.

- beautifully
- strangely

- cleverly
- respectfully

Remember that an -ly does not make the word an adverb. Some adjectives also end in -ly such as friendly and lovely.

Placement

The location of the adverb in a sentence can change the rhythm and emphasis dramatically.

- Formerly, Star Wars was just three movies.
- Star Wars was formerly just three movies.

CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions join words, phrases or clauses within a sentence. They illustrate a relationship between the two elements that are being joined.

Coordinating Conjunctions *And, but, or, nor, for, so* and *yet* are coordinating conjunctions. These are conjunctions of two grammatically equal elements such as two nouns or two clauses.

Example: I like apples *and* oranges.

Correlative Conjunctions come in pairs such as *either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also*. These conjunctions also connect two equal grammatically elements.

Example: I will have *either* pasta *or* pizza for dinner.

Subordinating Conjunctions *After, although, as if, because, even though, once, in order that*, and *rather than* are some common subordinating conjunctions. These are conjunctions that introduce a subordinate clause and illustrate a relationship with the rest of the sentence.

Example: I will go to the library *rather than* class this afternoon.

PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions are words that come before a noun or pronoun that form a phrase that modifies another phrase within the sentence. This phrase, the prepositional phrase, usually functions as an adjective or adverb.

Some examples of prepositions:

about, above, after, along, among, as, before, behind, beside, between, by, despite, durig, for, in, into, like, of, onto, opposite, over, past, regarding, since, and with.

Prepositional Phrases begin with a preposition and most often end with a noun. The noun is known as the object of the preposition. There are several different types of prepositional phrases classified by the type of word it modifies.

Adjective prepositional phrases most often modify the noun directly before the prepositional phrase. These usually answer the questions *which one?* or *what kind of?*.

Example: The thoughts of the professor were closed minded. *of the professor* is the

prepositional phrase which modifies *thoughts*. What kind of thoughts? Those of the professor.

Adverbial prepositional phrases modify a verb within the sentence. These usually answer the questions *When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions?* and *To what degree?*

Example: You can not judge a book *by its cover*. The prepositional phrase, by its cover, modifies the verb *judge*. How can you not judge a book? By its cover.

INTERJECTIONS

Interjections are words that express surprise or emotions. Examples: Oh! Hey! Ow!

SECTION 1.03 • SENTENCES

There are several different types of sentences. Each are classified based on their structure and their purpose.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Sentence structure is determined based on the number of clauses in the sentence. A clause can be independent or subordinate.

Independent clause

- Full sentence pattern that can operate on its own and does not function within another sentence pattern.
- Contains a subject plus a verb and any objects, any modifiers.
- It either stands alone or could stand alone.

Subordinate clause

- Pattern like a full sentence (has subjects and verbs) but functions within a sentence.
- Can function as a noun, adjective or adverb.
- Can not stand alone as a complete sentence.

Examples

Simple sentence
One independent clause with no subordinate clauses. It does no contain more than one full sentence pattern.
Without love, life would be empty.
This sentence contains a subject (life), a verb (would be) and 2 types of modifiers (Without love and empty).

Compound sentence
Composed of two or more independent clauses with no subordinate clauses. The two clauses are usually joined by a comma and a conjunction or a semicolon.
Together we stand, but united we fall.
This sentence contains 2 clauses which are joined by "but".

Complex sentence
Composed of one independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses.
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
"that sow in tears" is the subordinate clause.

Compound-complex sentence

Contains at least two independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause.
> *Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.*

This sentence contains two independent clauses (one before and one after the comma) and each independent clause contains a subordinate clause ("what you eat" and "what you are").

SENTENCE PURPOSE

- **Declarative sentence** - used to make a statement

  My dog barks at everything.

- **Imperative sentence** - used to mae a request or demand

  Give me that.

- **Interrogative sentence** - used to ask a question

  What are you doing?

- **Exclamatory sentence** - used to make an exclamtaion

  I don't want that!

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SECTION 1.03 • SENTENCES

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SECTION 1.04 • ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Disclaimer: Contemporary American audiences and language instructors prefer sentences written in the active voice. Sentences written in this way have value clarity, brevity, and action. For clarification, keep reading.

THE DIFFERENCE

Is the subject of your sentence acting or being acted upon?

- In the **active voice**, the subject acts.
  - I dropped the ball. (*I* is the subject and **agent**. The *ball* is the direct object.)
- In the **passive voice**, the subject is acted upon.
  - The ball was dropped by me. (The *ball* is now the subject being acting upon by *me*.)

Note that both sentences express the same idea, but the former is more straight foward.

A NOTE ON THE PASSIVE VOICE

Passive sentences allow writers/speakers to evade responsibility. Instead of saying "I dropped the ball," someone attempting to escape scrutiny would assert "The ball was dropped." Dropping the `agent` allows the writer/speaker to shift attention. Passive formations are indirect, and consequently, less compelling.

Another example:

- **Passive**: Mom's favorite vase was destroyed by Anna.
- **Active**: Anna destroyed mom's favorite vase.

SECTION 2.01 • WHAT IS MECHANICS?

Mechanics refer to the area of study encompassing the technical aspects of prose style.

Effective writing requires a writer to understand and imply mechanics of good writing. There are various components of writing and rules of grammer.

- Parts of speech
    - Nouns
    - Pronouns
    - Verbs
    - Articles
    - Adjectives
    - Prepositions
    - Conjunctions
    - Relative pronouns
    - Phrase
    - Clause
    - Sentence.

- Punctuation
    - Periods
    - Colons
    - Semi-colons
    - Commas
    - Question marks
    - Apostrophes
    - Hyphens
    - Parentheses
    - Brackets
    - Dashes.

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SECTION 2.01 • WHAT IS MECHANICS?

Writer's Handbook

Unit 02 ~ Understanding Mechanics

SECTION 2.02 • PUNCTUATION

WHAT IS PUNCTUATION FOR?

"Proper punctuation" shows up repeatedly in discussions about expectations and criteria for what constitutes good academic writing — whether it's administrators, teachers, students, or legislators talking about what should be taught in the first-year writing classroom. But the word "proper" might limit or even mislead our thinking of punctuation. Used knowledgeably and deliberately, punctuation is more than proper ; it's essential to making meaning. Too, there's a faint connotation of "arbitrary" with the word "proper" — and effective punctuation is anything but arbitrary.

Nor is punctuation merely a reflection of oral behavior, as suggested by the familiar injunctions "Use a comma for a pause" or "Where your voice drops, use a period." Instead, punctuation functions as a rich set of clues that have emerged specifically for readers working through text on a page or screen, visually and two-dimensionally.

The nature of reading demands such clues precisely because text is not speech. Speakers have pitch, pace, hand gestures, facial expressions, and other means to let a listener know such things as which points to link to each other and which points should stand on their own, or whether information is necessary in that it restricts meaning or whether it is extraneous. Moreover, ordinary speech usually accomodates a listener's questions, allowing for a more rapid arrival at a joint understanding between speaker and listener. The greater temporal and spatial distance between writer and reader, however, calls for a code that can work to give clues about the writer's intended meaning in the absence of such direct two-way communication.

IS IT WORTH THE WORK?

While punctuation does function as a vital part of making meaning within a text, it can't be denied that it serves another function as well: that of credibility marker. Using punctuation according to the conventions of the academic community does serve as a sort of license into, and within, that community. To take the time and effort to learn and use punctuation conventionally sends the message to readers that "I'm part of your community; I can speak your language (use your code). So, listen to me." It signals a sort of collegial willingness to hear and to be heard: to use a common code that enhances and expands understandability instead of restricting it to yourself. Codes can exclude and include; by using the code of "correct" punctuation, you're signaling a willingness to be included in a group of people who've agreed on how to use certain dots and squiggles on the page to indicate certain relationships among ideas. For whatever reason you value inclusion in the academic community, subscribing to (buying into) conventional punctuation is one among many certificates of authenticity you can carry.

Why is that? Why should conventional punctuation exert such influence? Part of the answer can be found in the way different punctuation marks support characteristics that the academic community values in its overall discourse. This is another way in which conventional punctuation operates on more than a merely arbitrary level: It serves to indicate relationships among ideas in a sentence or paragraph that echo the very ways in which the academic community organizes and develops its

lines of thought. Those ways include segmentation, coordination, subordination, modification, and supplementation -- concepts discussed later in this section.

What's With All the Jargon?

Have you ever tried to complete a task with someone who doesn't know the names of the objects you're working with? Think of changing your oil with a person who doesn't know the terms "dipstick," "oil pan," "drain plug," or "filter wrench." Or imagine trying to show someone how to make an omelet, and they don't know what a "whisk" is or what it means to "dice" onions. Chances are, it will take longer than usual for you to get the task done; perhaps you may even decide to start off with a brief vocabulary review before focusing on the task itself. Let's face it, "that thingy there" takes you only so far.

Like other specialized subjects, punctuation has a specialized vocabulary that allows us to talk about it: a set of terms we use to name parts, describe purposes, explain activities, and identify errors. The attractive thing about a lexicon is that it saves time by eliminating a lot of guesswork and reinvention. While punctuation jargon can sometimes sound unnecessarily inflated (the word "and," for example, is a "coordinating conjunction") or even faintly accusatory (an unnecessary comma is called "disruptive"), having a consistent set of terms makes it easier to use punctuation correctly.

In short: Yes, it does help to know some of the jargon when learning punctuation. The good news is, once you learn a few terms, you can plug them into formulas that you can use to quickly get a solid grasp on correct punctuation.

OK, which terms do I need to know?

The sections below about specific punctuation marks introduce terms as you'll need them. But there are a few terms it helps to know beforehand.

Independent clause

This is a group of words that could stand on its own as a complete sentence because it expresses a complete thought.

How can you tell if a thought or sentence is "complete"? While there are more complicated tests involving more jargon, one simple test that usually works is to read the group of words out loud with extra expressiveness. We almost always can "hear" completeness or incompleteness.

When you read an independent clause aloud, it has a sound of being finished. You and any other listener are not waiting for more information. Your voice usually drops with an air of finality when you are done reading an independent clause aloud.

Examples:
- *Conflict resolution requires looking first at involved parties collectively.*
- *One challenge is determining whether all parties truly want to resolve the conflict.*
- *The conflict may be serving another purpose.*

Dependent clause

In contrast, when you read a dependent clause aloud, you or your listener has the feeling of "Well...? What's next? Finish it up!" A dependent clause is a group of words that can't stand on its own as a sentence because it does not express a complete thought. It leaves the listener (and reader)

hanging.

In addition, there are certain words that make a clause dependent. When the following words appear at the beginning of a clause, that clause is dependent:

after, although, as, as if, as long as, as soon as, as though, because, before, during, even if, even though, ever since, if, in case, in order that, once, on condition that, provided that, since, so that, then, though, unless, until, what, whatever, when, whenever, whether, which, whichever, while, whomever, whose, why

Examples:

- *Until all parties agree that resolution is a shared priority*
- *Which allows the process to move forward*
- *An example being one person who retains power as long as the conflict goes unsolved*

Independent clause and **dependent clause** refer to groups of words. Two more terms it helps to know beforehand are labels for certain individual words.

Coordinating conjunctions

When these seven short words words link two independent clauses together within one sentence, they are called coordinating conjunctions:

and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet

Each coordinating conjunction signals a specific relationship between the independent clauses it joins.

- **And** signals addition and extension. Used with a comma between two independent clauses, it tells the reader that the thoughts expressed in those clauses should be considered together and with equal weight.

   Each workplace conflict is unique, and each requires its own assessment.
- **But** expresses contrast. It tells readers that the thought expressed in the second independent clause is in opposition to, or otherwise different from, the thought expressed in the first independent clause.

   Each workplace conflict is unique, but several general principles apply to finding solutions.
- **For** signals that the second thought is a statement of causation relative to the first thought or that the second thought should be considered as significantly informing the first thought.

   Each workplace conflict is unique, for each context is unique.
- **Nor** links two complete thoughts expressed as negatives, indicating that neither is an option.

   Serious conflicts cannot be solved by ignoring them, nor can they be solved by attempting to legislate past them.
- **Or** conveys option/choice or consequence (as in the sense of "or else") between the two thoughts.

   Conflicts may be resolved with one mediated discussion, or extended negotiation may be required to bring about consensus.
- **So** signals that the second thought is a statement of effect or consequence relative to the first thought.

   Workplace conflicts can ultimately be opportunities for growth, so managers should approach them confidently.
- **Yet** tells the reader that the thought expressed in the second independent clause is in opposition or contrast to the first. It also can indicate simultaneity, in effect saying to the

reader, "At the same time, after you've read the first thought, you should also consider this thought."

> *Workplace conflicts can ultimately be opportunities for growth, yet most managers approach them with dread and apprehension.*

Conjunctive adverbs

These are words expressing a relationship or transition between two independent clauses. Common conjunctive adverbs are:

also, consequently, for example, furthermore, however, in addition, in contrast, in fact, instead, likewise, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, still, then, therefore

Once you understand these terms, you're ready to look at punctuation formulas for using commas, semicolons, and colons.

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SECTION 2.02 • PUNCTUATION

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SECTION 2.02.01 • COMMAS

WHAT DO COMMAS DO?

As you can see in the list below, commas serve several different purposes. For now, don't worry about any unfamiliar terms; simply observe the main actions commas do: *join, emphasize, contain*, and *separate*.

1. Commas work with a coordinating conjunction to **join two independent clauses** within a sentence.
2. They **emphasize introductory elements** at the beginning of a sentence or clause.
3. They **set off cumulative elements** at the end of a sentence or clause.
4. They **separate a dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence** from the independent clause following it.
5. They work in pairs to **contain restrictive modifiers** within a sentence.
6. They work in pairs to **contain parenthetical expressions** within a sentence.
7. They **separate two or more adjectives** that independently describe the same noun.
8. They **separate quotations** from their attributions.
9. They **separate items in a list**.
10. They **separate elements in dates, numbers, personal titles, and addresses**.

As you can see, there are many uses for commas but an overwhelming majority of commas used are needed in three situations.

If you know the basic rule for these three cases, you should be set for comma usage.

1. Put a comma before a coordinating conjunction that separates two independent clauses.
2. Put a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence.
3. Use commas to set off elements that interrupt or add information in a sentence.

COMMAS WITH TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

Used with coordinating conjunctions, commas allow writers to let readers know how their complete thoughts (as expressed in independent clauses) relate to one another. After all, our thoughts build on each other and interact with each other. Unless we're merely listing things or free-associating, our thoughts rarely develop in separate "boxes," but rather tend more to develop in relationship with one another.

When it's time to put those thoughts into written text, commas used with coordinating conjunctions help us indicate the relationships among our thoughts. They help us avoid the choppy, flat style that comes from every thought becoming a separate separate sentence, walled off from other sentences with the finality of a period:

Example of periodic text: *Building consensus ends with synthesis. It begins with analysis. Of course, the ultimate goal is finding commonality. The final product is a single course of action. However, a consensus derives validity only from agreement among the many. The first step in reaching consensus is to survey the different viewpoints involved.*

If we add commas with coordinating conjunctions to this group of sentences, our reader will be able to see more clearly the relationships that exist among the complete thoughts:

The same text with commas and coordinating conjunctions: *Building consensus ends with synthesis, **but** it begins with analysis. Of course, the ultimate goal is finding commonality**, and** the final product is a single course of action. However, a consensus derives validity only from agreement among the many**, so** the first step in reaching consensus is to survey the different viewpoints involved.*

The formula

Use a comma to join two independent clauses (IC) with a coordinating conjunction (CC). Place the comma before the coordinating conjunction.

IC, CC IC.

Errors

A comma and a coordinating conjunction must appear together in order to have enough "strength" to join two independent clauses. These errors happen when one or the other is missing:

Two independent clauses joined by just a coordinating conjunction (no comma) or joined by nothing at all -- they just collide -- is called a **run-on sentence** or sometimes a **fused sentence**.

Examples of run-on or fused sentences:

- *Several environmental organizations recognized the treaty but few endorsed it.*
- *Internet communities redefine the notion of space they take the concept beyond physical dimensions.*

Two independent clauses joined by just a comma (no coordinating conjunction) is called a **comma splice**.

Example of a comma splice: *Economists predicted lower personal debt loads resulting from tax cuts, this did not happen.*

Commas with introductory elements

Another relationship between thoughts we signal to our readers is that of **introduction**. We often want to give our readers some background before laying out our main thought, or we want to give some information first that limits or otherwise modifies the information in our main thought. Introductory elements can be one word or several. Common ones are **transition words** and **statements about time, place, manner, or condition**.

Using a comma after an introductory element alerts your reader to an upcoming shift in thought or a shift in the arrangement of ideas. It asks the reader to pause and focus his or her attention on the main thought coming up.

Examples of sentences with introductory elements:

- *Moreover, several groups actively opposed the treaty.*
- *Ideally, all participants in a mediation process agree on the goals. In reality, this calibration occurs only over time.*
- *Outside, protesters waved signs and chanted slogans.*
- *When the grace period expires, all businesses must comply fully with the new regulation.*

A simple question to ask yourself here is if the information **before** the comma could be placed **after**

the remaining part of the sentence and still make sense.

Examples from above:

- *Protesters waved signs and chanted slogans outside.*

    Notice how the word "outside" was just shifted to the end of the sentence?
- *All businesses must comply fully with the new regulation when the grace period expires.*

    Notice how the words "when the grace period expires" were just shifted to the end of the sentence?
    If you are able to shift the words of your sentence that come before the comma to the end of the sentence without disturbing your sentence's meaning, your comma is placed in the right spot!

COMMAS WITH CUMULATIVE CLAUSES

Another type of relationship between ideas that we signal to readers with a comma is that of **accumulation**. Occurring at the end of a sentence, **cumulative clauses** hook up to a main clause and add further information. Using cumulative clauses is a good way to avoid having to use two sentences when one will do.

Examples of sentences with cumulative clauses:

- *Nine senators changed their vote, passing the bill into law.*
- *Three years of above-average rainfall raised the water table, turning formerly usable fields into wetlands.*
- *Peers frequently reinforce the behavior, leading it to become an ingrained habit.*

COMMAS AND DEPENDENT CLAUSES

Remember, when you read a **dependent clause** aloud, you or your listener has the feeling of "Well...? What's next? Finish it up!" A dependent clause is a group of words that can't stand on its own as a sentence because it does not express a complete thought. It leaves the listener (and reader) hanging.

Examples of dependent clauses:

- *although psychology and applied psychology are separate disciplines*
- *when sanctions proved too difficult to enforce*
- *because it was undated*

Dependent clauses, as their name implies, "depend" on another clause to form a complete sentence. Dependent clauses must be paired with independent clauses.

The formula

When the dependent clause comes before the independent clause, use a comma after the dependent clause.

> **DC, IC**.

When the dependent clause comes after the independent clause, just run right through without a comma.

> **IC DC**.

Examples:

- *Although psychology and applied psychology are separate disciplines, they both are relatively recent additions to the university.*
- *The U.N. approved military action when sanctions proved too difficult to enforce.*
- *Archaeologists used contextual clues to date the manuscript because it was undated.*

Errors

A **disruptive comma** is one used before a dependent clause when it appears after the independent clause. Writers often make this mistake when the dependent clause begins with because.

Examples of disruptive commas:

- *The future of print newspapers appear uncertain, due to rising production costs and the increasing popularity of online news sources.*
- *Some argue that print newspapers will never disappear, because of their many readers.*

COMMAS AND RESTRICTIVE MODIFIERS

You know what it's like to talk to someone and add explanations as you go, even right in the middle of your thoughts, to make sure your listener knows exactly which things you are talking about? When those explanantions show up in a written sentence, they are called **modifiers**. Modifiers can be **nonrestrictive** -- meaning that you can drop them out of a sentence and you won't change the meaning. **Restrictive** modifiers are ones whose meaning is essential to the overall meaning of the sentence; if you dropped a restrictive modifier, the meaning of the sentence would change.

Use a pair of commas to set off a nonrestrictive clause. Don't use commas around restrictive clauses.

Examples:

- *The committee, headed by Dr. Suarez, met weekly to develop a budget.*

  In this sentence, the phrase "headed by Dr. Suarez" is nonessential to the meaning of the main clause, which is that the committee met weekly. Presumably only one committee has been under discussion in previous sentences. However, if the discussion is of several committees, and the writer wants to point out that it was that one specific committee headed by Dr. Suarez that met weekly, the commas would be removed:
- *The committee headed by Dr. Suarez met weekly to develop a budget.*
- *Employees who participate in the company's fitness classes pay a lower health insurance premium.*

  Here, no commas are used, since it is not just any and all employees who pay a lower health premium, but only those who participate in the company's fitness program. Notice the difference in the next sentence, in which the nonrestrictive modifier adds information but wouldn't change the meaning if it was taken out:
- *Employees, who have access to the company's gym and fitness classes, are encouraged to practice preventive healthcare.*

COMMAS AND PARENTHETICAL ELEMENTS

Much like a nonrestrictive modifier, a parenthetical expression provides extra information or commentary in the middle of a sentence. A parenthetical element, however, often sounds more

obviously "speech-like" and interjectory. Use a pair of commas to set off a parenthetical element.

Examples:

- *The candidate, much to the committee's surprise, voluntarily revealed her positions on several key controversies.*
- *The question has, incidentally, since become moot.*

COMMAS WITH MULTIPLE ADJECTIVES

When you use more than one descriptive word (adjective) to describe something (a noun), ask yourself whether the adjectives work independently to describe the noun, or if they build on each other and work together to describe the noun.

One way to tell is to reverse the order of the adjectives. If you can reverse the order and the meaning stays the same, the adjectives are working independently and should be separated by a comma. If you reverse the order and it doesn't make sense, the adjectives are working together and should not be separated by a comma.

Another test is to put "and" between the adjectives. If you can do that and retain the meaning, the adjectives are working independently and need a comma between them. If inserting "and" between the adjectives changes the meaning, the adjectives are working together and shouldn't be separated from each other by a comma.

If multiple adjectives before a noun work independently, use a comma between them. If they work together, don't.

Examples of adjectives working independently:

- *An open, exploratory, and inclusive spirit marked the meeting.*

   Test: *An open **and** exploratory **and** inclusive spirit marked the meeting.*
- *A direct, conversational tone made the instructions easy to understand.*

   Test: *A conversational, direct tone made the instructions easy to understand.*

Examples of adjectives working together:

- *Local health officials recently released guidelines for dealing with avian flu outbreaks.*

   Test: *Health local officials recently released guidelines for dealing with flu avian outbreaks.* **Do not use commas.**
- *A rigid plastic sleeve keeps the component stable.*

   Test: *A rigid **and** plastic sleeve keeps the component stable.* **Do not use a comma.**

COMMAS WITH QUOTATIONS

Use a comma to set off the **attribution** -- the phrase that says who said or wrote a quotation -- from the quotation itself. Notice that the comma goes inside the quotation marks, even if the quotation is a complete sentence and would, if appearing on its own, take a period at the end.

   Examples:
- *"The ballot is stronger than the bullet," writes Abraham Lincoln.*
- *"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies," said Groucho Marx.*

Use a pair of commas to set off the attribution when it appears in the middle of the quotation.

> **Example**: *"In a time of univrsal deceit," writes George Orwell, "telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act."*

Do not replace a question mark or exclamation point in a quotation with a comma.

> **Example**: *"When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?" writes Eleanor Roosevelt.*

Do not use a comma to set off quotations that occupy a subordinate position in a sentence, often signaled by the words **that**, **which**, or **because**.

> **Examples**:
> - *Emphasizing the importance of staying in touch with the populace, James Madison wrote that "a popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or both."*
> - *Participating in a democracy takes a strong stomach because "it requires a certain relish for confusion," writes Molly Ivins.*

COMMAS IN A LIST

Use commas between items in a list when there are three or more. (This rule applies to most academic writing. In newspapers and magazines, the final comma is omitted although doing so can cause confusion.)

Examples:

- *Additional supplies required are a burner, beaker, and safety goggles.*
- *Lakes Superior, Ontario, and Huron reported improvements in water clarity last year.*
- *The position requires expertise in building consensus, formulating policy, and developing long-range goals.*

COMMAS IN DATES, NUMBERS, PERSONAL TITLES, AND ADDRESSES

Use commas to separate the day of the week from month and to set off a year from the rest of the sentence.

> **Examples**:
> - *On December 12, 1890, orders for the arrest of Sitting Bull were sent.*
> - *Graduation is set for May 20, 2006.*

You don't need to use a comma when giving only the month and the year.

> **Example**: *The next presidential election will take place in November 2008.*

Use commas to separate number into groups of three when they are more than four digits long. The comma is optional when the number is four digits long.

> **Examples**:
> - *2,400 (or 2400)*
> - *50,000*
> - *340,000*

Do not use a comma in street addresses or page numbers.

Examples:
- *The table appears on page 1397.*
- *The fire occurred at 5509 Avenida Valencia.*

When following a name with a title, use a comma (if the title is at the end of the sentence) or two (if the title is in the middle of the sentence) to separate the title from the rest of the sentence.

Examples:
- *Paul Hjort, D.C., practices chiropractic medicine in central Minnesota.*
- *Earnings far exceeded projections last quarter, according to Hitomi Masamura, Vice President for Operations.*

Separate each element of an address is with commas. However, do not use a comma before a ZIP or other postal code.

Examples:
- *Bob Dole grew up in Hope, Kansas.*
- *Write to the program advisor at 645 5th Street, Minerton, Indiana 55555.*

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SECTION 2.02.01 • COMMAS

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SECTION 2.02.02 • SEMICOLONS

USE

A semicolon introduces a pause greater than that of a comma but less than that of a period.

To Clarify a Series
> Semicolons separate elements of a series when the items are long or when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas. Example: She leaves a son, Mike Nach, of Arizona; a daughter, Emily Rosa, of Colorado; and a sister, Sara Evans, of Minnesota.

To Link Independent Clauses
> A semicolon joins two independent clauses within one a sentence without the use of a coordinating conjunction. Example: The horse was due for an immunization; the veterinarian administered one today.

Placement with Quotes
> Semicolons should always appear outside quotation marks.

COMMON MISUSES

Some examples of improper use of the semicolon:

- Between a subordinate clause and the rest of the sentence. Example: Unless you are coming home before your curfew**;** don't bother coming home.
- Between an appositive and the word to which it refers. Example: My favorite animal is a parakeet**;** a type of bird.
- To introduce a list. Example: I own these cars**;** a Dodge Stealth, an Acura RSX, and a Geo Storm.

USE

Colons are used to draw attention to certain words. They are used after an independent clause to direct attention to a list, appositive or quotation, between independent clauses when the second clause summarizes or emphasizes the first clause, or after the greeting in a formal letter. Here are some examples:

- **List** *My pets' names include: Lily, Sadie and Nippers.*
- **Appositive** *My mom has three pets: two cats and a dog.*
- **Quotation** *In the words of Homer: "Doh!"*
- **Between independent clauses** *Life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you're going to get.*
- **After salutation** *Dear Sir or Madam:*

COMMON MISUSES

- **Between a verb and its object**

    Example: Some important computer programs are: Word, Excel and Publisher. (Colon is not necessary)
- **Between a preposition and its object**

    Example: My cars of choice consist of: Honda Accord and Ford GT. (Colon is not necessary)
- **After such as, including or for example**

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SECTION 2.02.03 • COLONS

USE

Apostrophes are used to indicate possession and in contractions.

Add an 's when the noun does not end in an "s" (driver's) or when the noun is singular and ends in an "s" (Lois's).

However, if the pronunciation of a word would be awkward with the "s" added, it is acceptable not to use the extra "s".

If the noun is plural and ends in "s", you don't need to add an apostrophe (diplomas' instead of diplomas's).

Joint Possession

If there is a compound noun, add the possessive apostrophe to the last noun.

Example: *I went to see Anthony and Geroge's new apartment.* (The apartment belongs to both Anthony and George.)

If the compound noun indicates individual possession, add the apostrophe to both nouns.

Example: *Mary's and Brian's sense of style was quite different.* (Mary and Brian have individual senses of style.)

Compund Nouns

If a compound noun uses dashes, place the apostrophe after the last nouns.

Example: *My brother-in-law's house*

COMMON MISUSES

- Do not use apostrophes in nouns that are not possessive. Example: Some parent's are more strict than mine. (Apostrophe is not necessary)
- Do not use an apostrophe in possessive pronouns such as its, whose, his, her, ours, your and theirs.

SECTION 2.02.05 • QUOTATION MARKS

USE

Quotations are used to mark direct quotes. This is to give the original writer or speaker credit for their work. If you are paraphrasing, you do not need quotation marks.

- If you are using a long quotation (long is constituted by 4 or more typed lines), instead of quotation marks, you should indent the quotation. If the quote is two or more paragraphs, indent the first line of the paragraphs an additional five spaces (plus the indent of the rest of the quote). When indenting to quote, you do not need to use quotation marks.
- If your quote has a quote within it, the inner quote needs one quotation mark and the outer quote needs two quotation marks.
- Use quotation marks around the titles of short works such as newspapers and magaizne articles, poems, short stories, songs and chapters.
- Periods and commas should be placed inside the quotation marks. Colons and Semicolons should be placed outside the quotation marks. Question marks and exclamation points should be placed inside the quotation marks, unless the punctuation applies to the whole sentence (not just the quote).
- You can set off words by using quotation marks instead of italicizing or underlining them.

USING QUOTED MATERIAL WITHIN YOUR OWN WRITING

- If a quotation is introduced formally, use a colon.
- If a quotation is being with "he said" or "she said", use a comma.
- If a quotation is blended into the writer's sentence, you can use a comma, although no punctuation may be more appropriate.
- If a quotation is used at the beginning of a sentence, use a comma after the quote unless the quote ends in a question mark or exclamation point.
- If you choose to break up the quotation with your own words, use commas to off set the quotation from your explanation.

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SECTION 2.02.05 • QUOTATION MARKS

DASH

A dash is used to mark an interuption in a sentence. These are often used in the same way that parenthesis are used.

> Example: Three unlikely companions -- a canary, an eagle, and a parrot -- flew by my window in an odd flock.

WIDTH DIFFERENCE

Notice that the dash is actually like two dashes. This is because a dash (or em-dash) is the width of the letter m. Hyphens (or en-dashes) are the width of the letter n. This difference makes the two easier to tell apart.

HYPHEN

A hyphen joins two parts of a compound word.

> Example: semi-colon, half-back.

Hyphens can also be used to make compound words more understandable. Consider these words:

- Man-eating dog
- Man eating dog

The first example describes a particular type of dog (man-eating, as in the dog eats men) is used as an adjective mdoifying the noun ('dog') and a past participle ('eating'). The second example says that a dog is eating a man.

WHAT DO PARENTHESES DO?

Parentheses can be used to enclose an interjected, explanatory, or qualifying remark, mathematical quantities, etc. The words placed inside the brackets are not necessary for the interrupted sentence to be complete.

Setting off incidental/accompanying information

Examples:
1. Be sure to call me (extension 2104) when you get this message.
2. Copyright affects how much regulation is enforced (Lessig 2004).

Enclose numbers and letters that label items listed in a sentence

Capitalize means to use uppercase for the first letter of a word.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- **Proper nouns**: Capitalize nouns that are the unique identification for a particular person, place or thing.

  Example: Michael, Minnesota, North America.

- **Proper names**: Capitalize common nouns such as party only when they are part of the full name for the person, place or thing.

  Example: Democratic Party. They would be lowercase.
  Example: The party. They are also lowercased when being used in a plural setting.
  Example: The democratic and Republican parties.

- **Sentences**: Capitalize the first word of every sentence including quoted statements and direct questions.

- **Composition**: Capitalize the main words in the names of books, movies, plays, poems, operas, songs, radio and television programs, etc.

  Example: Family Guy.

- **Titles**: Capitalize formal titles only when used in front of a name, not when used after the name.

  Example: Associate Professor John Doe / John Doe, associate professor.

- **Academic titles**: Capitalize and spell out formal titles only when they precede a name.

  Example: Chancellor David Nachriener.

Section 3.01 • Know your patterns

Getting your grammar and punctuation right in your writing is easier than you think! That's because, for the most part, writers don't make every mistake. Instead, we tend to make a few of the same mistakes multiple times, such as always missing the comma after an introductory clause, or usually forgetting to match up our nouns and pronouns in the right way. This means that you don't have to worry about learning every grammar and punctuation rule; chances are, you follow most of them already. This allows you then to focus only on the mistakes you make habitually — and often a writing instructor or writing center tutor can help you identify what those are. Once you know what they are, it's a matter of making sure you understand how to find those errors when editing your own writing and how to correct them.

"It is perfectly okay to write garbage — as long as you edit brilliantly." **--C.J. Cherryh, science fiction and fantasy writer**

Don't worry about having to memorize the grammar and punctuation rules you need to implement or learning them so deeply that you'll never again make certain errors. Both of these things usually come in time, but what's most important when you're first diving into the world of punctuation and grammar are these two habits:

- **Leaving time to edit at the sentence level after you've finished drafting.** The best writers don't write error-free; rather, the best writers edit their work.
- **Having and consulting resources when correcting your mistakes.** Why do you think there are hundreds of writer's handbooks online and at the bookstore?! It's precisely because writers of every stripe make mistakes in grammar and punctuation and need to frequently (and repeatedly) look up the answers. You may internalize the rules for using a colon after you've looked them up twenty-nine times — or you may not, so your handbook might just start falling open to that page. That's just fine; the important thing is having a handy place to look up rules when you're editing.

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Section 3.01 • Know your patterns

Section 3.02 • Homonyms

Homonyms can be tricky to figure out! The following examples of common homonym mistakes prove that spell-check can only go so far in helping to error proof your document.

Affect, Effect

- **Affect** can be only a verb, usually meaning to influence; (an easy way to remember this is that 'affect' starts with an "a", as does 'action'!)

- **Effect** can be both a noun and a verb, although is most common as a noun meaning result. 'Effect' used as a verb means to bring about, normally to bring about some kind of change.
  - Example: The game will **affect** the standings. The **effect** was overwhelming. I managed to **effect** a change in his behavior.

Afterward, Afterwards

- Use afterward only.

Aid, Aide

- **Aid** is assistance.
- **Aide** is a person who serves or offers assistance.
  - Example: "The **aide** will **aid** the victim."

It's, Its

- **It's** is a contraction, short for either **It is** or **It has**.
- **Its** is the possessive form of **it**. This usually means that the following noun phrase belongs to 'it'. It is important to recognise that 'its' the possessive form does not have an apostrophe - it is in the same category as 'his'.
  - Example: "**It's** (It is) my dog." "The computer crashed a few minutes ago, and **it's** (it has) done it again!" "What is **its** name?"

Lay, Lie

- **Lay** is the action word.
- **Lie** is the state of being or a telling someone something untruthful on purpose.
  - Example: "I will **lay** the book on the desk."
  - Example: "I plan to **lie** in bed most of Saturday."
  - Example: "Jim will probably **lie** to get out of being punished for breaking the window."

To, Too, Two

Figuring out which of these three forms have stumped more than one person! You can find a quick was to tell them apart below:
- **To** is generally used to describe a relationship between things.
  - Example: "Matt is going **to** the doctor." "This gift is **to** you." "It is ten minutes **to** seven."
- **Too** is usually used when you are describing an excess or is used when noting

something is *in addition*
- Example: "I usually eat **too** much on Thanksgiving." or "Joe cleaned the house, washed the car, and mowed the lawn **too**.

- **Two** is the word you use for the number **2**.
  - Example: "You have **two** minutes left before class starts."

Remember that just because two words don't have the same meaning just because they sound the same. If you are ever in doubt which one to use, check your dictionary.

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SECTION 3.02 • HOMONYMS

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SECTION 3.03 • SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

EXAMPLES

- **Singular**: *The **whale**, which doesn't mature sexually until six or seven years old and which has only one calf per year, **is** at risk for extinction because **it reproduces** so slowly.*
- **Plural**: ***During election season, several civic** groups sponsor **public debates in which** candidates present **their views and audience** members ask **questions**.*
- **Singular**: ***Digging** a few inches into the dunes, even at 750 feet above the valley floor, **reveals** wet sand.*
- **Plural**: *The **dunes comprise** small **rocks** and dry, sandy **soil** that constantly **form** strange designs under the ever-present wind.*

WHAT IS SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT?

Subject-verb agreement is something most native speakers know pretty automatically, but we can make mistakes when writing, especially when several words separate a particular subject and verb. As you can see in the following examples, "of" phrases can be misleading, too. The trick is to find the "root" noun: the one actually performing the action of the verb.

EXAMPLES

- ***Characteristics** of the middle child often **include** an equitable temperament and high feelings of security and self-esteem.*
- *The opportunity **cost** of loaning out the funds **is** usually reflected in the interest rate.*
- *A certain **percentage** of the cars produced by major manufacturers **meets** stricter emission standards in order for the company to sell their products in regulated regions.*

OTHER GUIDELINES

Other guidelines for making subjects and verbs agree include:

- Noncount nouns — those that don't have a singular or plural form, such as *furniture, baggage, poetry, melancholy* — take a singular verb.
- Two or more singular nouns joined by an "and" take a plural verb: *A timely, relevant **topic** and an **environment** of trust **produce** a good class discussion.*
- When two nouns differing in number are joined by "or," the verb should take the form of the noun closest to it: *Most viewers of the painting assume that either the monkey's **antics** or the handler's **chagrin** causes the young men's laughter.*

If you struggle with problems in subject-verb agreement, leave time to edit your paper once through just for that error: go through each sentence, underlining each subject and verb pair and checking that they agree.

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SECTION 3.03 • SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

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Section 3.04 • Noun-Pronoun Agreement

Rules

Pronouns (words such as *it*, *her*, *them*, *this*, *someone*, *who*, *him*, *they*, *themselves*, *herself*, etc.) replace specific nouns (persons, places, or things) so you don't have to keep repeating them. Like subjects and verbs, pronouns and nouns need to agree in "**number**": in whether they are singular or plural. They also need to agree in **gender**: masculine, feminine, or inclusive (both).

Errors in noun-pronoun agreement usually simply result from writing quickly and not editing closely enough. Three specific instances, though, can cause problems:

1. The nouns *each*, *either*, *neither*, and *one* are all singular and take singular pronouns.
2. When using singular nouns that refer to both sexes or for which the gender is not known, use both masculine and feminine prounouns together (*him or her, he or she, himself or herself, his or her*) or rewrite the sentence to make the noun and the pronoun both plural.
3. Some nouns can be either singular or plural: *audience*, *group*, *team*, *unit*, *class*, and others. Use a singular or plural pronoun depending on whether you intend to indicate a single mass or a collective of individuals.

Examples

- Every one of the studies indicated ~~their~~ **its** methodology.
- Neither Jackson nor Juarez believed ~~they~~ **he** had been represented unfairly.
- Each researcher included a control group with ~~their~~ ~~his~~ **his or her** test group.
- By 1999, the lacrosse team had outgrown ~~their~~ **its** space.

Section 3.05 • Missing Comma

Rules

When you begin a sentence with a word or group of words that provides some background, introductory, or otherwise preliminary information, put a comma between this word or phrase and the rest of your sentence. The comma here tells your reader to pause, take the background information into consideration, and get ready to move on to the main part of the sentence.

To help you recognize places in your sentences where you are missing commas after introductory clauses, read your writing out loud. Chances are good you'll naturally pause after introductory phrases. You can also check the beginning of each sentence to look for words or phrases that add information about time, place, or manner or for words that serve as transitions; these are all common introductory elements.

Examples

Incorrect: Before the budget passed several lawmakers filibustered to stop it.
Correct: Before the budget passed, several lawmakers filibustered to stop it.

Incorrect: However supporters saw the legislation through.
Correct: However, supporters saw the legislation through.

Learn more under "Commas after introductory elements" here.

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Section 3.05 • Missing Comma

SECTION 3.06 • SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Sentence fragments. Might sound good at first! More trustworthy. Because they're simple. Not trying to complicate things. Like when a sentence goes on and on. Making you lose track of the ideas. Not like straight talk.

We use fragments constantly when talking, emailing, IMing: They save time and space and sound "natural." Advertisements frequently use them to draw attention to key concepts. In academic writing, however, all but the most occasional use of fragments is considered inappropriate: too folksy, too speech-like.

There are a number of grammar-technical ways to recognize fragments, but **the best way to find them in your writing is to read your work out loud**. Listen for any sentences that may end in a period or other end punctuation but seem to leave you hanging, as if you want to say, "Well ... ? Now what? Go on, finish it up!" The end punctuation may tell you to express "ending" (our voice usually falls when we're reading out loud and get to a period), but the thought won't be finished.

Try reading the following paragraph out loud and seeing if you can pick out the fragments -- that is, the sentences that seem to leave you hanging.

> *Getting published is simultaneously one of the most exhilarating and taxing goals writers writers can set for themselves. Calling for equal parts patience and persistence. It is often a team effort among several players. Such as, the writer, perhaps an agent, friends and peers who will edit and respond to the work, and previously published writers who can provide advice. Another tension writers must negotiate when pursuing publication is audience appeal and personal integrity to one's work. What is often called "being true to oneself." Because getting published calls on writers to be flexible yet unique at the same time.*

As you can see in the revised version below, **fixing fragments** is usually a matter of

- hooking up the fragment to the sentence before or after it (whichever one it seems to relate to), often using a comma, colon, or em dash;
- adding the missing actor (noun) or action (verb); or
- fleshing out the thought to express what was previously not "spelled out."

*Getting published is simultaneously one of the most exhilarating and taxing goals writers writers can set for **themselves, calling** for equal parts patience and persistence. It is often a team effort among several **players, such as** the writer, perhaps an agent, friends and peers who will edit and respond to the work, and previously published writers who can provide advice. Another tension writers must negotiate when pursuing publication is audience appeal and personal integrity to one's **work: what** is often called "being true to oneself." Because getting published calls on writers to be flexible yet unique at the same **time, it can be the most challenging yet most rewarding experience writers undertake**.*

SECTION 3.07 • MISSING APOSTROPHES

For such a little piece of punctuation, the apostrophe is really noticeable when it's used wrong. And, there seems to be a lot of confusion about how it's used: a casual look at ads, signs, and other everyday writing reveals a wildly exotic sprinkling of apostrophes in all kinds of places. That's why mastering the apostrophes' uses can really bolster your credibility in writing: so many people get them wrong!

The main thing to know is that **apostrophes' primary jobs are to form possessives and to stand in for missing letters in a contraction**. Apostrophes are only *very* rarely used to form plurals.

You use possessive forms when you want to indicate ownership, or "belonging to." **Possessives are almost always formed by adding an apostrophe and an "s" to the end of a noun (a person, place, or thing).** In contrast, **plurals** are usually formed by adding an "s" or "es" to the end of a noun *without* an apostrophe.

Examples
Possessives use apostrophes.
The amendment's language clarifies the terms left undefined in the original law. "language" belongs to "amendment"; "terms" is plural
A review of the month's headlines reveals nine front-page pieces about the local school board election. "headlines" belongs to "month"; "headlines" and "pieces" are plural
Sara Jones' study of language use and class is considered a classic in the field. "study" belongs to "Jones"; the apostrophe moves to the end because the noun ends in "s"

Plurals do not take apostrophes.
*Three key **ideas** emerged in the introduction.*
*The organization was restructured after **decades** of poor performance.*
*All **animals** have an innate evolutionary drive to pass along **genes** to offspring.*

But **plurals that are also possessive do use apostrophes**. Notice how the position of the apostrophe moves depending on whether the plural ends with "s" or not.
*The book traces the **Kennedys'** influence on national politics.*
*The library science degree offers a special emphasis in **children's** literature.*
*The board changes the policy after the **stakeholders'** objections.*

Apostrophes are also used to stand in for missing letters in a contraction.

Examples
*The conclusion **doesn't [does not]** follow from the evidence.*
*Remove the test tubes from the sterilizer when the **cycle's [cycle is]** finished.*
*This committee will file a final report when **we're [we are]** done with the applications.*

Do not use an apostrophe to form the plurals of numbers or acronyms.

Examples

1980**s**
eight**s**
three CEO**s**
these JPEG**s**

Section 3.08 • Tense Shifts

WHAT IS A TENSE SHIFT?

Verbs are action words. "Tense" refers to the time when an action takes place: past, present, or future. Necessary tense shifts simply make it clear to your reader when actions have taken, are taking, or will take place. When you "shift tense unnecessarily," however, it means you change the times when actions are taking place within a chunk of text in a way that doesn't seem to make sense. Notice how the tense changes cause confusion in the following examples.

EXAMPLES OF CONFUSING TENSE SHIFTS

- *In February 2003, the Sefton City Council **passed** an ordinance that **limited** the number of dogs city residents **could keep** on their property to three. Several residents **objected** and formally **petitioned** the council to repeal the ordinance, but the council **upheld** it. Their reasoning **is** that having more than three dogs **creates** potentially dangerous situations. In November 2004, however, changes in the Council's membership **resulted** in the ordinance being **repealed**.*
- *While St. Cloud **struggles** with keeping rental housing from dominating the housing market, other communities in central Minnesota **undertook** several initiatives to build more apartments and condominiums.*

The best way to find unnecessary tense shifts is to read a piece of writing through one time just looking for tense and asking yourself whether each verb tense accurately reflects the time period it took place, takes place, or will take place in. Start by using a highlighter to mark each verb, and then ask yourself if the "time" is correct for each one.

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SECTION 3.08 • TENSE SHIFTS

SECTION 3.09 • RUN-ON SENTENCES

WHAT IS A RUN-ON SENTENCE?

While a run-on sentence might just seem to be the type of sentence that goes on and on without a clear point, the technical grammatical definition of a run-on sentence is one that "runs together" two or more independent clauses (basically, clauses that express a complete thought and could stand on their own as full sentences) without punctuation to separate them. They may have nothing between them, or they may have a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, but, for, so yet) between them but not the comma that needs to accompany the coordinating conjunction when separating two independent clauses.

You can often find run-on sentences in your work by reading it aloud. The run-on sentences will trip you up: you'll want to pause or otherwise come to some sort of end when you hit the end of an independent clause, but a run-on, with its lack of punctuation, doesn't signal you to do that. Try reading the following examples of run-on sentences out loud, and notice where two clauses seem to collide:

EXAMPLES OF RUN-ON SENTENCES

- *Every day, millions of children go to daycare with millions of other kids there is no guarantee that none of them are harboring infectious conditions.*
- *Many daycares have strict rules about sick children needing to stay away until they are no longer infectious but enforcing those rules can be very difficult.*
- *Daycare providers often undergo extreme pressure to accept a sick child "just this once" the parent has no other care options and cannot miss work.*

FIXING RUN-ON SENTENCES

Once you find a run-on sentence and notice where the two independent clauses "collide," you can then decide on how best to separate the clauses:

- You can make two complete sentences by inserting a period; this is the strongest level of separation.
- You can use a semicolon between the two clauses if they are of equal importance, and you want your reader to consider the points together.
- You can use a semicolon with a transition word to indicate a specific relation between the two clauses.
- You can use a coordinating conjunction and a comma, also to indicate a relationship.
- Or, you can add a word to one clause to make it dependent.

EXAMPLES OF FIXED RUN-ON SENTENCES

Notice how the sentences above have been punctuated in the following examples.

- *Every day, millions of children go to daycare with millions of other **kids. There** is no guarantee that none of them are harboring infectious conditions.*
- *Many daycares have strict rules about sick children needing to stay away until they are no longer **infectious; however**, enforcing those rules can be very difficult.*
- *Many daycares have strict rules about sick children needing to stay away until they are no longer **infectious, but** enforcing those rules can be very difficult.*
- *Daycare providers often undergo extreme pressure to accept a sick child "just this once" **because** the parent has no other care options and cannot miss work.*

Learn more under "commas with two independent clauses" here.

FUSED SENTENCES

"Fused sentence" is another name for "run-on."

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SECTION 3.09 • RUN-ON SENTENCES

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Section 3.10 • Disruptive Commas

Disruptive commas are simply those that aren't needed -- those that "disrupt" the flow of the sentence. Here are some guidelines about places where you *don't* need to use commas.

Don't put a comma between a noun and the action it's doing, even when several words come between them.

> Most organic **compounds** / **contain** oxygen, nitrogen, and halogens.
> In the Islamic bayaa ceremony, prominent **citizens** / **pledge** allegiance to a newly elected leader.
> A **visit** to The City Museum's exhibit on the origins of photography , **provided** an inspiring start to the class.

Don't put a comma before these words unless there is an independent clause on each side

> and, or, but, for, so, nor, yet.
> The town was first settled in 1865 / and incorporated in 1868.
> The study sample was the correct size / but insufficiently diversifed.
> The Australian conductor Richard Bonynge was born in Sydney / and returned there after studying in London.

Don't put a comma before a list.

> The neighborhood contains several examples of classic mid-century architecture, including // the Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and Kennedy homes.
> The recommended treatment focuses on changes in diet, such as / increased fiber, less fat, and fewer processed foods.
> The group of benefits considered standard is made up of / health insurance, disability insurance, and a retirement account.

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SECTION 3.10 • DISRUPTIVE COMMAS

SECTION 3.11 • DANGLING MODIFIERS

WHAT IS A DANGLING MODIFIER?

A common way to save words and combine ideas is by starting a sentence with a phrase that provides additional information about an element in the sentence without having to make a whole separate sentence to say it. In the following example, notice how three choppy sentences condense into one smoother sentence with the use of such an opening phrase, which is called a modifier:

- **Original**: *The Student Council exists to represent students to the faculty and administration. It also oversees student organizations. The Student Council plays an important role in campus life.*
- **Rewrite**: *Responsible for representing students to the faculty and administration and overseeing student organizations, the Student Council plays an important role in campus life.*

Here are some other examples of sentences that begin with a phrase providing this sort of additional information:

- *An example of bottom of the pyramid targeting, microcredit ventures lend small amounts of money to those with minimal assets.*
- *Found in tropical southern Asia, the Asian Koel belongs to the cuckoo order of birds.*
- *After completing the experiment, the most bacteria appeared in the scraping taken from the drinking fountain.*

Notice something odd about the last one? The modifier -- "After completing the experiment" -- doesn't match what follows it: The *bacteria* didn't complete the experiment (presumably, a researcher did)! The rule for using modifiers at the beginning of a sentence is that **the thing being modified must immediately follow the modifier**. Sometimes this requires you to rearrange the sentence; other times you have to "spell out" what is being modified if you didn't include it.

EXAMPLES

- **Dangling modifier**: *Covering most of Minnesota, the illustration showed the glacier that left the state with its thousands of lakes.*
- **Corrected**: *Covering most of Minnesota, the glacier left the state with its thousands of lakes, as depicted on the illustration.*
- **Dangling modifier**: *Trekking across the desert, fierce winds swirled around the riders.*
- **Corrected**: *Trekking acorss the desert, the riders were assaulted by fierce winds.*
- **Dangling modifier**: *First coined in 1980, historian Linda Kerber used the term "republican motherhood" to describe a phenomenon occurring after the Revolutionary War in which women were encouraged to promote the ideals of liberty and democracy to their children.*
- **Corrected**: *First coined in 1980, the term "republican motherhood" was used by historian Linda Kerber to describe a phenomenon occurring after the Revolutionary War in which women were encouraged to promote the ideals of liberty and democracy to their children.*

SECTION 4.01 • CITATION

OVERVIEW OF CITATION

The Modern Language Association (MLA) style of writing is one of the most common writing systems in the educational systems. Most students learn first how to write using the MLA format in elementary school.

What you need to remember are these three aspects when making sure that you are writing according to the MLA format:

- Making a thesis
- Plagiarism
- Citing outside sources

Making a thesis

Your thesis is a short summary of your writing piece. It's basically your central idea that you form everything around. In MLA, the thesis will usually be at the end of your first or second paragraph, depending on how long your introduction is. At first, thesis' are sometime hard to come up with. It's hard to only use one or two sentnces to summarize what you're going to write about. However, your thesis is one of the most important aspects of your writing piece because it let's the reader know what they are about to read. It will also help you organize and develop your paper more thoughtfully.

Here is an example of a introduction paragraph, including the thesis at the end:

> Rachel Carson's book Silent Spring has a very persuasive style, especially her chapter, "Needless Havoc." To push her views about the environment and the application of insecticides, Carson utilizes storytelling, sarcasm, emotional appeal, and graphic details to persuade us. All of these things make her argument stronger than most. (Stephanie Wolf; WA#6)

The paragraph above is an example of using two thesis sentences. The first sentence sets up the order in which the author will write. The next paragraph will most likely be about something having to do with storytelling, the next paragraph about emotional appeal and so on. The second thesis sentence sets up how the writer will use each paragraph. The author will argue how each topic in the first thesis sentence will strengthen Rachel Carson's argument.

CITING OUTSIDE SOURCES

Any time you use information that you paraphrase, summerize, or quote from another source, you must give the author or the publication proper credit. Failure to do so is considered plagerism.

Plagerism can be avoided by using **paranthetical citations** within the text of your paper or essay and by using a **works cited** list at the end of your paper or essay.

Paranthetical Citations

Paranthetical Citations serve to inform your reader of where you found the data or quotation you are providing to them. Generally, author's or editor's name and the page number where found your information are what should be included in your paranthetical citation if you are using more than one source. If you are only using a single source, simply using the page number is sufficient.

Paranthetical (or In-Text) Citation Example

> Hemmingway's arguments against oil drilling in Alaska continued to intensify in his later life. In a 1949 visit to members of Congress, Hemmingway repeatedly reported of the natural beatuy that would be destroyed by exploring for oil in Alaska (Booth 216). Later that year, Hemmingway went on to request, and to be granted, an audience with the President where he shared a multitude of research against drilling (Goodview 98). Hemmingway, along with countless other supporters, continued to call upon legislators from both sides of the aisle until the idea of Alaskan oil exploration was naught, or so they thought. "It is a victory for all the inhabitants of the earth that the State of Alaska's natural beauty, wonder, and habitat will remain unharmed by human greed so that our children and grandchildren and generations after them will be able to catch a glimpse of an unspoiled planet" (Chandler 143). The idea of an unspoiled planet was, unfortunately, realtively short lived.

How to Cite Your Outside Sources

To avoid plagiarism and to give proper credit to the source where you learned your information or took your quote, it is necessary to not only provide the parenthetical (or in-text) citation but also to provide a list where your readers can go to check the information you provide for themselves. The place to do all of this is in your Works Cited page, which is usually found at the end of your essay or research paper.

To write your works cited list, follow the steps below.

1. Start a new page for your list, and center the words "Works Cited" at the top of the page.
2. Number this page in continuation of the pages in your essay or research work.
3. Start each entry flush with the left margin. Indent any subsequent lines five (5) spaces.
4. Alphabetize your sources by the author's last name or by using the information provided below.

Books - one author
a. Author - List author by last name, (comma) first name.
b. Title - Underline title and subtitle. Capatilize any major words even if not officially capatilized in the book's title.
c. Publication Information - Provide the city of publication and the state code if the city is unfamiliar, followed by a : (colon)- a space and the shortened version of the publisher's name (Penguin for The Penguin Press - a , (comma) and the year of publication.

Johnson, Steven. <u>Everything Bad is Good for You</u>. New York: Penguin, 2005.

Books - two or three authors
a. Authors - List the first author last name first. Then list the name (s) of the subsequent author(s) in normal order, with a , (comma) between the names and a ,and (comma and) before the last author.
b. Follow the remaining steps as you would with one author.

Caldwell, Ian, and Dustin Thomason. <u>The Rule of Four</u>. New York:

---. Dial, 2004.

Books - four or more authors

a. Authors - Give the first author listed on the title page, followed by a , (comma) and "et. al."

b. Follow the remaining steps as you would with one author.

Pilot, John, et al. <u>A Lifetime of Success</u>. Minneapolis: Grey Wolf, 2005.

Books - corporate author

a. Give the name of the group listed on the title page as the author even if the same group published the book.

b. Follow the remaining steps as you would with one author.

National Multiple Sclerosis Society. <u>Dealing with MS: a Guide for the Newly Diagnosed</u>. Los Angeles: National Multiple Sclerosis Soc., 2000.

Books - unknown author

a. Start the entry with the titl, and list alphabetically by the first major word of the title.

b. Follow the remaining steps as you would with one author.

<u>Time Life Treasury of Letters</u>. New York: Harvard UP, 1976.

Books - two or more by the same author(s)

a. arrange entries alphabetically by title.

b. list the name(s) of the author in the first enty, but in subsequent entries, us three hyphens followed by a period.

Tims, James. <u>What Went Right for Republicans in 2004</u>. New Orleans: Wave, 2004.

---. <u>What Went Wrong for Democrats in 2004</u>. New Orleans: Wave, 2004.

Books - editor or editors

a. treat as you would an author, but add a comma "ed." for (or "eds." for more than one) editor.

b. Follow the remaining steps as you would with one author.

Pemberton, Michael A., and Joyce Kinkead. <u>The Center Will Hold: Critical</u>

---. <u>Perspectives on Writing Center Scholarship</u>. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2003.

Website

a. give the authors name (if known) last name followed by first name.

b. list the full title of the work in quotation marks.

c. list the complete works title (if applicable)in itallics.

d. give any version or file number.

e. give the date of the document's last revision.

f. finally, list http: and give the full URL address

Schanaansberg, Arthur. "Hurricane Katrina 2005". *What is Happening as a Result of the Greenhouse Effect*. November 6, 2005. http://en.geowarming.org/recent_disasters

Works Cited Example

Works Cited

Allyn, Fredrick. <u>The Effect of Monopolies on Economies Throughout the World</u>. Hartford:
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<u>How Did We Get Here: Economic Analysis of Carter through G.W.</u>.
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Urbanski, Jenny and Helen Carter. <u>How We Continue Competing</u>. Chicago: Tribune, 2003.

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SECTION 4.01 • CITATION

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SECTION 4.02 • PLAGIARISM

OVERVIEW OF PLAGIARISM

According to dictionary.com, plagiarism is defined as the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another. There are three different conventions in writing in which you must provide reference.

- When you use someone elses ideas, such as when I gave the description of plagiarism, you should cite the source.
- When the way in which you are using a source is unclear to the reader, make it clear.
- Acknowledge any help you recieve from someone on writing the paper.

Citing your sources is easy, do it and save yourself from getting in a lot of trouble.

EXAMPLES OF PLAGIARISM

Take the following passage from Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual.* New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004, page 115:

> *Your research paper is a collaboration between you and your sources. To be fair and ethical, you must acknowledge your debt to the writers of those sources. If you don't, you are guilty of plagiarism, a serious academic offense. Three different acts are considered plagiarism:*
> - *failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas,*
> - *failing to enclose borrowed langauge in quotation marks, and*
> - *failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words.*

If you wrote something in your paper such as this:

> *When writing a research paper it is important to acknowledge your debt to the writers of those sources. It is a collaboration between you and your sources. Failure to not acknowledge your sources is an act of plagiarism.*

and did not put any reference to Hacker, it would be plagiarism. The proper way to use the work would be this:

> *Diana Hacker stresses how important it is "to acknowledge your debt to the writers" of sources you use in your writing. She states that your paper "is a collaboration between you and your sources". "failure to not acknowledge your sources is an act of plagiarism" (Hacker, 115).*

It is also important to not only cite your sources in your work but also include a detailed reference to the work at the end of your paper on the works cited page. An example for the previous source is below:

> Hacker, Diana. <u>A Pocket Style Manual</u>. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

Rules to Avoid Plagiarism

The following rules are taken from Rosen, Leonard. *The Academic Writer's Handbook: Instructor's Copy.* 2006, pages 122-124.

- When quoting another writer, use quotation marks and give credit.
- When restating the ideas of others in your words, give credit.
- Avoid using words, phrases, or sentence structures from the original source.

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