CU Write: Cameron Composition

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EDITED BY CARIE SCHNEIDER

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Contents

Introduction 1
Carie Schneider

Composition Courses at Cameron 3
Carie Schneider

The Center for Writers & Other CU Tutoring Help vii
Rachel Mozingo and Faith Huston

Online Citation & Style Guides & Other Helpful Links x

Part I. BASIC SKILLS

1. So You've Got a Writing Assignment. Now What? 15
Corrine E. Hinton
2. Adopt Effective Writing Habits 34
Joseph M. Moxley
3. Active Reading 45
Brogan Sullivan
4. Annotating the Margins 50
Jennifer Janechek
5. Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources 53
Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources
Karen Rosenberg

6. Working Through Revision: Rethink, Revise, Reflect 67
Rethink, Revise, Reflect
Megan McIntyre
7. Reorganizing Drafts 78
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
8. APA & MLA Citation & Documentation 92
Excelsior Online Writing Lab and Carie Schneider

Part II. Style

9. Academic Language vs. Colloquial Language 179
Brianna Jerman
10. Making Sure Your Voice is Present 185
Kyle D. Stedman
11. Writing Concisely 197
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
12. Flow 205
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
13. Style 216
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Part III. Mechanics

14. Getting the Mechanics Right 233
Amy Guptill

15. Fragments and Run Ons 253
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
16. Quotations 262
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
17. Punctuation 281
Jenifer Kurtz

Part IV. Elements

18. The Guiding Idea and Argumentative Thesis Statement 317
Rhonda Dietrich
19. Introductions 324
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
20. Paragraph Development 334
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
21. Transitions 345
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
22. Conclusions 352
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Part V. NARRATIVE

23. Storytelling, Narration, and the "Who I Am" Story 361
Catherine Ramsdell

24. Employing Narrative in an Essay 382
Allison Wise
25. "I need you to say 'I'": Why First Person Is Important in College Writing 386
Kate McKinney Maddalena
26. In The Moment: A Write-from-Experience Activity 401
Jason Wirtz

Part VI. CRITICAL THINKING

27. Critical Thinking in College Writing: From the Personal to the Academic 409
Gita DasBender
28. How To Read Like a Writer 427
Mike Bunn
29. Formulating a Thesis 447
Andrea Scott
30. Synthesis Notes: Working With Sources to Create a First Draft 455
Erika Szymanski

Part VII. RHETORIC

31. Why Study Rhetoric? or, What Freestyle Rap Teaches Us about Writing 465
Kyle D. Stedman
32. Rhetorical Analysis 473
Elizabeth Browning
33. Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps toward Rhetorical Analysis 494
Laura Bolin Carroll

34. Understanding Visual Rhetoric 512
Jenae Cohn

Part VIII. REFLECTIVE WRITING

35. Reflection Essay 547
Kristen Gay
36. Reflective Writing and the Revision Process: What Were You Thinking? 552
Sandra L. Giles
37. Rhetorical Appeals: A Checklist for Writers 569
Questions for Reflection
Angela Eward-Mangione

Part IX. RESEARCH & WRITING WITH SOURCES

38. Finding and Using Outside Sources 577
Katelyn Burton
39. Assessing Source Credibility for Crafting a Well-Informed Argument 598
Kate Warrington; Natasha Kovalyova; and Cindy King
40. Annoying Ways People Use Sources 620
Kyle D. Stedman
41. Integrating Evidence Appropriately 640
Alexandra W. Watkins

Part X. ARGUMENTATION

42. Argument: Overview 651
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

43. Argument: Components, Vocabulary, Logic, Types of Argument & Fallacies 660
Kirsten Devries

44. Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic? 772
Rebecca Jones

45. Rogerian Argument 801
Joseph M. Moxley

Part XI. PUBLIC & MULTIMEDIA WRITING

46. Digital Footprints: Public Writing and Social Identities 821
Cassandra Branham and Danielle Farrar

47. Navigating Genres 830
Kerry Dirk

48. Visuals Help You Communicate 846
Robin Jeffrey

Part XII. SAMPLE ESSAYS

49. About the CU Composition Essay Contest 855
Carie Schneider

50. Narrative 1 - "The Cantankerously Cruel and Contemporaneously Crude Cameron Catastrophe" 858
Michael Clark

51. Narrative 2 - "A Place Like Pelham" 864
Tdohasan Sunray
52. Critical Thinking Essay 1 - (contextual analysis) - "The American Contradiction" 867
Angie Daniela Briceno
53. Critical Thinking Essay 2 - (cultural analysis) - "Critical Analysis of the Marvel Cinematic Universe" 872
Grace McMullen
54. Critical Thinking Essay 3 - (textual analysis) - "Creative and Engaging: An Analysis of Manuel Muñoz's Essay" 876
Gideon Gish
55. Critical Thinking Essay 4 - (compare and contrast) - "Janet Jackson vs. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter: Voices of a Generation of Minorities in America" 881
DeRoin Motah
56. Rhetorical Analysis 1 - "Use of Rhetoric in Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Lecture" 890
V. Ware
57. Rhetorical Analysis 2 - "Limitations on Imagination" 897
Allyson Taylor
58. Controversy Analysis 1 - "Sex Education in Schools" 902
Lauren Buben
59. Controversy Analysis 2 - "Compulsory Military Service in the United States" 907
Zanden Dyke
60. Annotated Bibliography 1 - The American Dream 911
Emma Englefield

61. Annotated Bibliography 2 - "Are Serial Killers Born or Created?" 917
Scotlyn Koehler
62. Research-Supported Argument 1 - "Paper or Plastic? Neither." 922
Aubrey Hewitt
63. Research-Supported Argument 2 - "Teaching the Next Generation" 928
Sarah Nicole Bashaw
64. Comp II Reflection 1 - "Remix Reflection" 937
Skylar Ramsey
65. Comp II Reflection 3 - "Reflection on an Instagram Post about the Abolition of the Pledge of Allegiance" 940
Isabelle Teague
66. Comp II Reflection 4 - "Reflecting on Promoting Safe Pageantry" 943
Tran Yennhi
67. Comp II Reflection 2 - "Reflection on Rogerian Essay and Proposal Letter" 947
Blake Howard

Links to Additional Readings 951

CARIE SCHNEIDER

This textbook collects writing about writing from scholars and writing programs across the country, organizing this material into sections tailored to the work you'll be doing in composition courses here at Cameron.

Your instructor will probably not assign every single section of this book, but instead will pick and choose the sections most relevant to their individual class. You might be directed to specific chapters or sections of this book from weblinks on Blackboard or in instructional emails from your professor. Or, you might be asked to navigate to the assigned sections using the table of contents.

You can also use this textbook as a reference for your own writing–in your composition courses as well as in other classes where you have writing assignments. The sections on basic skills, style, mechanics, and the elements of an essay are relevant to whatever you're writing, and you might find it useful to browse through those sections on your own as you write and revise essays and reports in any of your classes.

At the end of this introductory section you'll find a collection of resources for writers, which include links and information about Cameron University resources like the Center for Academic Success and the Library, as well as links to web resources for writing tips and those all-important links to style and citation guides.

Because you might not always have access to the internet when you need to read from this textbook, you can also download a PDF or e-reader version of this book so you can access it offline from whatever device. If you need help with this, or with navigating the textbook in any way, talk to your composition instructor. We're here to help (and pretty bored during office hours if y'all don't stop by)!

About the Author

Carie Schneider
DIRECTOR OF COMPOSITION, CAMERON UNIVERSITY

Composition Courses at Cameron

CARIE SCHNEIDER

There are four English composition courses offered at Cameron University. Each course has different goals and outcomes. Understanding the overall goals of your course can help you understand the individual assignments and why you're doing what you're doing. Here's a brief overview of those goals for each course:

Developmental Writing (ENGL 0113)

This class is designed to help you develop your writing skills in order to be prepared for college-level writing assignments. Students who have been out of school for a while, or who didn't have the best preparation in writing skills before enrolling at Cameron, might need to take Developmental Writing to help get ready for the expectations of Comp I and other writing-intensive college courses.

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

- Recognize expectations of college-level reading and writing
- Apply strategies for reading, annotation, and planning/drafting to a variety of assignments
- Compose written texts for specific audiences and purposes
- Integrate material from sources into their own writing with clear attribution
- Revise their writing on both global (organization, ideas, etc.) and local (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) levels

Supplemental Writing Instruction (ENGL 0512)

Supplemental courses are paired with a Comp I (ENGL 1113) course to give you extra time and tips to work on the assignments and skills for Comp I. You'll have the same instructor for your Comp I course and your supplemental course, but work in a smaller group in the supplemental course to prepare for and work through the assignments in Comp I.

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Recognize expectations of college-level reading and writing
- Apply strategies for reading, annotation, and planning/drafting to assignments in ENG 1113
- Compose written texts for specific audiences and purposes
- Integrate material from sources into their own writing with clear attribution
- Revise their writing on both global (organization, ideas, etc.) and local (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) levels

English Composition I (ENGL 1113)

This class is designed to introduce you to the basic skills of college-level writing. You'll work on approaches to writing assignments and how to use critical thinking to read and analyze different kinds of texts and write about and with them. You'll also practice reading and composing different genres of writing as well as how to adapt your writing to different audiences and situations.

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Analyze rhetorical strategies

- Evaluate diverse texts
- Apply genre conventions
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of rhetorical situations

English Composition II (ENGL 1213)

This class builds on the skills you learned in Comp I, especially what you learned about critical thinking and rhetorical analysis. In Comp II, you'll be introduced to academic research skills and how to evaluate and use outside sources. You'll construct arguments for both academic and public contexts and practice supporting those arguments with evidence from research.

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Evaluate research materials
- Construct arguments for academic audiences
- Document sources according to conventions
- Compose and revise texts that synthesize source material with original ideas

College Writing After the Composition Sequence

After you finish your required composition courses, you aren't "done with English"! Instead, you're going to use what you learned in composition in many of your other classes at Cameron — whether that's doing research, writing a report, summarizing results of an experiment, tackling the essay question on an exam, or even just composing an email appropriate to your audience and situation.

What you learn in college composition also helps you outside of school, too! You'll eventually have to evaluate whether something you read on the internet is trustworthy, compose a cover letter for a job application, write a letter to your landlord demanding repairs, send an email to your boss, or just plain figure out the right strategies for communicating in different rhetorical situations. Hopefully the skills you learn in college composition stick with you and continue to help you communicate effectively through writing and words.

About the Author

Carie Schneider

DIRECTOR OF COMPOSITION, CAMERON UNIVERSITY

The Center for Writers & Other CU Tutoring Help

RACHEL MOZINGO AND FAITH HUSTON

The Center for Writers, Center for Academic Success, and Math Lab provides tutoring for all Cameron University students. Our services are free, unlimited, and we conduct appointments in multiple formats including in-person, zoom, e-mail, and phone, if applicable. If you are unsure if we offer tutoring for the class you are struggling in—PLEASE ASK. We can always find some way to help!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Tutoring?

- Tutoring is academic help with specific assignments, papers, or concepts from your classes. Each tutoring appointment is individualized and tailored to fit your needs in the scope of our responsibility. A typical appointment includes a 5-10-minute intake where we assess your needs. With the remaining time, we dive into whatever assignment you are needing help with. Our appointments typically last 45 minutes to an hour. We ask that you come prepared for your appointment with any course materials including your textbook and access to Blackboard.

Do you tutor in [INSERT SUBJECT HERE]?

- Yes! We tutor in all subjects. While we may not have a student tutor who is specialized in the field you are wanting tutoring in, the Center for Academic Success coordinator team will do their best to help!

What are your hours/Where are you located?

- Daytime Hours and Locations
    - o Center for Writers and Academic Success (Tutoring in all subjects except for Math)
        - Location: Nance-Boyer, Room 2060
        - Hours: MTWR 8:00 – 5:00 p.m. & F 8:00 – 3:00 p.m.
        - Contact information: cfw@cameron.edu or 580-581-2932
    - o Math Lab (Tutoring in Math)
        - Location: Math Lab, Room 104
    - Evening Hours and Location
        - o Center for Writers, Center for Academic Success, and Math Lab
            - Location: Library, Room 116
            - Hours: MTWR 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
            - Contact Information: rmozingo@cameron.edu or 580-581-2932

Follow us on Instagram at CU_Tutoring or visit our website at https://www.cameron.edu/office-of-teaching-and-learning/tutoring

About the Authors

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Online Citation & Style Guides & Other Helpful Links

Citation & Style Guides:

MLA Style:

MLA Style at Excelsior OWL: https://owl.excelsior.edu/citation-and-documentation/mla-style/

MLA Style Center: https://style.mla.org

MLA Works Cited: https://style.mla.org/works-cited/citations-by-format/

Formatting a Paper in MLA Style: https://style.mla.org/formatting-papers/

Purdue OWL MLA resources: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html

APA Style:

APA Style Online Handbook: https://apastyle.apa.org

APA Style at Excelsior OWL: https://owl.excelsior.edu/citation-and-documentation/apa-style/

APA Style at Purdue OWL: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

Chicago Manual of Style:

Chicago Manual of Style Online: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html

Chicago Style at Excelsior OWL: https://owl.excelsior.edu/citation-and-documentation/chicago-style/

Chicago Style at Purdue OWL: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/chicago_style_introduction.html

Other Helpful Links:

Other Helpful Links:

Tips & Tools: UNC Chapel Hill Writing Center: https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

Excelsior OWL: https://owl.excelsior.edu

Purdue OWL: https://owl.purdue.edu

Writing Commons: https://writingcommons.org

Grammarly: https://www.grammarly.com

PART I
BASIC SKILLS

1. So You've Got a Writing Assignment. Now What?

CORRINE E. HINTON

It's the first day of the semester and you've just stepped foot into your Intro to American Politics class. You grab a seat toward the back as the instructor enters, distributes the syllabus, and starts to discuss the course schedule. Just before class ends, she grabs a thin stack of papers from her desk and, distributing them, announces, "This is your first writing assignment for the term. It's due two weeks from Thursday, so I suggest you begin early." Your stomach clenches. For some people, a writing assignment causes a little nervous energy, but for you, it's a deep, vomit-inducing fireball that shoots down your body and out your toes. As soon as the assignment sheet hits your hands, your eyes dart wildly about, frantically trying to decipher what you're supposed to do. How many pages is this thing supposed to be? What am I supposed to write about? What's Chicago style? When is it due? You know your instructor is talking about the assignment right now, but her voice fades into a murmur as you busy yourself with the assignment sheet. The sound of shuffling feet interrupts your thoughts; you look up and realize she's dismissed the class. You shove the assignment into your bag, convinced you're doomed before you've even started.

So you've got a writing assignment. Now what? First, don't panic. Writing assignments make many of us nervous, but this anxiety is especially prevalent in first year students. When that first writing assignment comes along, fear, anxiety, avoidance, and even anger are typical responses. However, negative emotional reactions like these can cloud your ability to be rational, and interpreting a writing assignment is a rational activity and a skill. You can learn and

cultivate this skill with practice. Why is learning how to do it so important?

First, you can learn how to manage negative emotional responses to writing. Research indicates emotional responses can affect academic performance "over and above the influence of cognitive ability or motivation" (Pekrun 129). So, even when you have the knowledge or desire to accomplish a particular goal, your fear, anxiety, or boredom can have greater control over how you perform. Anything you can do to minimize these reactions (and potentially boost performance) benefits your personal and intellectual wellness.

Learning to interpret writing assignment expectations also helps encourage productive dialogue between you and your fellow classmates and between you and your instructor. You'll be able to discuss the assignment critically with your peers, ask them specific questions about information you don't know, or compare approaches to essays. You'll also be able to answer your classmates' questions confidently. Many students are too afraid or intimidated to ask their instructors for help, but when you understand an instructor's expectations for an assignment, you also understand the skills being assessed. With this method, when you do not understand a requirement or expectation, you'll have more confidence to approach your instructor directly, using him as valuable resource that can encourage you, clarify confusion, or strengthen your understanding of course concepts.

What follows is a series of practical guidelines useful for interpreting most college writing assignments. In my experience, many students already know and employ many of these strategies regularly; however, few students know or use all of them every time. Along the way, I'll apply some of these guidelines to actual assignments used in university classrooms. You'll also be able to get into the heads of other students as they formulate their own approaches to some of these assignments.[1]

Guidelines for Interpreting Writing Assignments

1. Don't Panic and Don't Procrastinate

Writing assignments should not incite panic, but it happens. We've already discussed how panicking and other negative reactions work against you by clouding your ability to analyze a situation rationally. So when your instructor gives you that writing assignment, don't try to read the whole assignment sheet at breakneck speed. Instead, take a deep breath and focus. If your instructor talks about the assignment, stop what you're doing and listen. Often, teachers will read through the assignment aloud and may even elaborate on some of the requirements. Write down any extra information or advice your instructor provides about the requirements, his or her expectations, changes, possible approaches, or topic ideas. This information will be useful to you as you begin thinking about the topic and formulating your approach. Also, pay attention to your classmates' questions. You might not need those answers now, but you may find them helpful later.

If you're an undergraduate student taking more than one class, it's not uncommon to have several writing assignments due within days of each other. Hence, you should avoid procrastinating. People procrastinate for different reasons. Maybe you wait because you've always been able to put together a decent paper the night before it's due. Perhaps you wait because avoiding the assignment until the last minute is your response to academic stress. Waiting until the last minute to complete a writing assignment in college is a gamble. You put yourself at risk for the unexpected: your printer runs out of ink, your laptop crashes and you didn't backup your work, the Internet in the library is down, the books you need are checked out, you can't locate any recent research on your topic, you have a last-

minute emergency, or you have a question about the assignment you can't find the answer to. The common result of situations like these is that if the student is able to complete the assignment, it is often a poor representatatoin of her actual knowledge or abilities. Start your assignment as soon as possible and leave yourself plenty of time to plan for the unexpected.

2. Read the Assignment. Read It Again. Refer to It Often

The ability to read critically is a useful skill. When you read a textbook chapter for your history course, for example, you might skim it for major ideas first, re-read and then highlight or underline important items, make notes in the margins, look up unfamiliar terms, or compile a list of questions. These same strategies can be applied when reading writing assignments.

The assignment sheet is full of material to be deciphered, so attack it the same way you would attack your history book. When Bailey[2], an undergraduate at a university in Los Angeles, was asked to respond to a biology writing assignment, here's what she had to say about where she would start:

> When getting a writing assignment, you should read it more than once just to get a knowledge of what they're [the instructors] really asking for and underline important information, which is what I'm doing now. Before starting the assignment, always write some notes down to help you get started.

Here are some other strategies to help you become an active, critical reader of writing assignments:

1. Start by skimming, noting anything in particular that jumps out

at you.
2. As soon as you have the time and the ability to focus, re-read the assignment carefully. Underline or highlight important features of the assignment or criteria you think you might forget about after you've started writing.
3. Don't be afraid to write on the assignment sheet. Use the available white space to list questions, define key terms or concepts, or jot down any initial ideas you have. Don't let the margins confine your writing (or your thoughts). If you're running out of space, grab a fresh sheet of paper and keep writing. The sooner you starting thinking and writing about the assignment, the easier it may be to complete.

As you begin drafting, you should occasionally refer back to the official assignment sheet. Maintaining constant contact with your teacher's instructions will help keep you on the right track, may remind you of criteria you've forgotten, and it might even spark new ideas if you're stuck.

3. Know Your Purpose and Your Audience

Instructors give writing assignments so students can demonstrate their knowledge and/or their ability to apply knowledge. On the surface, it may seem like the instructor is simply asking you to answer some questions to demonstrate that you understand the material or to compare and contrast concepts, theorists, or approaches. However, assessing knowledge is usually just one reason for the assignment. More often than not, your instructor is also evaluating your ability to demonstrate other critical skills. For example, she might be trying to determine if you can apply a concept to a particular situation, if you know how to summarize complex material, or if you can think critically about an idea and then creatively apply that thinking to new situations. Maybe she's

looking at how you manage large quantities of research or how you position expert opinions against one another. Or perhaps she wants to know if you can form and support a sound, credible argument rather than describing your opinion about a certain issue.

Instructors have different ways of conveying what they expect from their students in a writing assignment. Some detail explicitly what they intend to evaluate and may even provide a score sheet. Others may provide general (even vague) instructions and leave the rest up to you. So, what can you do to ensure you're on the right track? Keep reading through these guidelines, and you'll learn some ways to read between the lines. Once you identify all the intentions at work (that is, what your instructor is trying to measure), you'll be able to consider and address them.

Audience is a critical component to any writing assignment, and realistically, one or several different audiences may be involved when you're writing a paper in college. The person evaluating your essay is typically the audience most college students consider first. However, your instructor may identify a separate audience to whom you should tailor your response. Do not ignore this audience! If your business instructor tells you to write a research proposal that will be delivered to members of the local chamber of commerce, then adapt your response to them. If you're in an engineering course, and your instructor asks you to write a product design report about a piece of medical equipment geared toward medical practitioners (and not engineers), you should think differently about your terminology, use of background information, and what motivates this particular audience when they read your report. Analyzing the background (personal, educational, professional), existing knowledge, needs, and concerns of your audience will help you make more informed decisions about word choice, structure, tone, or other components of your paper.

4. Locate and Understand the Directive Verbs

One thing you should do when interpreting a writing assignment is to locate the directive verbs and know what the instructor means by them. Directive verbs tell you what you should do in order to formulate a written response. The following table lists common directive verbs used in writing assignments:

Table 1. Frequently used directive verbs.

analyze	defend	illustrate
apply	describe	investigate
argue	design	narrate
compare	discuss	show
consider	explain	summarize
contrast	explore	synthesize
create	evaluate	trace

You might notice that many of the directive verbs have similar general meanings. For example, although explore and investigate are not necessarily synonyms for one another, when used in writing assignments, they may be asking for a similar structural response. Understanding what those verbs mean to you and to your instructor may be the most difficult part of understanding a writing assignment. Take a look at this sample writing assignment from a philosophy course:

> Philosophy Writing Assignment *
> "History is what the historian says it is." Discuss.
> All papers are to be typed, spell-checked and grammar-checked. Responses should be 2000 words. They should be well written, with a logical flow of thought, and double-spaced with 1" margins on all sides. Papers should be typed

> in 12-pitch font, using Courier or Times Roman typeface. Indent the first line of each new paragraph five spaces. Also include a title page so that the instructor can identify the student, assignment and course number.
>
> Proper standard English is required. Do not use slang or a conversational style of writing. Always avoid contractions (e.g. "can't" for "cannot") in formal essays. Always write in complete sentences and paragraphs! Staple all papers in the upper left-hand corner and do not put them in a folder, binder or plastic cover.
>
> All written work, citations and bibliographies should conform to the rules of composition laid down in The Chicago Manual of Style (15th edition), or Charles Lipson's Doing Honest Work in College (chapter 5). A paper that lacks correct citations and/or a bibliography will receive an automatic 10% reduction in grade.
>
> * *Sample undergraduate philosophy writing assignment, courtesy of Dr. Kenneth Locke, Religious Studies Department, University of the West.*

You may interpret the word discuss in one way, while your instructor may have a different understanding. The key is to make certain that these two interpretations are as similar as possible. You can develop a mutual understanding of the assignment's directive verbs and calculate an effective response using the following steps:

1. Look up the verb in a dictionary and write down all of the definitions.
2. List all possible synonyms or related terms and look those up as well; then, see if any of these terms suggest a clearer interpretation of what the assignment is asking you to do.
3. Write down several methods you could use to approach the assignment. (Check out guideline eight in this essay for some common approaches.)
4. Consult with your instructor, but do not be discouraged if he/

she is unwilling to clarify or provide additional information; your interpretation of the directions and subsequent approach to fulfilling the assignment criteria may be one of its purposes.

5. Consult a trusted peer or writing center tutor for assistance.
6. Figure out what you know.

When deciphering an assignment's purpose is particularly challenging, make a list. Think about what you know, what you think you know, and what you do not know about what the assignment is asking you to do. Putting this list into a table makes the information easier to handle. For example, if you were given an assignment that asked you to analyze presentations in your business ethics class, like the assignment in Figure 2, your table might look like Table 2 below:

> Business Writing Assignment Presentation Analysis
>
> During three weeks of class, you'll observe several small group presentations on business ethics given by your fellow classmates. Choose two of the presentations and write a short paper analyzing them. For each presentation, be sure to do the following:
>
> 1. In one paragraph, concisely summarize the group's main conclusions
> 2. Analyze the presentation by answering any two of the following three:
>
>   a. With which of the group's conclusions do you agree? Why? With which of the conclusions do you disagree? Why? (include specific examples of both)
>
>   b. What particular issue of ethics did the group not address or only address slightly? Analyze this aspect from your perspective.
>
>   c. In what way could you apply one or more of the group's conclusions to a particular situation? (The situation could be hypothetical, one from your personal or professional experience, or a real-world example).

The paper should be no more than 3 pages in length with 12-pt font, 1 1/2 line spacing. It is due one week after the conclusion of presentations.

Your grade will depend upon

1. the critical thought and analytical skills displayed in the paper;
2. your use of ethical principles from chapter 7 of our textbook;
3. the professionalism, correctness, and logic of your writing.

Table 2. Sample knowledge table for undergraduate business writing assignment.

What I Know	**What I Think I Know**	**What I Don't Know**
Need to observe and take notes on 2 presentations	Concisely means "short," so my summaries should be shorter than the other parts of the paper	What does the professor mean by "critical thought"?
Need to summarize each groups' conclusions	I think I need to apply my own understanding of ethics to figure out which issue the group didn't address	How does the professor evaluate "professionalism"? How do I demonstrate this?
2-3 pages long; 12 pt font and 1 1/2 spacing	I think I understand everything from chapter 7	Do I ned to apply both groups' conclusions to the same situation or to two different ones?
Need to include personal opinion	I think its okay to say "I" in the paper.	How much personal opinion should I include and do I need specific examples to support my opinion?
Need to answer 2 of the 3 questions under part 2	I don't think I need an introduction.	Should I separate my essay into two parts, one for each group I observed?

After reviewing the table, you can see that this student has a lot of thoughts about this assignment. He understands some of the general features. However, there are some critical elements that need clarification before he submits the assignment. For instance, he's unsure about the best structure for the paper and the way it should sound. Dividing your understanding of an assignment into a table or list can help you identify the confusing parts. Then, you can formulate specific questions that your instructor or a writing center consultant can help you answer.

6. Ask Yourself: Do I Need an Argument?

Perhaps one of the most important things to know is whether or not your instructor is asking you to formulate and support an argument. Sometimes this is easy to determine. For example, an assignment many instructors include in their courses is a persuasive paper where you're typically asked to choose an issue, take a position, and then support it using evidence. For many students, a persuasive paper is a well known assignment, but when less familiar assignment genres come up, some students may be confused about argument expectations. This confusion may arise because the instructor uses a directive verb that is easily misinterpreted. What about the verb explain? Does it make you think of words like summarize, review, or describe (which would suggest more facts and less opinion)? Or, do you associate it with words like debate, investigate, or defend (which imply the need for a well-supported argument)? You can also look for other clues in the assignment indicating a need for evidence. If your instructor mentions scholarly citations, you'll probably need it. If you need evidence, you'll probably need an argument. Still confused? Talk to your instructor.

7. Consider the Evidence

If your assignment mentions a minimum number of required sources, references a particular citation style, or suggests scholarly journals to review during your research, then these are telltale signs that you'll need to find and use evidence. What qualifies as evidence? Let's review some of the major types:

- Personal experience
- Narrative examples (historical or hypothetical)
- Statistics (or numerical forms of data) and facts
- Graphs, charts, or other visual representatives of data
- Expert opinion
- Research results (experimental or descriptive)

Each of these offers benefits and drawbacks when used to support an argument. Consider this writing assignment from a 200-level biology class on genetics:

> Biology Writing Assignment Genes & Gene Research
>
> Purpose:
>
> This writing assignment will ask you to familiarize yourself with genes, the techniques gene researchers use when working with genes, and the current research programs investigating genes. The report is worth 10% of your final grade in the course.
>
> In a research report of at least 1500 words, you should address the following:
>
> 1. Generally, what is a gene and what does it do? Create a universally applicable definition for a gene.
> 2. Choose a specific gene and apply your definition to it (i.e.,what does this particular gene do and how does it work?)
> 3. Recreate the history of the gene you've chosen

including the gene's discovery (and discoverer), the motivation behind the research into this gene, outcomes of the research, and any medical, social, historical, or biological implications to its discovery.

4. Explore the current research available on your gene. Who is conducting the research, what are the goals (big/small; longterm/short-term) of the research, and how is the research being funded?
5. Research should be properly documented using CSE (Council of Science Editors) style.
6. The report should be typewritten, double spaced, in a font of reasonable size.

This instructor asks students to demonstrate several skills, including definition, summary, research, and application. Nearly all of these components should include some evidence, specifically scientific research studies on the particular gene the student has chosen. After reading it, here's what Bailey said about how she would start the assignment: "This assignment basically has to do with who you are, so it should be something simple to answer, not too difficult since you should know yourself." Ernest, another student, explains how he would approach the same assignment: "So, first of all, to do this assignment, I would go on the computer, like on the Internet, and I would . . . do research about genes first. And . . . everything about them, and then I would . . . start with the first question, second question, third and fourth, and that's it." For Bailey, using her own life as an example to illustrate genetic inheritance would be the best way to start responding to the assignment. Ernest, on the other hand, thinks a bit differently; he knows he needs "research about genes" to get started, and, like many students, figures the internet will tell him everything he needs to know. So, how do you know what evidence works best? Know the field you're writing in: what type(s) of evidence it values, why it's valuable, and what sources provide that evidence. Some other important questions you should ask yourself include

- Where, in the paper, is the most effective place for this evidence?
- What type of evidence would support my argument effectively?
- What kind of evidence would most convince my audience?
- What's the best way to integrate this evidence into my ideas?
- What reference/citation style does this discipline use?

If your writing assignment calls for evidence, it is important that you answer these questions. Failure to do so could cost you major points—in your assignment and with your instructor.

8. Calculate the Best Approach

When you decide how to approach your paper, you're also outlining its basic structure. Structure is the way you construct your ideas and move from one idea to the next. Typical structural approaches include question/answer, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, methodology, cause/effect, narration/reflection, description/ illustration, classification/division, thesis/support, analysis/ synthesis, and theory/ application. These patterns can be used individually or in combination with each other to illustrate more complex relationships among ideas. Learning what structures are useful in particular writing situations starts with reviewing the assignment. Sometimes, the instructor clearly details how you should structure your essay. On the other hand, the assignment may suggest a particular structural pattern but may not actually reflect what the instructor expects to see. For example, if the prompt asks four questions, does that mean you're supposed to write a paragraph for each answer and then slap on an introduction and a conclusion? Not necessarily. Consider what structure would deliver your message accurately and effectively.

Knowing what structures are acceptable within the discipline is

also important. Many students are uncomfortable with rigidity; they wonder why their chemistry lab reports must be presented "just so." Think about the last time you looked at a restaurant menu. If you're looking for appetizers, those items are usually listed at the front of the menu whereas desserts are closer to the back. If a restaurant menu listed the desserts up front, you might find the design unfamiliar and the menu difficult to navigate. The same can be said for formalized writing structures including lab reports or literature reviews, for example. Examining scholarly publications (journal articles or books) within that field will help you identify commonly used structural patterns and understand why those structures are acceptable within the discipline.

9. Understand and Adhere to Formatting and Style Guidelines

Writing assignments usually provide guidelines regarding format and/ or style. Requirements like word count or page length, font type or size, margins, line spacing, and citation styles fall into this category. Most instructors have clear expectations for how an assignment should look based on official academic styles, such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), or the Council of Science Editors (CSE). If your instructor specifically references a style then locate a copy of the manual, so you'll know how to cite source material and how to develop your document's format (font, spacing, margin size, etc.) and style (use of headings, abbreviations, capitalization).

Occasionally, an instructor may modify a standard style to meet her personal preferences. Follow any additional formatting or style guidelines your instructor provides. If you don't, you could lose points unnecessarily. They may also refer you to scholarly journals to use as models. Don't ignore these! Not only will you be able to

review professional examples of the kinds of work you're doing (like lab reports, lit reviews, research reports, executive summaries, etc.), you'll also learn more about what style of writing a discipline values.

10. Identify Your Available Resources and Ask Questions

Even after following these steps, you may still have questions. When that happens, you should know who your resources are and what they do (and don't do). After Nicole read the business ethics assignment (provided earlier in this chapter), she said, "I would send a draft to [the instructor] and ask him if he could see if I'm on the right track." Nicole's instincts are right on target; your primary resource is your instructor. Professors may appear intimidating, but they are there to help. They can answer questions and may even offer research recommendations. If you ask ahead of time, many are also willing to review a draft of your project and provide feedback. However, don't expect your teacher to proofread your paper or give you the "right" answer. Writing assignments are one method by which instructors examine your decision making, problem solving, or critical thinking skills.

The library is another key resource. Reference librarians can help you develop an effective research process by teaching you how to use the catalog for books or general references, how to search the databases, and how to use library equipment (copy machines, microfiche, scanners, etc.). They will not choose your topic or conduct your research for you. Spending some time learning from a reference librarian is worthwhile; it will make you a more efficient and more effective student researcher, saving you time and frustration.

Many institutions have student support centers for writing and are especially useful for first year students. The staff is an excellent source of knowledge about academic expectations in college, about

research and style, and about writing assignment interpretation. If you're having trouble understanding your assignment, go to the writing center for help. If you're working on a draft and you want to review it with someone, they can take a look. Your writing center tutor will not write your paper for you, nor will he serve as an editor to correct grammar mistakes. When you visit your university's writing center, you'll be able to discuss your project with an experienced tutor who can offer practical advice in a comfortable learning environment.

The above are excellent resources for student assistance. Your instructor, the librarians, and the writing center staff will not do the work for you. Instead, they'll teach you how to help yourself. The guidelines I've outlined here are meant to do exactly the same. So the next time you've got a writing assignment, what will you do?

Exercises

Discussion

1. Think about a previous writing assignment that was a challenge for you. What strategies did you use at the time? After reading the chapter, what other strategies do you think might have been useful?
2. Choose two verbs from the list of frequently used directive verbs (Table 1). Look up these verbs (and possible synonyms) in the dictionary and write down

their definitions. If you saw these verbs in a writing assignment, what potential questions might you ask your professor in order to clarify what he/she means?

3. Choose two of the sample assignments from the chapter and create a chart similar to Table 2 for each assignment. What differences do you notice? If these were your assignments, what evidence do you think would best support your argument and why (review guideline seven for help)?
4. What advice would you give to first year college students about writing, writing assignments, or instructor expectations? Structure this advice in the form of a guideline similar to those included in the chapter.

Notes

1. My thanks to Dr. Kenneth Locke from University of the West for contributing a sample assignment to this project and to the students who participated in this exercise; their interest, time, and enthusiasm helps bring a sense of realism to this essay, and I am indebted to them for their assistance.

2. The names of student participants in this document have been changed to retain confidentiality.

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2. Adopt Effective Writing Habits

JOSEPH M. MOXLEY

Summary

Understand the psychology of writing, particularly the importance of balancing believing with doubting. Learn how to overcome "writer's block" and manage difficult writing assignments. When it comes to writing projects, do you tend to procrastinate and then binge-write around the deadline time? Do you ever have difficulties scheduling your writing work so that it doesn't become aversive?

The following suggestions will help you handle "the psychology of writing." Where possible, these suggestions link to more thorough discussions of writing principles.

Balance Believing with Doubting

Just about everyone has moments of despair and doubt about their writing. After countless hours and the feeling that your work has been futile, that you have not clearly expressed an important concept or relationship, you may feel the urge to give up, to abandon the project.

But you can't give up. To be a successful writer (or really, to be a successful person) you need to emphasize believing. Especially in the beginning of a writing project, you need to set aside doubt, self-criticism, and despair. You need to emphasize the positive. After all,

down the line, when your work is graded or critiqued by readers, you'll have plenty of time for self-criticism and doubt.

Why Belief is Important

One difference between successful writers and those who fail is that successful writers have faith in the creative process. In other words, even when they come close to despairing, they believe their rough drafts will become crystal clear—with effort. They believe they will develop an argument that synthesizes all of their reading. They believe that they will identify some innovative, creative interpretation. Buried deep in their rough drafts, they hope to find the seed of an elegant idea.

When Charles Darwin spent his early twenties and thirties writing obscure essays on barnacle taxonomies, he didn't give up. He kept writing, thinking, working, and eventually he created an elegant theory that transformed society: Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

Whenever you become discouraged about your writing or about your potential as a writer, remember that successful authors did not become competent overnight. In fact, for most people, learning to write well is a lifelong process, an apprenticeship.

Why Doubt is Important

Writing can be discouraging. After hours of effort, you can end up with a product that absolutely fails to express what you intended. Plus, the feedback and criticism of your classmates and teachers can be depressing. When there is a large gap between what you said and what you meant to say, you can easily get down on yourself, telling

yourself that you are not a good writer and that you will never be good at writing.

Sometimes, however, you need to shut off the negative voice within you and trust the generative nature of language to help you find exactly what you want to say. You must have confidence that your writing will be concise, coherent, and persuasive, given enough time and effort.

Of course it's true that writers must balance the negative with the positive. To be a successful writer you must be a realist: You must understand others will interpret your words in ways you cannot anticipate. Critics will identify unexpected weaknesses in your presentations. Being able to take the audience's view and accept criticism are helpful components of the writing process.

Successful writers try to anticipate the reactions of readers and critics. Indeed, writers must be critical of their ideas. There are some writers who tend to be especially reluctant to be critical of their work, who look on their writing as a reflection of their being. Writers who look at their work to affirm their insightfulness will not see glaring logical flaws. Those who look only to reaffirm their creativity may ignore the importance of others' views, research, and scholarship.

Successfully Mixing Belief and Doubt

While you must believe in yourself, while you must been comforted by the seed of a good idea beneath a dozen drafts, you must also be critical. You must balance believing with doubting.Successful writers are energized by their faith in the writing process. Their experiences as writers have taught them how to balance the importance of balancing believing with doubting.

Establish a Comfortable Place to Write

Ideally, you should find a quiet place where all your needed writing resources—such as a personal computer, dictionary, and paper—are set up. To help you focus on the work at hand, you may need a place that is reasonably free of distractions. For example, you may find it helpful to be away from temptations like the phone, television, refrigerator, radio, stereo, magazines, and books. Nonetheless, you must listen to your inner voice and trust your judgment. Some people enjoy writing in crowded spaces, abhorring the silence of isolation.

Determine Your Most Energetic Time of Day

> *In fact I think the best regimen is to get up early, insult yourself a bit in the shaving mirror, and then pretend you're cutting wood, which is really just about all the hell you are doing—if you see what I mean.* –Lawrence Durrell

> *It's important to try to write when you are in the wrong mood or the weather is wrong. Even if you don't succeed, you'll be developing a muscle that may do it later on.* -John Ashbery

You will probably find it easier to establish a regular writing schedule if you can write during your most energetic time of day. If you tend to procrastinate, try getting up an hour earlier each day to write. The advantage of morning writing is that you are fresh from the night's sleep. Also, once the words are written, you won't need to feel guilty about procrastinating all day and the responsibility of writing will not hover over you. Not everyone's body clock is the

same, of course. You may prefer to write in the evening; that is fine so long as you are able to produce meaningful work.

When circumstances prevent you from writing at your best time of day, however, do not use this as an excuse not to write at all. Even ten minutes of freewriting at your worst time of day is better than no writing.

Focus on Priorities

While emailing folks and talking in chats and e-lists can be fun, you need to ensure that you're not chatting and surfing online at the expense of your writing. As you may know, working on the Internet can be engrossing, just like TV. We can become so engrossed in reading and talking online that we forget we have a writing project due!

Write Daily

> *Writers are not born nor made, but written.* -William Matthews

> *I'm not sure I understand the process of writing. There is, I'm sure, something strange about imaginative concentration. The brain slowly begins to function in a different way, to make mysterious connections. Say, it is Monday, and you write a very bad draft, but if you keep trying, on Friday, words, phrases, appear almost unexpectedly. I don't know why you can't do it on Monday, or why I can't. I'm the same person, no smarter, I have nothing more at hand.... It's one of the things writing students don't understand.* -Elizabeth Hardwick

> *Think of writing then not as a way to transmit a message. Writing is a way to end up thinking something you couldn't have started out thinking. Writing is, in fact, a transaction with words whereby you free yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive.* -Peter Elbow

When asked how they develop ideas, professional writers often explain that regular writing becomes an addictive activity that enables them to develop new ideas. As they work on project A, they get ideas for projects B through Z! If you write regularly, you will generate more creative ideas than if you write only sporadically. Successful writers do not wait until they are inspired to write.

Making time for writing on a regular basis does not necessarily mean that you will have less time for your other classes, family, and social activities. After all, working a little each day instead of putting whole projects off until the weekend will leave your weekends freer for other activities. Rather than giving in to procrastination and letting the responsibility to write haunt every pleasurable moment, try little dosages of writing at a time. Ultimately, after a training period in which you need to force yourself to write, you will find writing has its own rewards and you will soon look forward to composing.

On days when disaster strikes—when the rain leaks through the roof of your writing site or a bad storm knocks out the electricity—you should still try to contribute something to your writing, even if it is a single sentence written hastily on a napkin or spoken into a tape recorder.

Establish a Reasonable Writing Schedule

> *You know when you think about writing a book, you think it is overwhelming. But, actually, you break it down into tiny little tasks any moron could do.* -Annie Dillard

> *Structuring your time without being tense about it helps writers find additional time to work and play. And more. If you work with a sense of structured routine, with a present-orientation (dwelling on missed opportunities), with effective organization, and with persistence, you will be more likely to display higher self-esteem, better health, more optimism, and more efficient work habits. Without learning the language of time, you risk depression, psychological distress, anxiety, neuroticism, and physical symptoms of illness. Clearly, writers must learn to deal with time.* -Robert Boice

Deadlines are extremely important to writers. Documents can almost always be improved with additional revisions, so some writers need deadlines, a line in the sand, to say "Enough is enough!" In turn, for writers who tend to procrastinate, deadlines can provide an incentive to get started. Each time you begin a new project, you should evaluate how much time you can devote to completing the document, then set realistic goals for first, second, and third drafts.

You can overcome the impulse to procrastinate by establishing reasonable goals. For example, you should not expect to write an entire essay in a single session, but it is reasonable for you to write a solid introduction or to develop one point of your essay in a single session.

To help develop a realistic schedule, consider the following questions:

How much time can I spend on selecting a topic? At what point can I get a good enough draft to share with others?When will I have identified the major sources that I will need to consult before writing a solid draft? What sources may be difficult to obtain?When can I develop a fairly complete document planner?

Because writing is typically not a step-by-step process, you will probably want to routinely revise your goals for research, writing, and anticipated due dates.

To keep motivated on a daily basis, many writers also maintain logs of their daily writing—i.e., written records of their daily efforts

to get writing work done. On longer projects, writers maintainWeekly Progress Reports.

To get the best out of a log or progress report, each time you complete a writing session, map out the agenda for your next session.

If you find it difficult to maintain your schedule of goals, use the reward system. Allow yourself a treat or indulge in a pleasurable activity—a hot fudge sundae or a relaxing swim— but only after you successfully complete a specific goal.

Plan Your Document

As children many of us heard the classic fable about the tortoise and the hare. The moral of the story is that rushing straight from point A to point B is not always the swiftest way to the destination. Sometimes it makes sense to pause for a few moments and ask yourself, "Do I really want to go there? What obstacles can I expect to encounter? Do I need to take a compass and a map? Is the path well marked? What provisions am I likely to need along the journey?"

Like many children's tales, the tortoise and the hare has implications for adults, too. For even though logic tells us that we can save time by quickly writing a first draft, we in fact might manage our time more effectively by doing some preliminary planning and prewriting.

Complete a Document Planner to navigate writing projects efficiently.

Be Flexible

Unlike a chef who follows a single recipe for preparing chocolate

cheesecake, writers lack a single modus operandi. Sometimes you may need to write 30 drafts and other times a single draft will do. Sometimes you should dictate your ideas; sometimes you should write them on the computer; sometimes you should scratch them out carefully with a pencil.

Instead of expecting yourself to write perfect first drafts or to develop your best ideas before writing, you need to learn to trust the generative nature of composing. By being flexible and open minded, you will sometimes discover your most innovative ideas in progress, because language generates thought. In fact, what you learn as you write will sometimes contradict your preliminary hunches, so be prepared to revise accordingly.

You also need to be flexible about how you compose documents. You need to be be aware that some documents will be more demanding than others. For example, a semester-long research paper or an international corporation's annual report would require a different amount of collaboration, research, and revision than a biography or a memoir.

Collaborate

Sharing your writing with friends and classmates can help motivate you to get the work done and help you judge whether or not your writing successfully communicates your ideas. By collaborating early in the life of a document, you can help focus and enrich the work.

Sometimes inexperienced writers are so inspired by seeing their words in print or published on the Internet that they fail to see the problem in the document.

Inexperienced writers are often astonished by the amount of criticism that professional writers receive as part of the pre-publication process. Typically, before publishing an essay or book, a document goes through extensive revisions in light of peer reviews,

professional critiques by editors, and copyediting. Even people who do not write as a career will face evaluation of their writing. The final writing activity for many people involves submitting their work to clients, co-workers, or supervisors. For students, primary audiences tend to be teachers or other students. Whether you're writing for a teacher or a client, criticism can often be painful so it is understandable that many of us try to avoid hearing or thinking much about our critics' comments. Nevertheless, your growth as a writer is largely dependent on your ability to learn from past mistakes and to improve drafts in response to readers' comments.

Be Organized

Maintaining organized files for all of your classes can be an important time-saver. By keeping lists of ideas or drafts of essays that might be worth developing and by organizing reading notes, you will have less trouble generating subjects to write about.

Use Technology Wisely

Used wisely, technology can literally transform how you write, research, collaborate, and publish. Writing tools, drawing tools, collaboration tools, animation tools—these are just a few of the examples of technologies that are transforming how and what we write.

1. Microsoft's Track Changes or Commenting can help you organize feedback from critics.
2. A wiki, such as /placeholders/external_placeholder.html?http%3A%2F%2Fwritingwiki.org,

facilitates co-authoring and enables you to easily publish your work on the Internet.
3. Charting and graphics tools enable you to use visual language to facilitate invention and creativity.
4. To aid your research, your college or university's library can provide you access to thousands of online journals, books, and databases.

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3. Active Reading

BROGAN SULLIVAN

Mapping the Territory

Reading is an activity integral to the writing process. You may not associate reading with the difficult task of writing a college essay. After all, it seems like a passive activity, something you might do at a café or sitting in an easy chair. But while you can read solely for entertainment, soaking in the plot of a good novel or familiarizing yourself with the latest celebrity gossip, reading also drives the act of writing itself, from the earliest stages onward. Reading can—and will—make you a better writer.

But first, you have to learn how to read in a whole new way, because college-level work requires you to read actively, a skill much different from the kind of reading you have practiced since elementary school. Active reading implies not only attention paid to the text, but also consideration and response. An active reader explores what she reads; she approaches the text as though she has entered an unknown territory with the intention of drawing a map. Indeed, the difference between passive reading and active reading is like the difference between watching a nature documentary and hiking through the wilderness. The film, although entertaining, doesn't require much exertion from the viewer. By contrast, the hiker has to navigate the trail: she must look out for hazards, read trail signs, and make informed decisions, if she hopes to make it back home.

Before you can write a successful essay, you must first understand the territory you're about to explore. Luckily, other writers have already scouted the area and logged reports on the terrain. These missives—the articles and books your professors will ask you to

read—sketch their findings. But understanding these documents can be a daunting task, unless you know how to interpret them. The following sections detail the most essential strategies for active reading.

A Two-Way Street: Reading as Conversation

Think of every text your instructor assigns as one half of a conversation between you and the writer. Good conversations achieve a balance between listening and responding. This give-and-take process drives human discourse. While one participant speaks, the other listens. But while the listener appears passive on the surface, he's most likely already preparing his response. He may evaluate what his partner says, testing it for how closely it matches his own ideas, accepting or rejecting part or all of the statement. When he does respond, he expresses his reaction, or asks a question about something he doesn't yet understand. Active reading mirrors this process closely. An active reader "listens" to the text, evaluating what the writer says, checking to see if it matches or differs from his current understanding of the issue or idea. He asks pertinent questions if something remains unclear, looking for answers in subsequent sections of the text. His final goal, of course, is to make a statement of his own, in the form of the essay he will eventually produce.

Retracing Your Steps: Read Every Text (at least) Twice

In fact, reading is in many ways better than conversation, because, like writing, it is recursive: you can revisit a text over and over, whereas the spoken word, unless recorded, disappears into the past, often along with part—or all—of the message the speaker was attempting to convey. When you read, you can move forward and backward in time, making sure you've captured every nuance. You should read the text more than once, first for a general understanding, and then for a detailed analysis; your first read-through may raise questions only a second reading can reveal the answers to.

Marking the Trail: Annotation

An active reader views the text as a living document, always incomplete. She reads with pen in hand, ready to write her observations, her questions, and her tentative answers in the margins. We call this annotation, the act of writing notes to oneself in the blank spaces of the page. It's not the same as underlining or highlighting, neither of which promotes active reading. A simple line underneath a passage contains no information; it merely indicates—vaguely—that you found a certain passage more important than the surrounding text. Annotation, on the other hand, is a record of your active responses to the text during the act of reading. A simple phrase summarizing a paragraph, a pointed question, or an emphatic expression of approval or disbelief all indicate spirited engagement with the text, which is the cornerstone of active reading.

Pace Yourself: Know Your Limitations and Eliminate Distractions

You can't hike the Appalachian Trail in a day. Similarly, you can't expect to sustain active reading longer than your mind and body will allow. Active reading requires energy and attention as well as devotion. Short rest periods between readings allow you to maintain focus and deliberate on what you have learned. If you remain diligent in your reading practice, you'll find that you can read actively for longer periods of time. But don't push yourself past the point at which you stop paying attention. If your mind begins to wander, take ten minutes away from the text to relax. Ideally, you should read gradually, scheduling an hour or two every day for reading, rather than leaving your assignments until the last minute. You can't hope to gain full or even partial comprehension of a text with a deadline looming overhead.

When and where you read can be as important as how long you read. Plan your reading sessions for hours when your mental energy is at its height—usually during daylight hours. Likewise, you should select an optimal location, preferably one free of distractions. Loud music, the flickering of a TV screen, and the din of conversation tend to divert your attention from the task at hand. Even a momentary distraction, like a quick phone call or a friend asking a question, can interrupt the conversation you are having with your assigned text.

This chapter originally appeared on *Writing Commons*: https://writingcommons.org/article/active-reading/

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4. Annotating the Margins

JENNIFER JANECHEK

As you progress throughout college and into your professional life, it's going to become increasingly important to remember what you read. You might say, "Well, it was important for me to remember what I read in high school, because I was tested on the material and even had pop quizzes." But that's a different type of reading—you were reading to take a test or quiz, so you remembered the material temporarily. Do you still remember things you read in high school? How can you change the way you read now, in college, so that going forth you will be able to retain the things you learn from others' writings? By annotating the margins of what you read, you can become a more active reader.

Now, you may be saying, "Annotation—that reminds me of the annotated bibliography I've done before, where I've written two-paragraph annotations for each source I've found for a paper." Actually, annotations for a bibliography and annotations for the margins are similar: either way, you're summarizing key points so that you'll remember them later.

So how do annotations work as a reader's tool? They serve as memory devices. When you return to a text you've already read—say, to locate evidence for a research paper—and that text contains your annotations, you'll be able to quickly identify (1) key points that the author made and (2) bits of information that, when reading the piece for the first time, you considered particularly useful.

As a student and as a professional, you want to learn how to read texts and take notes that are not just definitions of key terms (though key terms might be phrases you include in annotations); rather, you want to learn how to take notes that help jog your memory about larger concepts. Sometimes, you may have to read the piece twice before you grasp the larger concepts. Re-reading

material is not a sign of stupidity; even your professors have to re-read texts! Only annotate when you've determined larger concepts or key terms—or, if you want to take notes while reading, do so in pencil. You may also want to connect annotations with underlined or highlighted material. For example, if you find a sentence that points to the author's tone, you may want to highlight or underline that sentence (or select words from the sentence) and then connect the sentence to a key word like "sarcastic."

Now let's turn to the process of writing annotations. It's helpful to use two different annotations: after reading a page, on the top of that page write a key term or phrase that captures the material or most of the material on the page; after reading a paragraph, do the same thing for that paragraph—and write the phrase or term on the side margin. Take a look at the following paragraph and determine where you might place your annotation—and, more importantly, what would your annotation say?

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.[1]

So, we have here a paragraph (which has one main idea), though that main idea could be interpreted in different ways. The gist of it is, though, that doing research is like entering into a conversation: you

want to know what's been said before you so that you don't sound silly by saying something that's already been said. So, after reading this paragraph, I might write "research as conversation" on one of the side margins. That way, when I return to this paragraph, I will know the gist of it (and perhaps even remember details) without having to re-read the entire paragraph.

Suggestions for Types of Information to Emphasize through Annotation:

- Thesis
- Purpose
- Tone
- Main points and/or sub-points
- References to other sources that keep appearing
- Key terms/concepts
- Other information that you find particularly important

[1] Burke, Kenneth. "Burke's 'Unending Conversation' Metaphor." Texas Tech University. Texas Tech U, 18 May 2011. Web. 22 May 2011.

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5. Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources

Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources

KAREN ROSENBERG

If at First You Fall Asleep . . .

During my first year in college, I feared many things: calculus, cafeteria food, the stained, sweet smelling mattress in the basement of my dorm. But I did not fear reading. I didn't really think about reading at all, that automatic making of meaning from symbols in books, newspapers, on cereal boxes. And, indeed, some of my coziest memories of that bewildering first year involved reading. I adopted an overstuffed red chair in the library that enveloped me like the lap of a department store Santa. I curled up many evenings during that first, brilliant autumn with my English homework: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*, Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. I'd read a gorgeous passage, snuggle deeper into my chair, and glance out to the sunset and fall leaves outside of the library window. This felt deeply, unmistakably collegiate.

But English was a requirement—I planned to major in political science. I took an intro course my first semester and brought my readings to that same chair. I curled up, opened a book on the Chinese Revolution, started reading, and fell asleep. I woke up a little drooly, surprised at the harsh fluorescent light, the sudden pitch outside. Not to be deterred, I bit my lip and started over. I'd hold on for a paragraph or two, and then suddenly I'd be thinking about my classmate Joel's elbows, the casual way he'd put them on

the desk when our professor lectured, sometimes resting his chin in his hands. He was a long limbed runner and smelled scrubbed—a mixture of laundry detergent and shampoo. He had black hair and startling blue eyes. Did I find him sexy?

Crap! How many paragraphs had my eyes grazed over while I was thinking about Joel's stupid elbows? By the end of that first semester, I abandoned ideas of majoring in political science. I vacillated between intense irritation with my assigned readings and a sneaking suspicion that perhaps the problem was me—I was too dumb to read academic texts. Whichever it was—a problem with the readings or with me—I carefully chose my classes so that I could read novels, poetry, and plays for credit. But even in my English classes, I discovered, I had to read dense scholarly articles. By my Junior year, I trained myself to spend days from dawn until dusk hunkered over a carrel in the library's basement armed with a dictionary and a rainbow of highlighters. Enjoying my reading seemed hopelessly naïve—an indulgence best reserved for beach blankets and bathtubs. A combination of obstinacy, butt-numbingly hard chairs, and caffeine helped me survive my scholarly reading assignments. But it wasn't fun.

Seven years later I entered graduate school. I was also working and living on my own, cooking for myself instead of eating off cafeteria trays. In short, I had a life. My days were not the blank canvas they had been when I was an undergraduate and could sequester myself in the dungeon of the library basement. And so, I finally learned how to read smarter, not harder. Perhaps the strangest part of my reading transformation was that I came to like reading those dense scholarly articles; I came to crave the process of sucking the marrow from the texts. If you can relate to this, if you also love wrestling with academic journal articles, take joy in arguing with authors in the margins of the page, I am not writing for you.

However, if your reading assignments confound you, if they send you into slumber, or you avoid them, or they seem to take you way too long, then pay attention. Based on my experience as a frustrated student and now as a teacher of reading strategies, I have some

insights to share with you designed to make the reading process more productive, more interesting, and more enjoyable.

Joining the Conversation[1]

Even though it may seem like a solitary, isolated activity, when you read a scholarly work, you are participating in a conversation. Academic writers do not make up their arguments off the top of their heads (or solely from creative inspiration). Rather, they look at how others have approached similar issues and problems. Your job—and one for which you'll get plenty of help from your professors and your peers—is to locate the writer and yourself in this larger conversation. Reading academic texts is a deeply social activity; talking with your professors and peers about texts can not only help you understand your readings better, but it can push your thinking and clarify your own stances on issues that really matter to you.

In your college courses, you may have come across the term "rhetorical reading."[2] Rhetoric in this context refers to how texts work to persuade readers—a bit different from the common connotation of empty, misleading, or puffed up speech. Rhetorical reading refers to a set of practices designed to help us understand how texts work and to engage more deeply and fully in a conversation that extends beyond the boundaries of any particular reading. Rhetorical reading practices ask us to think deliberately about the role and relationship between the writer, reader, and text.

When thinking about the writer, we are particularly interested in clues about the writer's motivation and agenda. If we know something about what the writer cares about and is trying to accomplish, it can help orient us to the reading and understand some of the choices the writer makes in his or her work.

As readers, our role is quite active. We pay attention to our own motivation and agenda for each reading. On one level, our motivation may be as simple as wanting to do well in a class, and our

agenda may involve wanting to understand as much as necessary in order to complete our assignments. In order to meet these goals, we need to go deeper, asking, "Why is my professor asking me to read this piece?" You may find clues in your course syllabus, comments your professor makes in class, or comments from your classmates. If you aren't sure why you are being asked to read something, ask! Most professors will be more than happy to discuss in general terms what "work" they want a reading to do—for example, to introduce you to a set of debates, to provide information on a specific topic, or to challenge conventional thinking on an issue.

Finally, there is the text—the thing that the writer wrote and that you are reading. In addition to figuring out what the text says, rhetorical reading strategies ask us to focus on how the text delivers its message. In this way of thinking about texts, there is not one right and perfect meaning for the diligent reader to uncover; rather, interpretations of the reading will differ depending on the questions and contexts readers bring to the text.

Strategies for Rhetorical Reading

Here are some ways to approach your reading that better equip you for the larger conversation. First, consider the audience. When the writer sat down to write your assigned reading, to whom was he or she implicitly talking? Textbooks, for the most part, have students like you in mind. They may be boring, but you've probably learned what to do with them: pay attention to the goals of the chapter, check out the summary at the end, ignore the text in the boxes because it's usually more of a "fun fact" than something that will be on the test, and so on. Magazines in the checkout line at the supermarket also have you in mind: you can't help but notice headlines about who is cheating or fat or anorexic or suicidal. Writers of scholarly sources, on the other hand, likely don't think much about you at all when they sit down to write. Often, academics

write primarily for other academics. But just because it's people with PhDs writing for other people with PhDs doesn't mean that you should throw in the towel. There's a formula for these types of texts, just like there's a formula for all the *Cosmo* articles that beckon with titles that involve the words "hot," "sex tips," "your man," and "naughty" in different configurations.

It's just that the formula is a little more complicated.

The formula also changes depending on the flavor of study (physics, management, sociology, English, etc.) and the venue. However, if you determine that the audience for your reading is other academics, recognize that you are in foreign territory. You won't understand all of the chatter you hear on street corners, you may not be able to read the menus in the restaurants, but, with a little practice, you will be able to find and understand the major road signs, go in the right direction, and find your way.

How can you figure out the primary audience? First, look at the publication venue. (Here, to some extent, you can judge a book by its cover). If the reading comes from an academic journal, then chances are good that the primary audience is other academics. Clues that a journal is academic (as opposed to popular, like *Time* or *Newsweek*) include a citation format that refers to a volume number and an issue number, and often this information appears at the top or bottom of every page. Sometimes you can tell if a reading comes from an academic journal based on the title—e.g., do the *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education or Qualitative Research in Psychology* sound like they are written for a popular audience? What if you're still not sure? Ask your reference librarians, classmates, your instructor, or friends and family who have more experience with these types of readings than you do.

There are two implications that you should be aware of if you are not the primary audience for a text. First, the author will assume prior knowledge that you likely don't have. You can expect sentences like "as Durkheim has so famously argued . . ." or "much ink has been spilled on the implications of the modernization hypothesis" where you have no idea who Durkheim is or what the

modernization hypothesis says. That's OK. It might even be OK to not look these things up at all and still get what you need from the reading (but you won't know that yet). In the first reading of an article, it's smart to hold off on looking too many things up. Just be prepared to face a wall of references that don't mean a whole lot to you.

Second, if you're not the primary audience, don't be surprised if you find that the writing isn't appealing to you. Whereas a novelist or a magazine writer works hard to draw us in as readers, many academic authors don't use strategies to keep us hooked. In fact, many of these strategies (use of sensory language, suspense, etc.) would never get published in academic venues. By the same token, you'll use very different strategies to read these scholarly texts.

You may be wondering, if you're not the intended audience for the text, why do you have to read it in the first place? This is an excellent question, and one that you need to answer before you do your reading. As I mentioned earlier in the discussion of the role of the reader, you may need to do a little sleuthing to figure this out. In addition to the suggestions I provided earlier, look to your course notes and syllabus for answers. Often professors will tell you why they assign specific readings. Pay attention—they will likely offer insights on the context of the reading and the most important points. If after all of this, you still have no idea why you're supposed to read six articles on the history of Newtonian physics, then ask your professor. Use the answers to help you focus on the really important aspects of the texts and to gloss over the parts that are less relevant to your coursework. If you remain confused, continue to ask for clarification. Ask questions in class (your classmates will be grateful). Go to office hours. Most faculty love the opportunity to talk about readings that they have chosen with care.

Once you have an idea who the intended audience is for the article and why you are assigned to read it, don't sit down and read the article from start to finish, like a good mystery. Get a lay of the land before you go too deep. One way to do this is to study the

architecture of the article. Here are some key components to look for:

The title. As obvious as it sounds, pay attention to the title because it can convey a lot of information that can help you figure out how to read the rest of the article more efficiently. Let's say that I know my reading will be about the Russian Revolution. Let's say I even know that it will be about the role of music in the Russian Revolution. Let's say the title is "'Like the beating of my heart': A discourse analysis of Muscovite musicians' letters during the Russian Revolution." This tells me not only the subject matter of the article (something about letters Russian musicians wrote during the Revolution) but it also tells me something about the methodology, or the way that the author approaches the subject matter. I might not know exactly what discourse analysis is, but I can guess that you can do it to letters and that I should pay particular attention to it when the author mentions it in the article. On the other hand, if the title of the article were "Garbage cans and metal pipes: Bolshevik music and the politics of proletariat propaganda" I would know to look out for very different words and concepts. Note, also, that the convention within some academic disciplines to have a pretty long title separated by a colon usually follows a predictable pattern. The text to the left of the colon serves as a teaser, or as something to grab a reader's attention (remember that the author is likely not trying to grab your attention, so you may not find these teasers particularly effective—though it is probably packed with phrases that would entice someone who already studies the topic). The information to the right of the colon typically is a more straightforward explanation of what the article is about.

The abstract. Not all of your readings will come with abstracts, but when they do, pay close attention. An abstract is like an executive summary. Usually one paragraph at the beginning of an article, the abstract serves to encapsulate the main points of the article. It's generally a pretty specialized summary that seeks to answer specific questions. These include: the main problem or question, the approach (how did the author(s) do the work they

write about in the article?), the shiny new thing that this article does (more on this later, but to be published in an academic journal you often need to argue that you are doing something that has not been done before), and why people who are already invested in this field should care (in other words, you should be able to figure out why another academic should find the article important). The abstract often appears in database searches, and helps scholars decide if they want to seek out the full article.

That's a whole lot to accomplish in one paragraph.

As a result, authors often use specialized jargon to convey complex ideas in few words, make assumptions of prior knowledge, and don't worry much about general readability. Abstracts, thus, are generally dense, and it's not uncommon to read through an abstract and not have a clue about what you just read. This is a good place to re-read, highlight, underline, look up what you don't know. You still may not have a firm grasp on everything in the abstract, but treat the key terms in the abstract like parts of a map when you see them in the main text, leading you to treasure: understanding the main argument.

The introduction. The introduction serves some of the same functions as the abstract, but there is a lot more breathing room here. When I started reading academic texts, I'd breeze through the introduction to get to the "meat" of the text. This was exactly the wrong thing to do. I can't remember how many times I'd find myself in the middle of some dense reading, perhaps understanding the content of a particular paragraph, but completely unable to connect that paragraph with the overall structure of the article. I'd jump from the lily pad of one paragraph to the next, continually fearful that I'd slip off and lose myself in a sea of total confusion (and I often did slip).

If the author is doing her/his job well, the introduction will not only summarize the whole piece, present the main idea, and tell us why we should care, but it will also often offer a road map for the rest of the article. Sometimes, the introduction will be called "introduction," which makes things easy. Sometimes, it's not.

Generally, treat the first section of an article as the introduction, regardless if it's explicitly called that or not.

There are times where your reading will have the introduction chopped off. This makes your work harder. The two most common instances of introduction-less readings are assigned excerpts of articles and lone book chapters. In the first case, you only have a portion of an article so you cannot take advantage of many of the context clues the writer set out for readers. You will need to rely more heavily on the context of your course in general and your assignment in particular to find your bearings here. If the reading is high stakes (e.g., if you have to write a paper or take an exam on it), you may want to ask your professor how you can get the whole article. In the second case, your professor assigns a chapter or two from the middle of an academic book. The chapter will hopefully contain some introductory material (and generally will include much more than the middle of a journal article), but you will likely be missing some context clues that the author included in the introduction to the whole book. If you have trouble finding your footing here, and it's important that you grasp the meaning and significance of the chapter, seek out the book itself and skim the introductory chapter to ground you in the larger questions that the author is addressing. Oddly, even though you'll be doing more reading, it may save you time because you can read your assigned chapter(s) more efficiently.

Roadmaps included in the introduction are often surprisingly straightforward. They often are as simple as "in the first section, we examine . . . in the second section we argue . . ." etc. Search for these maps. Underline them. Highlight them. Go back to them when you find your comprehension slipping.

Section headings. A section heading serves as a title for a particular part of an article. Read all of these to get a sense of the trajectory of the text before delving into the content in each section (with the exception of the introduction and the conclusion which you should read in detail). Get a passing familiarity with

the meanings of the words in the section headings—they are likely important to understanding the main argument of the text.

Conclusion. When writing papers, you've likely heard the cliché "in the introduction, write what you will say, then say it, then write what you just said." With this formula, it would seem logical to gloss over the conclusion, because, essentially, you've already read it already. However, this is not the case. Instead, pay close attention to the conclusion. It can help you make sure you understood the introduction.

Sometimes a slight re-phrasing can help you understand the author's arguments in an important, new way. In addition, the conclusion is often where authors indicate the limitations of their work, the unanswered questions, the horizons left unexplored. And this is often the land of exam and essay questions . . . asking you to extend the author's analysis beyond its own shores.

At this point, you have pored over the title, the introduction, the section headings, and the conclusion. You haven't really read the body of the article yet. Your next step is to see if you can answer the question: what is the **main argument or idea** in this text?

Figuring out the main argument is the key to reading the text effectively and efficiently. Once you can identify the main argument, you can determine how much energy to spend on various parts of the reading. For example, if I am drowning in details about the temperance movement in the United States in the 19th Century, I need to know the main argument of the text to know if I need to slow down or if a swift skim will do. If the main argument is that women's organizing has taken different forms in different times, it will probably be enough for me to understand that women organized against the sale and consumption of alcohol. That might involve me looking up "temperance" and getting the gist of women's organizing. However, if the main argument were that scholars have misunderstood the role of upper class white women in temperance organizing in Boston from 1840–1865, then I would probably need to slow down and pay closer attention.

Unless the reading is billed as a review or a synthesis, the only way

that an academic text can even get published is if it claims to argue something new or different. However, unlike laundry detergent or soft drinks, academic articles don't advertise what makes them new and different in block letters inside cartoon bubbles. In fact, finding the main argument can sometimes be tricky. Mostly, though, it's just a matter of knowing where to look. The abstract and the introduction are the best places to look first. With complicated texts, do this work with your classmates, visit your campus writing center (many of them help with reading assignments), or drag a friend into it.

Once you understand the different parts of the text and the writer's main argument, use this information to see how and where you can enter the conversation. In addition, keep your own agenda as a reader in mind as you do this work.

Putting It All Together

Collectively, these suggestions and guidelines will help you read and understand academic texts. They ask you to bring a great deal of awareness and preparation to your reading—for example, figuring out who the primary audience is for the text and, if you are not that audience, why your professor is asking you to read it anyway. Then, instead of passively reading the text from start to finish, my suggestions encourage you to pull the reading into its constituent parts—the abstract, the introduction, the section headings, conclusion, etc.—and read them unevenly and out of order to look for the holy grail of the main argument. Once you have the main argument you can make wise decisions about which parts of the text you need to pore over and which you can blithely skim. The final key to reading smarter, not harder is to make it social. When you have questions, ask. Start conversations with your professors about the reading. Ask your classmates to work with you to find the main arguments. Offer a hand to your peers who are drowning in

dense details. Academics write to join scholarly conversations. Your professors assign you their texts so that you can join them too.

Exercises

Discussion

1. Pick one reading strategy above that you may have used in reading a text previously (like paying close attention to the introduction of a book, chapter, or article). Discuss the ways in which this strategy worked for you and/or didn't work for you. Would you recommend friends use this strategy? (How) might you amend it, and when might you use it again?
2. The author writes in several places about reading academic texts as entering a conversation. What does this mean to you? How can you have a conversation with a text?
3. How might the reading strategies discussed in this article have an impact on your writing? Will you be more aware of your introduction, conclusion, and clues you leave throughout the text for readers? Talk with other writers to see what they may have learned about writing from this article on reading strategies.

Notes

1. In this discussion I draw on Norgaard's excellent discussion of reading as joining a conversation (1–28). By letting you, the reader, know this in a footnote, I am not only citing my source (I'd be plagiarizing if I didn't mention this somewhere), but I'm also showing how I enter this conversation and give you a trail to follow if you want to learn more about the metaphor of the conversation. Following standard academic convention, I put the full reference to Norgaard's text at the end of this article, in the references.

2. I draw on—and recommend—Rounsaville et al.'s discussion of rhetorical sensitivity, critical reading and rhetorical reading (1–35).

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6. Working Through Revision: Rethink, Revise, Reflect

Rethink, Revise, Reflect

MEGAN MCINTYRE

Revision is what happens after you've written something; this might mean you have a full draft or a paragraph or two. It's an opportunity for you to revisit your work, rethink your approach, and make changes to your text so that your work better fits the task you were given or your goals for writing in the first place. In what follows, I lay out some definitions for revision and then offer five steps that can help you revise your work in thoughtful but manageable ways. These steps are most helpful when you have a section or the full piece drafted but can also be helpful at most any step of the writing process.

What is revision?

Revision is your chance to revisit your work and rethink how you've approached the writing situation (whether a writing assignment for a class, an article for your school's student paper, or a brief document, like a memo, for your job or internship). Revising a draft means reviewing what you've already written and (often with the help of feedback from a teacher, supervisor, colleague, or peer) making changes, usually significant, to the text you've written.

As Joseph M. Moxley lays out in his "Revision: Questions to

Consider," there are a few key areas where you might make revisions:

- The purpose, focus, or thesis of your text
- The evidence or support you use
- The organization or order of information
- The formatting, style, or layout of your text

Revision might also involve making smaller changes, though that's often called "editing," which focuses on sentence-level changes to grammar, style, word choice, and/or punctuation. Polished texts tend to undergo both revision and editing at various stages of the writing process.

Five Steps for Making Substantive but Manageable Revisions

Now that we know what revision is, let's talk about how to do it. As an experienced writer and a long-time writing teacher, I've found that there are five key steps for successfully revising my work. First, I solicit feedback. In some classes, feedback may be a required part of the writing process (like when your teacher requires you to submit a draft so that they can offer you suggestions). Even if it's not, though, you can reach out for feedback from your professors, supervisors, or peers; you might also make an appointment at your university's writing center. Once I have feedback from trusted sources, I need to interpret that feedback (step two) and translate it into concrete plans for revision (step three). Next (step four), I need to make changes to the text itself. Below, I'll share some strategies for doing this work, including creating a reverse outline, focusing on the thesis or main idea, reading only for evidence, examining introductions and conclusions, and reading aloud for

flow, connection, and clarity of ideas. Finally (step 5), I reflect on the changes I've made by revisiting the feedback I received and articulating how my revisions respond to that feedback and improve my work.

Step 1: Ask for Feedback

When feedback is already part of your class, you won't really have to ask for feedback, but it can still be useful to think about the kind of feedback that you most want: are you struggling with making sure your essay makes a specific point and that point is clear to the reader? If so, this may mean that feedback about your main idea (sometimes called a thesis) could be helpful. Or would you like feedback about your evidence (the sources you chose, how you used quotations or paraphrased the work you cited, the details you selected, or whether there's enough support for the claims you make)? Would you like to know how well the reader (whether your professor or a peer) could follow the organization? Articulating the kind of feedback you want can help your reader focus their attention; it can also help you re-read your own work with a critical eye.

When you want to ask your professor or supervisor for feedback, consider some of the same questions as above, and ask your professor/supervisor directly. The more specific you are about the kind of feedback you want, the easier it will be for your reader to figure out how to help. Be cognizant, though, of the time you're asking your reader to spend, and give them enough turnaround time to actually give you useful feedback prior to the deadline. For instance, if you want feedback about the organization of a five-page paper, a week may not be enough time, given your professor's other responsibilities. If, though, you want feedback on a smaller section like your introduction, conclusion, main idea, or a single paragraph in the paper, a week may be enough time. Professors may also have

different practices for giving feedback; for example, some may ask you to meet them during office hours to talk through your draft or questions while others may be happy to provide written feedback via email. Always check your syllabus and/or the assignment to see if there's information about the best way to proceed.

If you decided to reach out for feedback, here's a template that might be helpful:

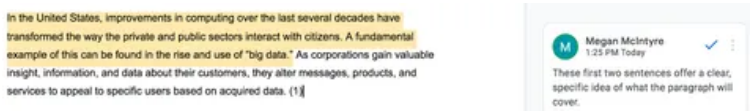
> *Dear Professor [professor's last name],*
>
> *My name is [your name], and I'm a student in [name of class]. I was hoping you might have time to give me some feedback on [name of the assignment]. Specifically, I was hoping you would read [part of paper] and give me feedback on my [particular issue; for example, you might ask about use of sources, the organization of the paragraph, or the paragraph's connection back to the main idea of the text].*
>
> *Sincerely,*
>
> *Your Name*

When you visit the writing center: here, too, you might consider asking some of the same questions above: would feedback about your main idea be helpful? Or would you like feedback about your evidence? Would you like to know how well the reader could follow the organization? Many writing center consultations involve reading your paper aloud with the writing consultant, but for longer papers, you may not have time to review the entire text. What part of the paper do you want to focus on first? One other tip: bring the assignment itself and any feedback you've already received with you to your writing center appointment. Your consultant can help you review both the assignment and previous feedback and help you make a plan for revision.

Step 2: Interpret Feedback:

Once you've asked for feedback, you'll need to (1) figure out what it means, (2) make a plan about how to incorporate the feedback, and (3) make changes to your text. Feedback might do some or all of the following things: tell you how your text is working well, ask questions meant to lead to revision or point out areas that aren't working, and give you advice for how to make changes to the text. Let's look at examples of each of these and think about how we might translate those into a to-do list of sorts.

Look for information about what's already working: generous readers often want writers to know what their text does well, and instructors might begin their feedback by telling students what's already working. This positive feedback shouldn't just make us feel good about our work. (Though, we should; writing is hard work!) This positive feedback can also give us a blueprint for how to revise sections that aren't working as well. Let's look at an example



Here, the instructor tells the writer that the first sentences of this paragraph "offer a clear, specific idea of what the paragraph will cover." These kinds of "topic sentences" help readers more easily follow an idea or argument, and this piece of positive feedback means we have a clear idea of how to do that work well, so we might ask ourselves, "how well do the opening sentences of my other paragraphs prepare the reader for the content of the paragraph?"If the answer is "not that well," consider using the topic sentence your reviewer commented on as a model for revision.

Look for information about what's not working: Feedback will often also point to places in your text that are not quite working. This may take the form of questions that ask for additional information (e.g., "What evidence do you have to support that?" or "How do you know that?"), express confusion (e.g., "As a reader,

I'm not sure I follow the order of information in this paragraph."), or point to places that need specific revisions or additions (e.g., "This paragraph feels disconnected to me. It needs a transition that connects it to the paragraph before it."). Each of these questions or comments could lead to a specific revision. For example, if my reader asks, "How do you know that?," it likely means that I need to add additional evidence, detail, and/or context to make it clear how I came to a particular conclusion. I'll want to make sure to note these questions as I'm drafting my revision plan in the step below.

Look for advice about how to make changes or which changes to make: Sometimes, like with the last example above ("This paragraph feels disconnected to me. It needs a transition that connects it to the paragraph before it."), your reader will also tell you what kind of changes to make. In this case, adding a transitional sentence or idea will help solve the problem the reader identifies (the lack of connection between paragraphs and ideas).

Step 3: Translate Feedback into a Concrete Revision Plan

List changes in order of importance or impact: Once you have gotten feedback and spent some time thinking about what that feedback means, you'll need to make a plan for addressing the feedback. In a separate document, make a list of the feedback you've gotten; then, put it in order according to which piece of feedback might lead to revisions that will have the most significant impact on the draft. Let's think about an example: on a recent draft of an article I wrote, the reviewers gave me three pieces of feedback:

- Add additional evidence to the first section of the text
- Reorder the paragraphs in the final section so that the sections are better connected to one another
- Use fewer contractions throughout

Now, it might be tempting to do the final thing ("use fewer contractions throughout") first; after all, this is the easiest and most straightforward piece of feedback to implement. But, is that the best place to start? Probably not. First of all, adding evidence and changing the organization of a section may mean deleting sentences that contain contractions or adding new sentences with contractions. That is to say, taking on the first two pieces of feedback may change my plan for responding to that third piece of feedback. And secondly, if I have a very limited time to make the requested revisions, spending time on those first two pieces of feedback will likely have the greatest impact on my draft. They require more work on my part, but they also lead to more significant and impactful revisions to my text.

Decide if there's feedback that you disagree with and/or don't plan to incorporate. All feedback is useful because it helps us as writers understand how readers interpret our work, but just because all feedback is useful doesn't mean we have to implement every piece of feedback we get. If there are suggestions for revision with which you disagree, it's important for you to articulate (both to yourself and, if possible, to your professor or supervisor) why you disagree and/or why you aren't planning to make the suggested changes. Let's think through an example: when I was in graduate school, I wrote a final paper about teaching for one of my theory classes. Throughout the paper, I used "I." During peer review, one of my peers commented that the use of "I" undercut my authority and credibility and that I should change everything to third person. I disagreed: I think using "I" in that paper gave me more credibility because it allowed me to make clear that my claims were based both on the sources I was using as evidence and on my own experiences. I didn't stop using "I," and when asked by my professor why, I told her exactly what I just wrote here: using "I" was an important part of my approach to this topic, and I thought it enhanced my credibility. Sometimes, feedback asks us to make changes that go against the goals or purposes we have for our writing, and when that happens, it sometimes makes sense to decide against incorporating that

feedback. The key is to know why you're making such a choice and to be able to articulate that reason to others.

Share your plan with your professor/supervisor: At this point in the process (when you've received specific feedback but haven't started making changes to your text) it might be a good idea to send a brief email or have a brief conversation with the person who gave you the assignment to see if your plan for revisions also make sense to them. If there are changes suggested by your readers that you're not planning to incorporate, this is also a good time to articulate that to your professor and discuss why you don't plan to make those particular changes. Your professor or supervisor might also have some additional suggestions for *how* to make changes that could be helpful as you begin to make revisions.

Step 4: Make Changes

In many of the examples above, there are specific, concrete changes that flow naturally from the feedback I received. But sometimes, feedback is more general or applies to a large section of a text. In those cases, you might need some additional strategies for figuring out which specific changes you want to make and how to make those changes. Here are few strategies that might be helpful at this point in the process:

Create a reverse outline: Creating a reverse outline allows you to see the main ideas of each of your paragraphs and think about the overall organization of your text. To create a reverse outline, you'll need a full draft of your text. Next to each paragraph, add a word or phrase that conveys the main topic of the paragraph. (If you find yourself wanting to write multiple words/phrases, that's often an indication that the paragraph in question should be more than one paragraph.) Once you've done this for each paragraph, make a list of these words and phrases in order. Are there similar words or phrases in different sections of your text? Do you need to

move paragraphs around to make sure similar ideas are close to one another? Does the order of ideas make sense to you? Is there an important idea missing?

Focus on the thesis or main idea: Focusing on your main idea allows you to ensure that the text serves the purpose you intended or makes the argument you intended. Start by highlighting or underlining your main idea. Does the section you underlined adequately capture what you intended your main idea to be? Are there things missing?

Next, look at each paragraph. Does each of your paragraphs move your reader closer to understanding that main idea? Are there ideas covered by paragraphs or sections that don't show up in your main idea? If so, should you revise your main idea to represent these ideas? Or, if there are sections that don't help to advance your readers' understanding of the main idea, should you remove these sections?

Review your evidence: Each of your paragraphs needs evidence. Different kinds of text use different kinds of evidence. Sometimes, evidence takes the form of quotes, paraphrases, or ideas from scholarly or expert sources. Other times, evidence takes the form of specific details or narratives. Thinking about your purpose for writing (and, if there's an assignment involved, the specific requirements of the assignment), what kinds of evidence does your text need? Do each of your paragraphs have adequate evidence to support the main idea or purpose of that paragraph?

Examine introductions and conclusions: Introductions and conclusions give writers a chance to clearly communicate their purposes, so it's always a great idea to review these two sections as you make revisions. Does your introduction help the reader understand both your topic and your purpose for writing about it? Does your conclusion make clear what you wanted your reader to understand? Making changes to introductions and conclusions can make a big difference to your reader's overall experience of your text.

Step 5: Reflect on the Changes You've Made

So now you're done, right? You've solicited feedback, interpreted the comments you received, and made changes to your work. What's left? The answer is reflection. Reflection asks us to look back on the process that allowed us to compose and revise our texts and think about how that process and the changes we've made might help us compose differently in the future.Taking time to reflect allows you to think through how the feedback you received on this piece of writing might change your writing process moving forward. What have you learned about your strengths as a writer? What have you learned about your challenges? What have you learned about how to address those challenges? Answering these questions will allow you to more easily apply what you've learned writing this specific document to other writing contexts.

Revisit feedback: Once you've made changes to your text, it's a good idea to return to the feedback and consider if there's anything in that feedback you haven't yet responded to. Did the feedback include a suggested revision you decided not to make? Are there additional changes that the feedback encourages? If you've chosen not to implement any of the suggested changes, how would you justify that decision?

Articulate how the changes you made address that feedback: Finally, it can be useful to take a few minutes to articulate *how* the revisions you made address the feedback you received. What changes did you actually make to your text? And for each of those changes, what piece of feedback were you responding to? These notes might be helpful as you work on future drafts of this project and/or future writing projects.

Reflect on (and write a little about) how this process of writing, feedback, and revision might change your process moving forward. This is your chance to take a few notes about how you might approach another writing situation differently because of what you've learned about yourself as a writer. What has this

process taught you about your strengths? What has it taught you about your challenges? How will you approach those challenges differently based on what you learned here?

This chapter originally appeared in *Writing Commons*:
https://writingcommons.org/article/working-through-revision-rethink-revise-reflect/

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7. Reorganizing Drafts

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

Reorganizing Drafts

What this handout is about

This handout gives you strategies to help you rethink your draft's organization.

Why reorganize?

Many students who come to the Writing Center wonder whether their draft "flows"—that is, whether the ideas are connected in a logical order to make a compelling argument. If you're worried about flow, chances are you're sensing some problems with your organizational scheme. It's time to reorganize!

Prerequisites

Two prerequisites will help you reorganize your draft. One is vital: a working thesis statement to give you a focus for organizing. If you're having trouble with this, see our thesis statement handout. The other thing you might want to check before you begin is your

paragraph development. It will be easier to reorganize your ideas if they are all fully fleshed out.

Strategies

Here are **five effective strategies** you can use to reorganize: reverse outlining, talking it out, sectioning, listing and narrowing your argument, and visualizing. Read through all of them before you begin and decide which seems like the best fit for your current needs.

Strategy 1. Reverse outlining

Let's say your paper is about Mark Twain's novel, Huckleberry Finn. Your thesis is:

> Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature.

You feel uncertain whether your paper really follows through on the thesis as promised.

Your paper may benefit from reverse outlining, to make sure it delivers on its promising thesis. A "reverse" outline is one you make after you have written a draft. Your aim is to create an outline of what you've already written, as opposed to the kind of outline that you make before you begin to write. The reverse outline will help you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both your organization and your argument. You will be able to see how your ideas are arranged, look for gaps in your reasoning, identify

unnecessary repetition, check whether you are answering all parts of the assignment prompt, identify places that need transitions, and tell whether you are presenting ideas in a logical order.

Read the draft and take notes

Read your draft over, and as you do so, make very brief notes in the margin about what each paragraph is trying to accomplish. You may find it helpful to number your paragraphs; if you decide that your organization needs some changes, the numbers will make it easier to locate paragraphs and move them around.

If you are concerned that your paragraphs may not be unified (that is, that you are talking about more than one main idea in each paragraph), you can make a more detailed reverse outline that includes a note about the main idea of each sentence. This will ultimately help you decide where to break your paragraphs so that each one sticks to one main idea.

Make the outline

After you've gone through the entire draft, make your outline by transferring your brief notes to a fresh sheet of paper, listing them in the order in which they appear. You can write in whatever style you are comfortable using; it's okay to write in sentence fragments or use abbreviations, since you are the only person who will be using the outline. Make sure you are creating an outline of what is actually in your paper, rather than what you intended to have in it or think should be in it! A reverse outline of your paper about Huckleberry Finn might look something like this:

> Paragraph 1: Intro. Thesis: "Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature."
>
> Paragraph 2: Background on Huck Finn
>
> Paragraph 3: River for Huck and Jim. Also shore for Jim.
>
> Paragraph 4: Shore for Huck. Shore and laws for Jim.
>
> Paragraph 5: Shore and family, school.
>
> Paragraph 6: River and freedom, democracy.

Paragraph 7: River and shore similarities.
Paragraph 8: Conclusion.

After making the outline, take a break for a few minutes!

Examine the outline

Now it's time to focus on your outline. Look at each point and ask yourself questions that address your top concerns.

If you are worried about coherence, you can ask:

- How is this idea related to my thesis?
- How is this idea related to the ideas that come before and after it?

If you are worried about repetition, you can ask:

- Do the same words or phrases appear in several places here?
- If so, could I eliminate or combine some of the paragraphs or sentences?

If you are concerned about overall logic and transitions, you can ask:

- Is this the order I would use if I were explaining my idea to a friend in conversation?
- Will this order be easy for readers to follow?
- Why did I put the ideas in this order—what was my organizing principle?
- Are there places where I seem to suddenly change topics or bring up a new idea? If so, do those places have strong transitions?
  Did I follow the order my thesis suggests, and did I include everything the thesis promised to cover?

If you are concerned about answering the prompt, you can ask:

- If I look at the prompt as a checklist, did I answer all of the

questions in the prompt?
- Do I have the right balance between different parts of the assignment (for example, have I balanced my summary of someone else's argument and my criticisms of the argument)?

Feel free to create more questions that address your concerns about the particular paper you are working on.

Let's go back to our Huckleberry Finn example for a moment. There seems to be a lot of repetition in our reverse outline—the word "shore" comes up in almost every paragraph. You may have noticed other issues, too. **If you revise, here are some possible options:**

- You might decide that you want to combine all the shore scenes into a single section, so all the paragraphs on that topic are adjacent to each other.
- You might decide to give "shore for Jim" its own paragraph, instead of having it as an add-on in the third paragraph.
- You might end up dropping the discussion of the law for Jim, if you decide it is off-topic.
- You might decide to move your discussion of the similarities between the shore and the river to an earlier point in the paper.
- You might decide you need a new paragraph to address an idea you forgot to include.

Your revised outline might look like this:

> Paragraph 1: Intro. Thesis: "Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature."
>
> Paragraph 2: Define American democratic ideals and how they're truly expressed
>
> Paragraph 3: River and shore similarities
>
> Paragraph 4: River for Huck and Jim (river=nature)

Paragraph 5: Shore for Huck and Jim (shore=civilization)
Paragraph 6: Shore, family, and school
Paragraph 7: River, freedom, and democracy
Paragraph 8: Conclusion.

Re-examine the thesis, the outline, and the draft together

Look closely at the outline and see how well it supports the argument in your thesis statement. You should be able to see which paragraphs need rewriting, reordering, or rejecting. You may find that some paragraphs are tangential or irrelevant to the focus of your argument or that some paragraphs have more than one idea and need reworking. You might also decide that you need to revise your thesis statement to better fit what you ended up discussing in the body of your draft.

Once you are happy with your outline, go back to your draft and make the necessary changes. It's wise to finish all of the changes to your organization before you begin proofreading.

Strategy 2. Talking it out

Let's say you're writing about Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, and your working thesis is:

> The New Deal was actually a conservative defense of American capitalism.

Since we are more accustomed to talking than to writing, the way we explain things out loud often makes more sense both to us and to our audience than the way we first write them down. Talking through your ideas can help you reorganize your draft.

Find a friend, your TA, your professor, a relative, a Writing Center coach, or any sympathetic and intelligent listener

Your listener does not need to be an expert on the subject matter your paper addresses.

Explain what your paper is about

Pay attention to how you explain your argument. Chances are that the order in which you present your ideas and evidence to your listener is a logical way to arrange them in your paper. Let's say that you begin by describing your working thesis. As you continue to explain, you realize that one of the first things you talked about was private enterprise—but your draft doesn't address this subject until the last two paragraphs. You may realize that you need to discuss private enterprise near the beginning of your paper.

Take notes or record the conversation

You and your listener should keep track of the way you explain your paper. Written notes are extremely helpful—you won't be able to remember all the details of your conversation. Compare the structure of the argument in the notes you or your listener take to the structure of the draft you've written.

Another good strategy to try is recording your conversation using a tape recorder, digital voice recorder, computer microphone, or iPod and microphone. This will allow you to talk without worrying about taking notes. Later, you can review the conversation and make changes to your draft.

Get your listener to ask questions

It is in your interest as a writer to receive constructive criticism so that your draft will become stronger. You want your listener to say things like, "Would you mind explaining that point about being both conservative and liberal again? I wasn't sure I followed" or "What kind of economic principle is government relief? Is it communist? Archaic?" or "I thought I knew where your argument was going, and I wasn't expecting you to bring up that issue." Questions you can't answer may signal an unnecessary tangent or an area needing further development in the draft. Questions you need to think about will probably make you realize that you need to explain more in your paper. In short, you want to know that your

listener fully understands you; if he or she does not, chances are your readers won't, either.

Strategy 3: Sectioning

Let's say you're working on a paper on euthanasia. Your thesis is:

> Voluntary euthanasia for terminally ill patients is justified on the grounds that it reflects humane values, respects individual autonomy, avoids needless costs, and reduces suffering.

Sectioning works particularly well for long papers where you will be contending with a number of ideas and a complicated argument. It's also useful if you are having difficulty deciding on the goals of each paragraph.

Put paragraphs under section headings

Your argument has four main categories of support. Put each of your paragraphs into one of the four categories: values, autonomy, costs, and reduction of suffering. If any paragraph (besides the introduction or conclusion) fits into two categories or all three, you may need to look at our paragraph development handout. Ideally, each paragraph should have just one central idea. If some paragraphs don't fit any category, then they probably don't belong in the paper.

Re-examine each section

Assuming you have more than one paragraph under each section, try to distinguish between them. For example, under "humane values," you might have listed an argument in favor of euthanasia, a counterargument, and a reply to the counterargument that strengthens your position. Or perhaps you have two separate arguments under "humane values" that can be distinguished from each other by author, logic, ethical principles invoked, etc. Write

down the distinctions—they will help you formulate clear topic sentences. If a single paragraph includes several arguments or points—for example, two arguments and one counterargument—you probably need to revisit paragraph development. You may be trying to do too many different things within a single paragraph.

Re-examine the entire argument

Which section do you want to appear first? Why? Which second? Why? In what order should the paragraphs appear in each section? Look for an order that makes the strongest possible argument.

Strategy 4: Listing and narrowing your argument

Let's say you're writing a history paper, and your working thesis is this:

> Fashions from the 1890s and 1990s have some unexpected things in common, including styling techniques, but they are very different in the materials and styles they employ.

Currently, your paper references some general trends you found on this topic, but it feels a little generic, and your paper is over the maximum page count. What might be giving you trouble is that the topics you've referenced (techniques, materials, and styles) are very broad, and there's only so much you can do in a three-, five-, or even ten-page paper. While your current thesis statement may be accurate, you feel that it may be possible to narrow your argument by finding more specific terms for the thesis statement. Narrowing the paper's argument will, in turn, help you rethink your organization.

In a compare and contrast paper like this one, where you distinguish between and explain fashions from two separate time

periods, listing can help clarify both the organization and the argument.

Make a list

In two columns, list the characteristics of fashion trends from different time periods, limiting yourself to the features you address (however briefly) in your draft. Let's say you come up with the following:

1890s	1990s
Full-coverage outfits	Full-coverage outfits
Fascinators	Gaudy jewelry
Corsets	Crop tops
Lace	Colorful prints
Layers	Layers
Tweed	Denim

As you can see, some of the characteristics pertain to both fashions from the time periods and some just to one or the other. Thus, the listing process should relatively quickly confirm whether the draft obeys the argument laid out in the working thesis.

Re-examine the thesis

You can now see that the draft offers clearer terms for your argument. A revised thesis statement might now read:

> Comparing the corsets, fascinators, and intricate lacework of the 1890s to the crop tops, gaudy jewelry, and colorful prints of the 1990s reveals that in spite of the Victorian era's reputation for extreme modesty, American fashions from the 1890s are just as bold and visually startling as those from the 1990s.

This revised thesis offers more specifics, which should help you organize your draft more successfully by narrowing the scope.

Re-examine the draft's general structure

It seems from the list and the revised thesis statement that you

probably want to establish the similarities in boldness first and then explain how that might change our perspective on the perceived differences of the fashions from both time periods. Check your draft; did you begin with the similarities and then move on to the significance? If not, you need to reorganize.

Reorganize the argument

You still need to ask yourself which similarities are most important. The order in which you present your points generally reflects a hierarchy of significance for your readers to follow.

Strategy 5: Visualizing

Many people find that a visual technique called clustering, mapping, or webbing is a good tool for rethinking a draft's organization. We tell you how to use these techniques in our handout on brainstorming.

When you are working on reorganizing a draft, clustering, mapping, or webbing can help you visually connect the points in your draft. Mapping your draft helps you see its structure in a new way: you'll get a clearer sense of the location and arrangement of your ideas. As a result, it should be easier to make editorial choices that will lead to a more cohesive final draft.

Final thoughts

Learning new strategies for reorganizing your drafts will greatly strengthen your writing process. Most writers find that their ideas develop as they write and that outlines made during the pre-writing stage don't always reflect the structure of the completed draft. Taking the time to examine and, if necessary, rework your

organization after writing your first draft will result in a final paper that is easier for readers to follow. We hope the techniques suggested in this handout will help you get things organized!

How can technology help?

Not sure where to begin or how to capture the different reorganization possibilities for your draft? Technology can help you get started:

Visualize with concept maps. Whether you write out maps by hand or use mind mapping software, concept maps can help you visually connect your ideas. Digitizing your concepts maps may allow allow you to:

- Connect links, embed documents and media, and integrate notes
- Search across maps for keywords
- Convert maps into checklists and outlines
- Export maps to other file formats

Reverse outline in your word processor. Many word processors, including Microsoft Word and Google Docs, have outline features that you can use to reverse outline. Try viewing your section headers as an outline and dragging around sections to preview different organizational options.

Think of sections as slides. Putting your writing into a slideshow, like PowerPoint or Google Slides, can help you easily identify each section of your paper. Once you've divided your writing, you can easily rearrange slides to see which sequence works best.

Testimonials

Check out what other students and writers have tried!

Read more about how a UNC graduate student uses PowerPoint to organize an essay in our blog post PowerPoints: More than Presentations.

In Scrivener: My New Favorite Word Processor, writing coach Eli shares his experience using Scrivener to write, outline, and reorganize an essay draft.

A UNC undergraduate student re-organizes a paper piece-by-piece in Rocking a Paper with Scissors.

This chapter originally appeared as part of the UNC-CH Writing Center *Tips and Tools* page: https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

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https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

8. APA & MLA Citation & Documentation

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Research papers at the college level will require some kind of documentation style. Documentation styles provide students, teachers, and researchers standards and specifications to follow for paper set up, in-text documentation, and references. They also will have recommendations for writing style, word choice, and in some cases, organization.

The most common documentation styles are APA (from the American Psychological Association) and MLA (from the Modern Language Association), and some fields require Chicago Style (from the University of Chicago Press).

While it may feel tedious learning the different aspects of a documentation style, it's important to remember following style guidelines helps add credibility to your writing by providing you with a structured method for sharing your research with your audience.

Chapter Contents:

- Locating Reference Information
- Formatting Titles
- APA Style

- APA in-text citation
- APA references

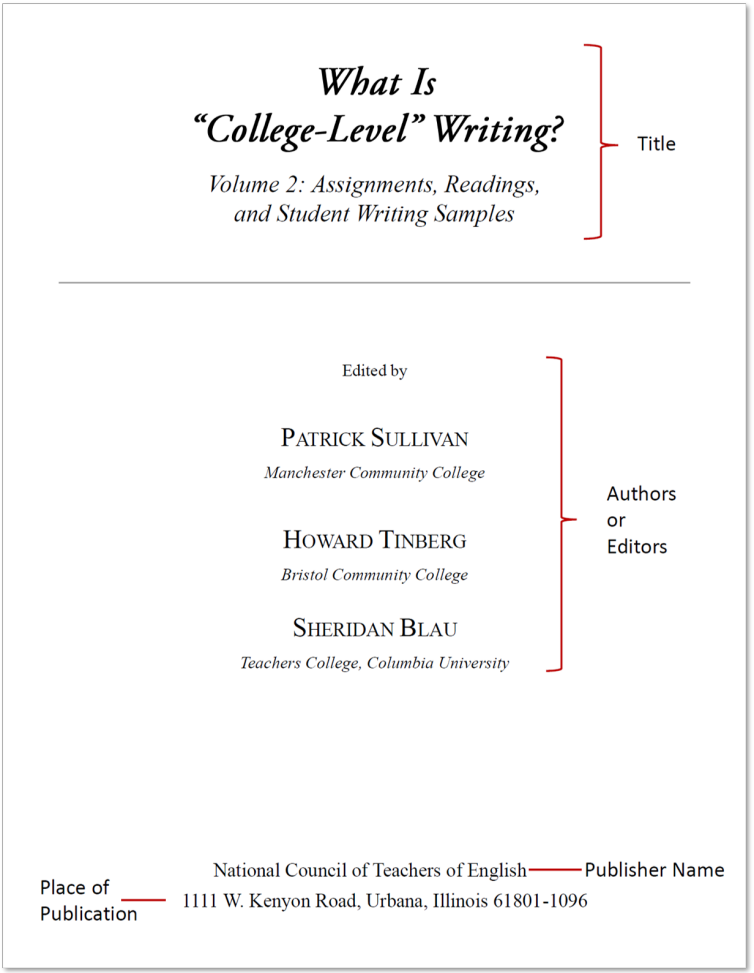
- MLA Style
  - MLA in-text citation
  - MLA works cited

Locating Reference Information

As you'll learn in this section of Citation & Documentation, part of writing within a particular documentation style, such as APA or MLA, is building a References or a Works Cited list with full publication information. But what happens when you're looking at your sources and just are not sure where to find all the necessary information like publication dates, volume numbers for journal articles, edition numbers, and the like?

The following images link to PDF files which include helpful information about locating publication information you'll need to build your References or Works Cited lists.

Print Book (Title/Author/Publisher)



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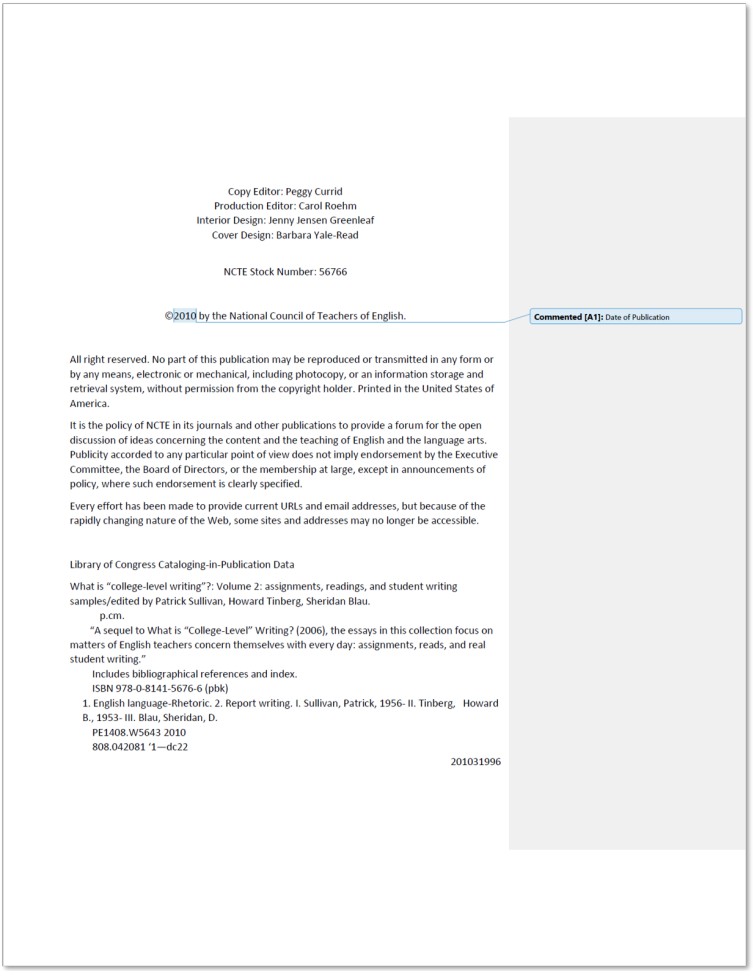

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Every effort has been made to provide current URLs and email addresses, but because of the rapidly changing nature of the Web, some sites and addresses may no longer be accessible.

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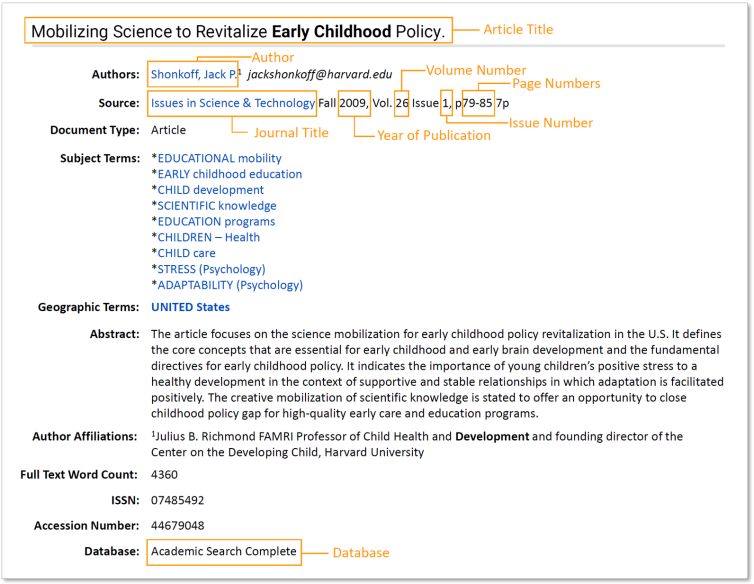
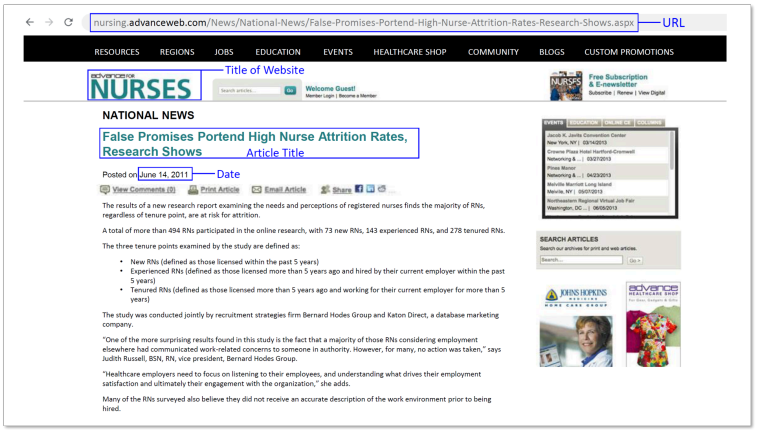


Online Journal Article

Website



Formatting Titles

So, you need to use title case, but you need to know what it is and how to do it. Well, that depends on who you ask. No matter which style guide you use, the basic principle is the same: The first word of the title and subtitle are uppercased, and major words have the first letter of the word capitalized. However, each style guide has its own requirements for how to use title case for that style.

Below you will see the guidelines compiled for APA, MLA, and Chicago/Turabian.

Title Elements	APA 7th Edition	MLA 9th Edition	Chi 9th
Name used within the style	Title case	Title-style capitalization	Hea
The first word of the title and subtitle	Uppercase	Uppercase	Up
The first word after a colon	Uppercase	Uppercase	Up
Major words (e.g. nouns, pronouns, verbs, etc.)	Uppercase	Uppercase (for titles in English; titles in other languages are sentence case)	Up titl sen
Last word	Uppercase only if it is a major word	Uppercase	Up (wi
Articles (a, an, the)	Lowercase (unless it is the first word of the title or subtitle)	Lowercase (unless it is the first word of the title or subtitle)	Low (un a ti
Coordinating conjunctions	Lowercase if 3 or fewer letters (and, as, but, for, if, nor, or, so, yet)*	Lowercase (and, but for, nor, or, so, yet)*	Low (an use titl
Prepositions	If they are 3 letters or fewer, then lowercase them. (e.g. as, at, by, in, to, etc.)	Lowercase (e.g. according to, as, between, in)	Low adv "As par
"To" used as an infinitive	Lowercase	Lowercase	Low (un a ti
Other notes			A p low low Fan

1. "Lowercase the second part of a species name, such as fulvescens in Acipenser fulvescens, even if it is the last word in a title or subtitle" (CMOS, p. 527, 8.159).

*Listed coordinating conjunctions are directly from their respective manuals. See below for attributions to each manual.

Attributions:

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000

The Modern Language Association of America. (2021). *MLA handbook* (9th ed.). The Modern Language Association of America.

The University of Chicago Press. (2017). *The Chicago manual of style* (17th ed.). https://doi.org/10.7208/cmos17

Turabian, K. L. (2018). A *manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago Style for students and researchers* (9th ed.) (W.C. Booth, G. G. Colomb, J. M. Williams, J. Bizup, & W. T. Fitzgerald, Eds.). https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226430607.001.0001

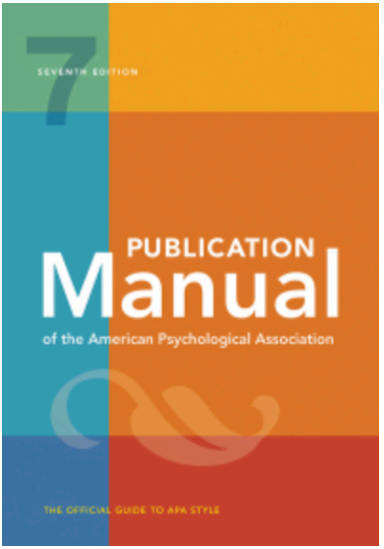
APA Style:

You will often use sources for academic writing, and it's important to know how to responsibly cite and integrate those sources into your own writing. APA format provides guidelines and structures for

citing those sources in a way that helps you avoid plagiarism and give proper credit to your sources.

APA stands for the American Psychological Association and is the format designed for use within the field of psychology. However, other disciplines use APA as well, so always use the format your professor chooses.

In addition to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition, the APA maintains its own website with multiple examples of how to format your paper and cite your sources. If you're unable to find the answer to your question here, check the APA Manual 7th edition or the APA website.



Papers constructed according to APA guidelines generally include the following elements:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Body
- Subsections within the body, with headings
- Tables and Figures
- References

In most cases, each of these elements will begin on a separate page, and it is important to note that not all academic papers will include all of these elements.

For specific types of reports, your subsections may need to be named with headings that reflect the type of report you are writing. For example, in reports on experiments or studies you'll usually need to follow the IMRAD structure with Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections. Be sure to check with your instructor to determine what the expectations are for your paper.

The APA style demos in this section will provide you with more information regarding APA in-text citations and the references list.

APA Style Overview:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://open.ocolearnok.org/cuwrite/?p=396#h5p-1

APA In-Text Citations:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://open.ocolearnok.org/cuwrite/?p=396#h5p-2

APA In-Text Citations Table of Contents:

- Single Author
- Three or More Authors
- Group Author
- Multiple Publications, Same Author

- Multiple Publications, Different Authors
- Unknown or Anonymous Author
- Personal Communications
- Direct Quotes

Single Author

When listing the source of information you are using in your paper, list the last name of the author (without their initials), followed by a comma, and then the year of publication. When referring to the author(s) directly in the text (also called a narrative citation), then list only the year (and page number, if needed for a direct quote).

Examples:

One scholar argued that it is impossible to measure social class (Calvert, 1982).

Calvert (1982) argued that it is impossible to measure social class.

Two Authors

Authors should be presented in the order that they appear in the published article. If they are cited within closed brackets, use the ampersand (&) between them. If they are not enclosed in brackets, then use the spelled out "and."

Examples:

A well-known study argued that social class is rapidly becoming obsolete (Calvert & Liu, 1987).

Calvert and Liu (1987) argued that social class is rapidly becoming obsolete.

Three or More Authors

Starting with the first author mentioned in the text, the correct format is (Author et al., year). This includes even the first citation. All authors, up to 20, should be listed in the corresponding reference.

Examples:

Calvert et al. (1987) argued that the concept of social class is rapidly becoming obsolete.

The concept of social class is rapidly becoming obsolete (Calvert et al., 1987).

Group Author

With Abbreviations

For group authors with abbreviations, use the full name and the abbreviation in the first citation. Then, use only the abbreviation in subsequent citations.

Examples:

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2019), women between the ages of 40 and 59 have the highest rates of depression in the United States.

Women between the ages of 40 and 50 have the highest rates of depression in the United States (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2019).

Without Abbreviations

For group authors without abbreviations, simply list the group author with the usual citation format.

Examples:

According to Stanford University (2018), first-generation college students face many obstacles as they work to complete their degrees.

First-generation college students face many obstacles as they work to complete their degrees (Stanford University, 2018).

Multiple Publications, Same Author

If an author has multiple publications you need to cite, use a comma to separate the years of publication in chronological order (oldest to most recent). If the publications occur in the same year, the American Psychological Association Publication Manual recommends using suffixes a, b, c, etc.

- **NOTE:** The corresponding letters should be

used in the reference list, and these references should be ordered alphabetically by title.

Examples:

A recent study argued for the abolition of social class (Calvert, 2004, 2005a, 2005b).

Calvert (2004, 2005a, 2005b) argued for the abolition of social class.

Multiple Publications, Different Authors

When citing multiple authors for the same information, use semicolons to separate the different citations. The authors should be cited in alphabetical order, and, if there is a need to cite more than one source by the same author within a citation for multiple publications, place the years of publication in chronological order (oldest to most recent).

Example:

A recent study argued for the abolition of social class (Calvert, 1987; Liu, 2004, 2005; Smith, 2003).

Unknown or Anonymous Author

When the author of a work is not known, the title of the work will be used in place of the author. There are some important details to be aware of however.

- If the title is long, it should be shortened for the in-text citation.
- Titles should be in title case even though they will be in sentence case on the References page.
- If the title is italicized in the reference, then it should also be italicized within the in-text citation.

Examples:

Children who are neglected suffer from trauma that can last a lifetime (*Foundations of Social Literacy*, 2018.)According to *Foundations of Social Literacy*, children who are neglected suffer from trauma that can last a lifetime (2018).

- If the title of the work is not italicized within the reference, use quotation marks around the title.

Examples:

Vitamin D deficiency affects approximately one billion people worldwide ("Medical Science Today," 2019)."Medical Science Today" professes that vitamin D

deficiency affects approximately one billion people worldwide (2019).

- If the work is attributed to "Anonymous," use "Anonymous" in place of the author. There is no need to italicize or use quotes.

Example:

The field of psychology is filled with people who want to understand their own lives (Anonymous, 2020).

Personal Communications

Personal communications, which are considered "nonrecoverable data" by the APA, are information that readers cannot typically access. These include personal interviews, emails, letters, and phone calls. This information should be cited within the text, but not included in a References list.

When citing a personal communication within the text, include the following information: (Author's first initial. Author's last name, personal communication, Date of publication).

Examples:

Opinions vary when it comes to the correct way to

baste a turkey (J. Doe, personal communication, December 8, 2018).

Doe confided that turkey basting is not a precise art (personal communication, December 8, 2018).

Direct Quotes

While academic writing encourages paraphrasing over quoting, there are instances when it is necessary to cite a direct quotation. When doing so, follow the corresponding rules for the in-text citation type and add a page number to the end of the citation.

When using the author or authors' names within the text (also called a narrative citation), the year citation comes after the author's name, and the page number citation should be placed after the direct quotation. Be sure to put quoted material inside quotation marks. Place the period after the citation for all quotes shorter than 40 words.

Examples:

According to Smith (2018), "the number of birds in North America has declined by 2.9 billion since 1970" (p. 31).

"The number of birds in North America has declined by 2.9 billion since 1970" (Smith, 2018, p. 31).

- **NOTE:** For multiple pages, use pp. instead of the single p.

No Page Numbers

To cite quotations of material without page numbers, the American Psychological Publication Manual recommends providing section names, heading names, or paragraph numbers—essentially providing readers with necessary information to locate the quotation.

Example:

According to Williams (2019), "gravity is actually the bending of space" (para. 5).

APA References

Every cited source from your essay, with the exception of personal communications, should appear in your References page, which comes at the end of the essay.

The References page must conform to the following rules:

- Begin on a separate page at the end of your essay, using the same format as your essay (i.e., one-inch margins and page number).
- Entries in your list of references should be alphabetized by the

authors' last names. Use the title if a work does not have an author.
- Center and bold the word References at the top of the page.
- Double-space all references, even within individual references.
- Use a hanging indent of 0.5 inches for each reference. This means the first line of each entry will be flush against the left margin, and subsequent lines are indented 0.5 inches.

Click on the following pages to view information on how to create a specific reference entry for your source type.

In this video on APA format, you'll see a sample references list with some tips on creating a references list of your own.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://open.ocolearnok.org/cuwrite/?p=396#h5p-3

APA References Table of Contents:

- Print Book
- Online Book
- Print Journal Article
- Online Journal Article
- Print Magazine Article
- Online Magazine Article
- Article from a Database
- Print Newspaper Article
- Online Newspaper Article
- Webpage on a News Website
- Webpage

- Television, Film, & Video
- Music
- Thesis & Dissertation
- Reports
- Social Media
- Other Sources

Print Book

Single Author

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials. (Year of publication). *Title italicized.* Publisher.

Larson, M. S. (1977). *The rise of professionalism.* University of California Press.

Multiple Authors (two to 20)

List up to 20 authors by their last names followed by initials. Use an ampersand (&) before the last author.

Rivano, N. S., Hoson, A., & Stallings, B. (2001). *Regional integration and economic development.* Palgrave.

Multiple Authors (21 or more)

When listing 21 or more authors, list the first 19 authors with names and initials, followed by an ellipsis (no ampersand), and then the final author's name.

Crocco, F., de Barros, B., McCaffery, B., Croop, P., Aldrich, L., Abeyta, M., Smith, J. Sands, C. Pearson, B., McCage, J., Jackson, C., Walker-Williams, H., Sekera, L., Lee, N., DiCamillo, K., Silver, J., Dvorak, A., Fuller, M., Thoreau, H., . . . Healy, A. (2017). *Creativity and design*. Abbeville Press.

Revised Editions

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initial, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year of publication). *Title italicized* (Number of edition followed by ed.). Publisher.

Hochman, J. (1994). *Strategies for urban farming* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall.

Edited Books

Elements: Editor's Last name, Editor's First and Middle initial, & Last names and initials of other editors,

if any. (Ed. or Eds.). (Year of publication). *Title italicized.* Publisher.

Siskin, M. (Ed.). (1988). *The alphabet of desire.* Plenum.

Chapter or Article in an Edited Book

Elements: Chapter Author's Last name, Chapter Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year of publication). Title of chapter or article. In Editor(s) First and Middle initials and Last names (Ed. or Eds.), *Book title italicized* (pp. followed by the page range for the chapter/article). Publisher.

Rodriguez, J. (1999). Imperfection is meaningless: On prayer and chanting. In P. Smith (Ed.), *Looking ahead* (pp. 107-112). St. Martin's Press.

Online Book

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year of publication). *Title of the book*

italicized. URL to the full text ebook or to the distributor's homepage

Austen, J. (1813). *Pride and prejudice*. http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1342

Online Book with a DOI

Smith, J. (2018). *Women's support groups*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10/1022/0000091-00

Edited Ebook from a Library Database

- **NOTE:** Use (Ed.) if there is a single editor.

Randall, S. & Ford, H. (Eds.) (2011). *Long term conditions: A guide for nurses and health care professionals*. http://www.ebrary.com

Print Journal Article

- **NOTE:** In the 7th edition, the style manual of the American Psychological Association no longer differentiates between journals with and without

continuous pagination. If the journal does not have an issue number, simply omit it from the reference.

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal italicized*, *Volume number italicized*(Issue Number), Page numbers.

Winans, A. D. (1992). The Mafioso and American political culture. *Journal of Popular Culture, 22*(1), 21-47.

Online Journal Article

Journal Article with a DOI (Digital Object Identifier)

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Journal italicized*, *Volume number italicized*(Issue number), Page numbers. DOI

Herbst-Damm, K. L., & Kulik, J. A. (2005). Volunteer

support, marital status, and the survival times of terminally ill patients. *Health Psychology*, 24(2), 225-229. https://doi.org/10.1037/027806133.24.2.225

Journal Article without a DOI, with a Nondatabase URL

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Journal italicized, volume number italicized*(Issue number), Page numbers. URL

Kelley, H., & Betsalel, K. (2004). Mind's fire: Language, power, and representations of stroke. *Anthropology & Humanism*, 29(2), 104-116. http://www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/&28ISSN%291548-1409

Journal Article without a DOI from Academic Research Database

- **NOTE:** Do not include the database name or URL.

Anderson, H. (2019). Teaching during times of trauma. *Education Today*, 36(1), 35-43.

Print Magazine Article

- **NOTE:** Magazine citations are similar to journal citations, but they include additional information about the publication date. For monthly magazines, the month is included. For weekly magazines, both the month and day are included.

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year, Month and Day of publication). Title of article. *Title of Magazine italicized*, *Volume number italicized*(Issue number, if available), Page numbers.

Cooper, H. (1998, May). The trouble with debt. *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine*, *43*, 100-103.

Online Magazine Article

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year, Month and Day of publication, if available). Title of article. *Title of Magazine italicized*,

Volume number italicized(Issue number, if available). URL or DOI link

Vogel, C. (2008, June). A honeymoon cut short: How one couple survived the sinking of the Lusitania. *American Heritage*. http://www.americanheritage.com/honeymoon-cut-short

Article from a Database

- **NOTE:** If an article from a database includes a DOI, provide the DOI link as you would for any online journal article. If the article does not include a DOI, the reference will look like a print version of the article. The 7th edition of American Psychological Association Publication Manual states, "Do not include the database name or URL."

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Date). Title of article. *Title of Journal italicized*, *Volume number italicized*(Issue number), Page numbers.

Mershon, D. H. (1998, November). Star trek on the

brain: Alien minds, human minds. *American Scientist*, 86(6), 585.

Print Newspaper Article

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initial, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year, Month and Day of publication). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper italicized*, Page numbers.

Clark, D. E. (1994, March 21). Health factor in cauliflower still elusive. *New York Times*, C1.

Online Newspaper Article

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year, Month and Day of publication). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper italicized.* URL for article

Hunter, J.D. (2019, April 14). Pressure cooker: A Tiger Woods recipe. *The Oregonian.* https://www.oregonlive.com/sports/2019/04/pressure-cooker-a-tiger-woods-recipe-commentary.html

Webpage on a News Website

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Date published or updated). *Title of webpage italicized.* Site Name. URL

Street, F. (2020, January 9). *How the village that inspired 'Frozen' is dealing with overtourism.* CNN. https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/overtourism-frozen-hallstatt-austria/index.html

Webpage

Elements: Author (person or organization). (Date published or updated). *Title of webpage italicized.* Site Name. URL

Boyd, V. (2012, January 15). *About Zora Neale Hurston*. Zora Neale Hurston. http://zoranealehurston.com/about/

- **NOTE:** If the above example had no author or date, the title of the webpage would be moved to the front, and (n.d.) should be used to reflect that no date is available.

About Zora Neale Hurston. (n.d.). Zora Neale Hurston. http://zoranealehurston.com/about

Television, Film, Podcasts, & Video

Television Broadcast

- **NOTE:** Identify the primary contributors at the

beginning of the citation and, in parentheses, identify their function, e.g. Director, Executive producer, Writer, etc.

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other primary contributors, if any. (Function). (Year, Month and Day, if available). Title of episode. In First and middle initials followed by Last name (Executive Producer or Producers), *Title of series italicized*. Production company.

Levy, S. (Director). (2017, October 27). Chapter three: The pollywog. In M. Duffer, R. Duffer, S. Levy, D. Cohen, & I. Paterson (Executive Producers), *Stranger Things*. 21 Laps Entertainment; Netflix.

Film

- **NOTE:** Identify the primary contributors at the beginning of the citation and, in parentheses, identify their function, e.g. Director, Executive producer, Writer, etc.

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other primary contributors, if any. (Function). (Year, Month and Day, if available). *Title of the film italicized* [Film]. Studio or Distributor.

Coen, J. & Coen, E. (Directors). (1996). *Fargo* [Film]. Gramercy Pictures.

Podcast Episode

- **NOTE:** Provide the podcast episode number after the title of the episode in parentheses, but this can be omitted if the series does not number episodes. In the brackets after the episode title and number, specify if the podcast is audio or video. If the URL of the podcast is not known (if accessed via an app), simply omit the URL.

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other primary contributors, if any. (Function). (Year, Month and Day, if available). Title of episode (No. episode number) [Audio or video podcast episode]. In *Title of the series in italics*. URL

Garber, J. (Host). (2019, November 22). The grazing revolution: A radical plan to save the Earth (No. 638) [Audio podcast episode]. In *The farming podcast*. https://www.thefarmingpodcast.com/2019/11/

YouTube Video or Other Streaming Video

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other primary contributors, if any. (Year released, Month and Day). *Title of the video italicized* [Video]. Streaming Service. URL

Ezekiel, S. (2012, March 21). *MIT understanding laser and fiberoptics: Fiberoptics fundamentals*[Video].

YouTube. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DCrIAxEv_Y

Music

Album

Elements: Composer or Artist. (Year). *Title of album.*Label.

- **NOTE:** It is not necessary to denote the format of the work, but this information may be included in brackets.

Petty, T. (1994). *Wildflowers* [Album]. Warner Records.

Single Song or Track

Elements: Composer or Artist. (Year). Title of song. [Song]. On *Title of album.* Label.

- **NOTE:** It is not necessary to denote the format of the work, but this information may be included

in brackets.

Childish Gambino. (2016). Zombies [Song]. On *Awaken my love*. Glassnote.

Thesis & Dissertation

Unpublished Master's Thesis

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials. (Year submitted). *Title of thesis italicized* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Name of College/University.

Blount, C. (1992). *Genre Envy: The threat of theory and the promise of creative writing* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of South Dakota.

Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials. (Year submitted). *Title of dissertation italicized* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Name of College/University.

Baume, D. (1994). *Cracking up the south: Irony in Eudora Welty* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of North Carolina.

Published Thesis or Dissertation

- **NOTE:** Published theses and dissertations are available in databases, such as Pro-Quest Dissertations and Theses Global database, a university archive, or a personal website.

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and Middle initials. (Year submitted). *Title of dissertation or thesis italicized* [Doctoral dissertation or Master's thesis, Name of University]. Name of Database or Archive. URL if published online

Finnian, R. C. (1996). *Development and depression in southern teenagers* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota]. ProQuest Dissertations.

Reports

Reports are similar to journal articles because they typically present research. Report references should be

formatted the same as a book, but keep the following in mind:

- If the report has one or more authors, list those first as you would with a book.
- If the report has a number assigned to it, then that number needs to be included in the reference. It should be placed in parentheses immediately after the title.
- If the report comes from a government agency or organization and no author is listed, list the organization name first.
- If the publisher is the same as the authoring agency, omit the publisher from the source element.

Report with Author(s)

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials. (Year released, Month and Day). *Title of report italicized*(Report Number). Publisher Name (if different from authors). DOI or URL.

Smith, J. A., & Jones, S. P. (2013). *The effects of applying the Excelsior College OWL's reading strategies in freshman writing classes* (Report No. 123). https://www.fdlp.gov/govinfo-excelsior-owl

Report From a Government Agency

Elements: Organization Name. (Year). *Title of report italicized* (Report Number). DOI or URL

National Council of Online Colleges. (2018). *How open educational resources help online colleges stay afloat*. https://ncoc.ho-open-educational-resources-help-online-colleges-stay-afloat/2018.pdf

Social Media

Tweet

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials or Name of Group. [@username]. (Year, Month and Day). *Content of the post up to the first 20 words italicized* [Description of audiovisuals] [Source type]. Site Name. URL

NASA. [@NASA]. (2020, January 5). *A team of astronomers have found EGS77—the farthest galaxy group known to date!* [Video attached] [Tweet].

Twitter. https://twitter.com/NASAUniverse/status/1213925744352661504

Facebook Post

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials or Name of Group. [@username]. (Year, Month and Day). *Content of the post up to the first 20 words italicized* [Description of audiovisuals] [Source type]. Site Name. URL

Excelsior Online Writing Lab. [@ExcelsiorOWL]. (2019, July 2). *Another application for questioning is to develop good research questions.* [Thumbnail with link attached] [Status update]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/ExcelsiorOWL/posts/1149183315268024

Instagram Photo or Video

Elements: Last name, First and Middle initials or Name of Group. [@username]. (Year, Month and Day). *Content of the post up to the first 20 words italicized* [Description of audiovisuals]. Site Name. URL

Sulic, L. [@lukasulicworld]. (2019, December 31). *We wish you a happy new year!* [Photograph]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/B6vTyaZHNU9/?igshid=141g9y12b4gfn

Other Sources

Book Review

- **NOTE:** It is often preferable to find and cite the full book/ebook, but book reviews can be used and cited when what the reviewer has to say is applicable to your research.

Elements: Reviewer's Last name, Reviewer's First and Middle initials. (Year, Month and Day). Title of the review [Review of the book *Title of the book italicized*, by Author's First and Middle initials Author's Last name]. *Title of the Periodical in which the Review is Published italicized*, *Volume number italicized*(Issue number if available), Page numbers. If found online, include the DOI or the URL

Flower, T. (1998, February 24). Blues sisters [Review of the book *Blues legacies and black feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*, by A.Y. Davis]. *Village Voice*, 8, 139-141. http://www.villagevoice.com

Software

Elements: Author's Last name, Author's First and

Middle initials, & Last names and initials of other authors, if any. (Year of publication). *Title of program in italics* (Version) [Computer software or Mobile app]. Publisher Name or App Store. URL if available.

Adobe Photoshop (Version 6) [Computer software]. (2000). Adobe Systems Incorporated.

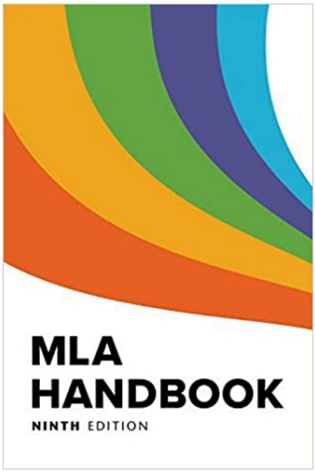
Personal Communications

Personal communications, which are considered "nonrecoverable data" by the APA, are information that readers cannot typically access. These include personal interviews, emails, letters, and phone calls. This information should be cited within the text, but not included in a References list.

MLA Style

MLA stands for the Modern Language Association, and its style guidelines have been assisting authors since 1951. In 2016, the *MLA Handbook* introduced a template using core elements in an effort to simplify much of the documentation process in MLA format. In 2021, the ninth edition was expanded with considerably more content and visuals.

MLA Formatting: The Basics



Papers constructed according to MLA guidelines should adhere to the following elements:

- Double-space all of the text of your paper (including entries within Works Cited).
- Use a clear font between 11 and 13 points. One example is Times New Roman font.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides and indent the first line of a paragraph one half-inch from the left margin.
- Add a running head in the upper right-hand corner with your last name, a space, and then a page number. Pages should be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- List your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date double-spaced in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. This is your header. There is no cover page.
- Center the title on the next double-spaced line after the header.
- Provide in-text citations for all quoted, paraphrased, and summarized information in your paper.
- Include an alphabetized Works Cited page at the end of your paper that gives full bibliographic information for each item cited in your paper.
- If you use endnotes, include them on a separate page before your Works Cited page.

The following parts of this section will provide you with more information regarding MLA formatting, in-text citations, and the Works Cited entries. There are also videos that give an overview of MLA in-text citations and the Works Cited section. The information in this section follows the *MLA Handbook*, 9th edition. MLA guidelines do change over time, so it's important to be aware of the most current information. As always, follow the requirements of your teacher or professor; their requirements take precedence.

MLA Format: Overview Video

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://open.ocolearnok.org/cuwrite/?p=396#h5p-4

**NOTE: page formatting instructions have not changed between MLA 8th edition (2016) and MLA 9th edition (2021). Regardless, follow the page setup requirements of your instructor or professor.*

MLA In-Text Citations

MLA citations follow specific conventions that distinguish them from other styles. In-text citations are also sometimes known as "parenthetical citations" because they are enclosed in parentheses. Most often, the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation or paraphrase is taken must appear in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

At the end of the day Wilbur made "in excess of half a million

dollars" (Marx 43).

If you use the name of the author to set up your quote or paraphrase, mention the full author's name the first time in the sentence; thereafter use only the last name. Then put the page number without p. or pp. in the parentheses at the end of the sentence.

> According to Marx, Wilbur made "in excess of half a million dollars" (43).

Page numbers should appear as they do in the source. If the source is only one page, do not add a page number in the citation. Examples of how numbers could appear in citations include 422, xxvi, and D32.

If other location types are used within a citation, they are listed often using abbreviations. The table below shows some location options with the appropriate abbreviations. When using any of these location types, add a comma within the citation after the author's name. Only use the location type if they are included in the source. For example, do not use line or paragraph numbers if they are not included in the source referenced.

Location	**Appropriate Abbreviation**
chapter(s)	ch. or chs.
line	Do not abbreviate. Write out line or lines.
paragraph(s)	par. or pars.
scene	sc.
section(s)	sec. or secs.

- **NOTE:** If you reference the work as a whole, page numbers are

not required within the citation.
If an ebook is used, use page numbers that are consistent across devices. Chapter numbers are also acceptable. However, do not use location numbers as they can vary in different devices.

If you need to cite more than one source in your in-text citation, you should use a semicolon to separate the sources.

(Jones 101; Williams 23).

It's important to remember, in MLA style, each citation in your text must have a complete bibliographic entry in your Works Cited page, so, if readers want to go to the original source, they can!

The examples above are just a few of the most common examples of in-text citations in MLA style. The following sections provide more detailed information about in-text citing in MLA.

MLA In-Text Citation Walkthrough Video

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://open.ocolearnok.org/cuwrite/?p=396#h5p-7

NOTE: While this video is based on the MLA 8th edition style guidelines, the rules for placement and formatting of in-text citation entries has not changed with the 9th edition (2021).

MLA In-Text Citation Table of Contents

- Single Author
- Two Authors
- Three or More Authors
- Multiple Works by the Same Author
- Multiple Sources in the Same Citation
- Corporate Author
- Anonymous or Unknown Author
- No Page Numbers
- Verse
- Plays
- Sources Quoted in Other Sources

Single Author

When you quote or paraphrase a source, list the last name of the author, followed by the page number.

Example:

According to most experts, "the best way to increase a child's literacy" is to read to them every night (Wolf 220–240).

Two Authors

If your source has two authors, separate their last names with the word "and." The authors' names should be listed in the order they appear in the published work.

Example:

According to most experts, "the best way to increase a child's literacy" is to read to them every night (Wolf and Munemo 220–240).

The first time the authors are mentioned in the text, the full names of both authors should be used.

Example:

James Wolf and Alice Munemo note that children whose parents read to them every night receive higher scores on literacy tests (220–240).

Three or More Authors

If your source has three or more authors, you should include the first author's name followed by **et al.**

Example:

According to most experts, "the best way to increase a child's literacy" is to read to them every night (Wolf et al. 220–240).

The first time the authors are mentioned in the text, one option is to list all of the authors' full names. Alternatively, it is acceptable to mention the first author's full name with "and colleagues" or "and others" after the name.

Example:

James Wolf and colleagues note that children whose parents read to them every night receive higher scores on literacy tests (220–240).

Multiple Works by the Same Author

If more than one work by an author is cited, include shortened titles for the works to distinguish them from each other.

Example if the author's name is mentioned:

Obama has argued that the invasion was a bad idea ("Too Soon" 42), though he has acknowledged elsewhere that it led to much good ("A Stronger Country" 13).

Example if the author's name and title are mentioned:

In "Too Soon," Obama argued that the invasion was a bad idea (42).

Example if the author's name is not mentioned in the sentence:

Photography, because it is both science and art, seems to be "a bridge discipline" (Barthes, "Of Loss and Cameras" 45).

Notice that when all three elements are used within the parenthetical citation, there is a comma added after the author's name.

Multiple Sources in the Same Citation

If multiple sources are cited within the same in-text citation, separate each citation with a semicolon. The sources do not need to be alphabetized within the citation.

Example:

The importance of family bonds and connections is immeasurable (Pickens 21; Bulmore 68).

Corporate Author

If a source is created by an organization, the author element (name of the organization) must be abbreviated to only the noun phrase within the citation, minus any articles. The citation will point the reader to the full name within the Works Cited content. In the text and in the Works Cited, use the full name of the work.

The Excelsior Online Writing Lab (OWL) would be Excelsior Online Writing Lab because Lab is the noun. The words that come before it are modifying the word Lab. However, the National Academy of Medicine would be abbreviated to National Academy. Academy is the noun.

Examples:

Citations

According to the National Academy of Medicine, "sources should be science-based, objective, transparent, and accountable."

"Sources should be science-based, objective, transparent, and accountable" (National Academy).

Work Cited

National Academy of Medicine. "NAM & WHO Encourage Digital Platforms to Apply Global Principles for Identifying Credible Sources of Health Information." 24 Feb. 2022, https://nam.edu/nam-who-encourage-digital-platforms-to-apply-global-principles-for-identifying-credible-sources-of-health-information/.

Anonymous or Unknown Author

If the author is unknown, use an abbreviated version of the work's title or description. The beginning phrase of the title or description should be used without the beginning article (a, an, the). If your title is a noun phrase, it should not be abbreviated. Format the title (or abbreviated title, or description) consistent with the formatting within the Works Cited. For example, if the title is italicized or in quotes on the Works Cited page, it should also be italicized or in quotes here.

Example:

An anonymous source claimed that the Iraq invasion

was a bad idea from the beginning ("Bush Cannot Win" 104).

No Page Numbers

If a work, such as a website, does not include page numbers, then omit this portion of the in-text citation.

Example:

Marx used "class" in "two different ways" (Calvert).

Some sources—like an ebook—employ location indicators other than page numbers. If your work is divided into stable sections like chapters, those sections may be cited. Do not use the location numbers used within an ebook as the locations are often specific to that app or device.

Example:

Marx used "class" in "two different ways" (Calvert, ch. 4).

Verse

- **NOTE:** Some works are classics and have accepted abbreviations that can be used. For plays, it is always acceptable to use the name or abbreviated name of the play. If you are interested in using these abbreviations, there is a list in Appendix 1 within the *MLA Handbook*. This list has abbreviations for works by Chaucer and Shakespeare as well as books within the Bible.

Play

Most poems and verse plays provide line numbers. When quoting lines of verse, avoid using page numbers and cite by whatever categories you can provide (title of play, act, scene, and line). Make sure to separate the numbers with periods. In the citation, use the title of the play, the act and scene separated by a period, and the line numbers without the word "line." The citation examples below refer to title, act, scene, and line numbers.

Examples:

When Prospero says to Ferdinand, "All thy vexations /

Were but my trials of thy love, and thou / Hast strangely stood the test," he reveals his own surprise in his friend's dedication to him (*Tempest* 4.1.5–7).

When Polonius says, "This above all: to thine own self be true, / And it must follow, as the night the day, / Thou canst not then be false to any man," he is giving timeless and wise advice to his son, Laertes (*Hamlet* 1.3.78–80).

Poem

For verse works, such as poems, include line numbers in your in-text citations if the lines are included in your source.

When you are citing only line numbers, write out the full word "line" or "lines."

Example:

In "April Rain Song," Hughes uses sibilance to mimic the sound of raindrops on his roof, "The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night" (line 6).

If you do not use the author's name or the title of the work (or both) in your prose prior to the

citation, include that information, separated by a comma, in the parenthetical citation.

Example:

The poet uses sibilance to mimic the sound of raindrops on his roof, "The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night" (Hughes, "April Rain Song," line 6).

If it is clear that you are referencing only line numbers from within the same work, you only have to use the word "line" or "lines" in the first citation. After that, you can use just the number.

Example:

Poe wrote, "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary" (line 1).

Later in the poem, Poe wrote, "Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, / Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before" (25–26).

Scripture

When citing scripture the first time, add part or all (depending on length and omit articles) of

the first element from the citation from the Works Cited page. Follow that with an abbreviated name of the book as well as chapter and verse numbers. Chapter and verse(s) will be separated with a period. A specific edition should be in italics, but the Bible, Koran, and Talmud without specific editions should not be italicized.

Citation Examples:

He wrote, "A mild answer turns away wrath, sharp words stir up anger" (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Prov. 15.1).

The Holy Bible says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4.7).

In the Bible it says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding" (*Holy Bible*, Prov. 4.7).

Works Cited

The New Jerusalem Bible. Joseph Henry Wansbrough, general editor, Catholic Online, https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=24&bible_chapter=15.

The Holy Bible. Authorized King James Version, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979.

Plays

In-text citations from plays have different formatting depending on whether the play is written in verse or in prose; see above for how to cite plays written in verse. When quoting lines of verse, avoid using page numbers and cite by whatever categories you can provide (title of play, act, scene, and line). Make sure to separate the numbers with periods. In the citation, use the title of the play, the act and scene separated by a period, and the line numbers. The citation examples below refer to title, act, scene, and line numbers.

When referencing commonly studied plays written in prose, list the author and page number first, followed by the act and/or scene, in your in-text citation. Separate the page number from the rest of the details with a semi-colon.

Prose example:

The audience laughs when Vladimir says, "There is a man all over you blaming on his boots the faults of his feet" (Beckett 8; act 1).

Indirect Sources (Sources Quoted in Other Sources)

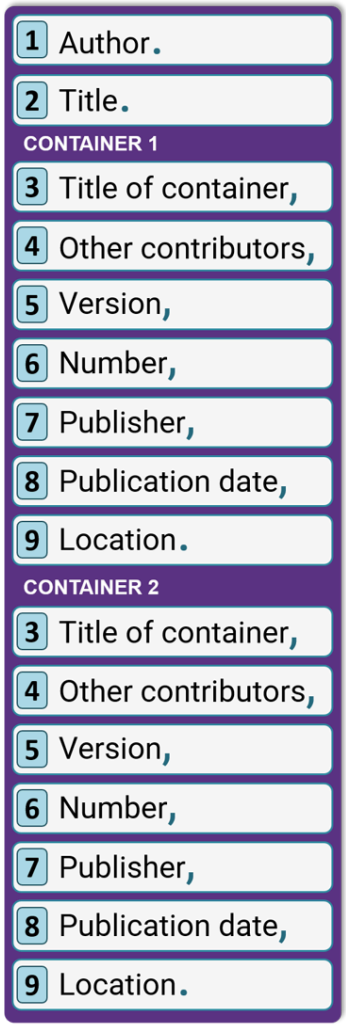
The MLA Handbook recommends taking material from the original source whenever possible. If you need to use indirect quotations, use "qtd. in" to indicate the source consulted. If it is clear in the text that the source is secondhand, "qtd. in" is not needed within the citation.

Example:

Jones claimed that runners who "drank regularly usually stopped running after a few months" (qtd. in Salazar 212).

MLA Works Cited

With the 2016 update (8th edition), MLA changed and simplified the way your Works Cited entries should be formatted. Instead of offering a specific way to format each and every source time, MLA offers a streamlined approach using something called "containers." The ninth edition (2021) continues to use this system.



These containers, pictured here, provide you with the required elements, order, and punctuation for each of your Works Cited entries.

As you work to format your Works Cited entries, you will notice that some sources require only one container, depicted at the right. These are sources that you access directly from their original publication, such as books, an online magazine article, and general websites.

You should follow the order of items listed in the container, following the simplified punctuation rules you see in the container as well. Not all elements will apply to every citation. Use only the elements that apply. You will place a period after the author and the title of the source. Then, you should place commas after each item until the last item used in the container.

Two containers are required for sources that you access through places like library databases. An example of MLA's "two container" structure is depicted at the left. Here, you will notice there is a place for the first container, with the original publication information. Below the first container, the second container provides publication information for where you retrieved that information. For example, a journal article you access through your library's databases will have its original publication

information (container 1) and access information from the online database (container 2).

In the following sections, you can access interpretations of MLA format for Works Cited entries for a wide variety of sources. These interpretations follow the MLA "container" system. Remember that not all elements are needed. Only use the elements that are needed for your source.

MLA Works Cited Page Setup Walkthrough Video:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://open.ocolearnok.org/cuwrite/?p=396#h5p-6

*NOTE: *While this video is based on the MLA 8th edition style guide, the page design for the Works Cited entries has not changed with the 9th edition (2021).*

MLA Works Cited List Table of Contents

- Print Books
- Ebooks
- Print Magazine Articles
- Online Magazine Articles
- Print Journal Articles
- Article from a Database
- Print Newspaper
- Online Newspaper

- Works on Websites
- Audiovisual Works
- Theses & Dissertations
- Classroom Materials
- Email, Text Messages, and Social Media
- Government Publications
- Interviews

Print Books

Single Author

Minot, Stephen. *Three Genres.* Pearson, 2003.

Multiple Author Books

Two authors:

Sennett, Richard, and Jonathan Cobb. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. Vintage Books, 1973.

More than Two Authors:

NOTE: For more than two authors: list only the first author followed by the phrase "et al." (Latin abbreviation for "and others"; no period after "et") in place of the other authors' names.

Smith, John, et al. *Writing and Erasing: New Theories for Pencils*. Utah State UP, 2001.

Two or More Books by the Same Author

NOTE: If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information. When you list multiple works by the same author on your Works Cited page, all entries after the first one use three hyphens or three em dashes and a period in place of the author's name. List alphabetically by title.

Young, Dean. *Elegy on a Toy Piano*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2005.

———. *Embryoyo: New Poems*. McSweeney's, 2007.

Corporate Author

NOTE: Any articles or legal reference to the organization should be omitted from the name.

French Cheese Association. *Cheese for Life*. Fromage Press, 1996.

Book with No Author

NOTE: When you have a book with no author, you should begin with the title of the book.

Encyclopedia of Cats. Feline Press, 1991.

A Translated Book

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Translated by Gregory Rabassa, Harper and Row, 1970.

NOTE: If your writing is focused on the actual translation work itself, it would be acceptable to cite this same citation as follows.

Rabassa, Gregory, translator. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. By Gabriel Garcia, Harper and Row, 1970.

Republished Book

If your source has been republished, the MLA *Handbook* suggests providing the reader with the original publication date. You should always include the publication date of the source you consulted, but writers with a specialist

knowledge of the subject may want to include the original publication date for the reader's benefit.

Thomas, Paul. *Boy Trouble*. 1982. State Press, 1999.

In this example, the first date is the original date of publication, and the second is the publication date of the source consulted.

Subsequent Edition of a Book, Prepared by the Author

Minot, Stephen. *Three Genres*. 8th ed., Pearson, 2007.

Subsequent Edition of a Book, Prepared by an Editor Who is Not the Author

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Edited by J. Paul Hunter, 7th ed., W. W. Norton, 1995.

Entire Anthology or Collection

Lyons, Paul, editor. *The Greatest Gambling Stories Ever Told*. Lyons Press, 2002.

Essay, Poem, or Short Story in an Anthology, Reference, or Collection

To cite a work in an anthology or collection, provide the author and title of the specific work first. Then, provide information for the anthology or collection.

Young, Willie. "Knowing the Unknowable." *Poker and Philosophy*, edited by Eric Bronson, Carus Publishing Company, 2006, pp. 41-57.

Coleman, Wanda. "Job Hunter." *For a Living: The Poetry of Work*, edited by Nicholas Coles and Peter Oresick, U of Illinois P, 1995, p. 105.

Article in a Reference Book

If an article in a reference work has no author, you should begin with the title of the article.

"Discourse." *The Dictionary of Literary Theory*. 2nd ed., Penguin, 1991.

Multivolume Works

MLA requires different formatting depending

on how many volumes of a multi-volume work you are referencing for your citation:

Citing Only One Volume:

If you are citing just one volume of a multi-volume work, list just that number after "Vol." as supplemental information at the end of your citation.

"On the Heavens." *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by J. Barnes, Oxford Translation, Princeton UP, 1971. Vol. 1.

Citing More than One Volume:

When citing some or all of a multivolume set, add up the total number of volumes and include that total with "vols" as a supplemental item at the end of your citation.

Lo Kuan-Chung. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Translated by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, Tuttle Publishing, 2002, Tokyo. 3 vols.

An Introduction, Preface, Forward, or Afterword

If there is only a generic name for the section (e.g. Introduction), add it in the title area without quotes or italics.

Carter, Billy. Introduction. *Southern Beers*, Jersey City Press, 1977, pp. 2–14.

If the author of the part cited is different from

the author of the book, then write the full name of the complete work's author after the word "by."

Carter, Billy. Introduction. *Southern Beers*, by Thomas Budweiser, Jersey City Press, 1977, pp. 2–14.

If the section has a detailed name, use it in quotes. In this situation, you normally do not need to use the generic name.

Carter, Billy. "Why I Am Inspired by Hops." *Southern Beers*, by Carter, Jersey City Press, 1977, pp. 2–14.

Ebooks

According to MLA, an ebook is defined "as a digital book that lacks a URL and that you use software to read on a personal electronic device." Most often, this will just require one container. Normally, an ebook is noted within the version element, and the date should use only the year. If an ebook format (e.g. EPUB, MOBI, AZW, PDF) needs to be noted, possibly to indicate formatting for that publication type, it can be added as a supplemental element at the end of the citation.

Nixon, Robin. *Learning PHP, MySQL and JavaScript*. 4th ed., e-book ed., O'Reilly Media, 2014. EPUB.

Wright, Jonathan V., and Lane Lenard. *Why Stomach Acid Is Good for You: Natural Relief from Heartburn, Indigestion, Reflux, and GERD*. E-book ed., M. Evans and Company, 2012

- **NOTES:** This style guide spells ebook without the hyphen. However, within MLA a hyphen is required ("e-book.")
- In the publishing element, words that relate to the legal status should be removed. However, in the first example, "Company" is part of the name and not reflective of the legal status. The legal name of this publisher is M. Evans and Company, Inc., and Inc. has been removed from the citation.

Print Magazine Articles

Gallivan, Joseph. "Against the Odds." Oregon Humanities, summer 2008, pp. 16-24.

- **NOTE:** A season (like "summer," in this example) in MLA ninth edition is in lowercase if it follows a comma.

Online Magazine Articles

Bilger, Burkhard. "The Height Gap." *The New Yorker*, 5 Apr. 2004, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/04/05/the-height-gap.

Print Journal Articles

- **NOTE:** If the journal does not use volume numbers, cite the issue numbers only.

Pasquaretta, Paul. "On the Indianness' of Bingo: Gambling and the Native American Community." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no.4, 1994, pp. 151-187.

Online Journal Articles

- **NOTE**: MLA now requires full URLs for online material. However, if your article includes a DOI (digital object identifier), that information should be provided instead of the URL.

Collins, Ross. "Writing and Desire: Synthesizing Rhetorical Theories of Genre and Lacanian Theories of the Unconscious." *Composition Forum*, vol. 33, Spring 2016, compositionforum.com/issue/33/writing-desire.php.

Article From a Database

- **NOTE:** MLA now requires full URLs for online material. You should look for a stable link to the article within the database. However, if your article includes a DOI (digital object identifier), that information should be provided instead of the URL.

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante." *The Georgia Review*, vol.

64, no. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 69-88. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41403188.

Print Newspaper

- Works with nonconsecutive pagination ("continued on…") should be cited with the first page on which the article appears, followed by +, as in the example below.
- Works with consecutive pagination should be cited with the full range of pages: pp. 18-19, for example.

Williams, Joy. "Rogue Territory." *The New York Times Book Review*, 9 Nov. 2014, pp. 1+.

Online Newspaper

St. Fleur, Nicholas. "City Bees Stick to a Flower Diet Rather Than Slurp Up Soda." *The New York Times*, 19

May 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/05/21/science/urban-bees-diet-flowers-soda.html.

Works on Websites

Page, Post, or Article on a Website

Hollmichel, Stephanie. "The Reading Brain: Differences between Digital and Print." *So Many Books*, 25 Apr. 2013, somanybooksblog.com/2013/04/25/the-reading-brain-differences-between-digital-and-print/.

From a Book

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Masque of the Red Death." *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by James A. Harrison, vol. 4, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1902, pp. 250–58. *HathiTrust Digital Library*, hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.3192409574368.

On a Repository or Preprint Server

Wang, Living, et al. "Using Mobility Data to Understand and Forecast COVID19 Dynamics." *MedRxiv: The Preprint Server for Health Sciences*, 15 Dec. 2020, https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.12.13.20248129. Preprint.

Work with No Publication Date

- include a date of access if there is no listed publication date for your web source

Beaton, Kate. "The Secret Garden." *Hark! A Vagrant*, www.harkavagrant.com/index.php?id=350. Accessed 17 Jan. 2017.

From the Comment Section

Max the Pen. Comment on "Why They're Wrong." *The Economist*, 29 Sept. 2016, 6:06 p.m., www.economist.com/node/21707926/comments.

Audiovisual Works

Audiobook

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird.* Narrated by Sissy Spacek, audiobook ed., unabridged ed., HarperAudio, 8 July 2014.

Song From an Album

- Clarify the format you used to listen to the song, or include website information if listened online

Snail Mail. "Thinning." *Habit*, Sister Polygon Records, 2016. Vinyl EP.

Snail Mail. "Thinning." *Bandcamp*, snailmailbaltimore.bandcamp.com

Podcast

- If you listened to the podcast on an app such as *iTunes*, list the name of the app in the "Version" slot and provide the other information you see displayed on your device.
- If you listened to the podcast form a website,

include the URL after the date.

"Yiyun Li Reads 'On the Street Where You Live.'" *The Writer's Voice: New Fiction from* The New Yorker, hosted by Deborah Treisman, podcast ed., *The New Yorker*, WNYC, 3 Jan. 2017. *iTunes* app.

Film or Movie

- If you viewed the film in theaters, cite as below:

Opening Night. Directed by John Cassavetes, Faces Distribution, 1977.

- If you viewed the film through an app or streaming service indicate the app or streaming service in the optional element slot at the end of the citation:

Opening Night. Directed by John Cassavetes, Faces Distribution, 1977. *Netflix*, *www.netflix.com*.

Television Episode Viewed as Broadcast

"Hush." 1999. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Complete Fourth Seaso*n, created by Joss Whedon, season 4, episode 10, Mutant Enemy / WB Television Network, 14 Dec. 1999.

Television Episode Viewed on a Website or Streaming Service

"I, Borg." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, season 5, episode 23, Paramount Pictures, 1992. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com.

Television Episode Viewed on Physical Media

"Hush." 1999. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Complete Fourth Seaso*n, created by Joss Whedon, season 4, episode 10, Mutant Enemy / Twentieth Century Fox, 2003, disc 3. DVD.

Video on a Sharing Site (like YouTube):

"What is the MLA International Bibliography?" *Vimeo*, uploaded by MLA International Bibliography, 14 Oct. 2016, Vimeo.com/187399565.

A Photograph Viewed in Person

Cameron, Julia Margaret. *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*. 1866, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

A Painting Viewed Online

Bearden, Romare. *The Train*. 1975. MOMA, www.moma.org/collection/works/65232?locale=en.

An Untitled Image from a Print Magazine

Karasik, Paul. Cartoon. *The New Yorker*, 14 Apr. 2008, p. 49.

Theses & Dissertations

Samuelson, Michael Lynn. *Contending with Foucault*. 2003. Florida State U, dissertation.

Samuelson, Michael Lynn. *Contending with Foucault*. 2003. Florida State U, dissertation, *ProQuest*, search.proquest.com/docview/502312254.

Classroom Materials

Syllabus

Syllabus for Social Networking in the Scriptorium. Taught by Alex Mueller, spring 2014, U of Massachusetts, Boston.

On a Learning Management System (like Blackboard)

"Slides 040720." Introduction to Digital Media Theory, taught by Kathleen Fitzpatrick. D2L, Michigan State U, 7 Apr. 2020, d2l.msu.edu/d2l/le/content/909183/viewContent/8746820/View.

In a Printed Course Pack

Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery." Course pack for English 285: American Short Story Writers, compiled by Anne Smith, spring 2015, Iowa State U.

In an Open Textbook (Pressbooks):

Bunn, Mike. "How to Read Like a Writer." *CU Write: The Cameron Composition Textbook*. Online Consortium of Oklahoma, https://open.ocolearnok.org/cuwrite/chapter/how-to-read-like-a-writer/. Accessed 25 Feb. 2022.

Email, Text Messages, and Social Media

Emails and Text Messages

- NOTE: MLA style includes a hypen in the word e-mail.

Elahi, Nareen. E-mail to Standards Committee. 15 Jan. 2019.

Lemuelson, Erik. Text message to the author. 3 May 2018.

Pierson, Collette. E-mail to the author. 1 June 2019.

Zamora, Estelle. E-mail to Penny Kinkaid. 3 May 2018.

Email Newsletters

"Member Success Stories." *The MLA Commons Newsletter*, Modern Language Association of America, 7 Sept. 2016. E-mail.

Social Media Posts

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Attributions

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For more information on MLA and APA style, see the links collected in "Online Citation & Style Guides" at the beginning of this textbook.

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PART II
STYLE

9. Academic Language vs. Colloquial Language

BRIANNA JERMAN

In what ways have you fulfilled the assignment requirements as they relate to audience, appropriate persona/tone, and rhetorical stance? Why is this word choice/diction inappropriate (conversational) for your audience? What might be more appropriate?

For students and teachers alike, most writing occurs in non-academic settings—notes, e-mails, Facebook posts, blogs, shopping lists, etc. In these writing settings, it is perfectly fine to "write as you speak," using a conversational tone and slang terms. However, when you enter the classroom (and the professional workspace), writing expectations change. These changes in expectation and acceptability occur because the topic or subject of academic writing is more complex than what we write about in our day-to-day writing settings—not because scholars and professionals say so or because they want to sound "snobby" or superior. Also, there is a shift in audience and level of audience interaction. Basically, college-level and professional writing require clarity both in grammar and word choice so that complex ideas can be easily understood by the reader.

Grammatical differences in writing and speaking

Using conversational language and an informal tone—or, "writing as we speak" —in academic writing can be problematic because it can

lead to unclear communication between the writer and the reader. In conversations, we often speak in sentence fragments because we are reacting to the other person's dialogue. For example, when someone asks "How was your day?" we might answer, "Good." However, "good" is not a complete sentence, because it has neither a noun (subject) nor a verb. What we really mean to say is, "My day was good," but because the question implies the subject (my day) and verb (was), our answer can still make sense without repeating these words back to the speaker. However, in writing, the reader cannot necessarily infer the missing subjects and verbs insinuated by the writer. In order for a writer's ideas to be understood, he or she must include a subject and verb in each sentence and not assume that a reader will infer the correct meaning without these words.

We also tend to use run-ons frequently in our conversations, but they usually go unnoticed.

For example, a friend was explaining to me a trip she took to Disney World in which she used several run-ons:

> We took the kids to see "The Country Bear" show and on the "It's a Small World" ride, which Cole absolutely loved and couldn't stop singing the song the rest of the day, and then we took them on "The Haunted House" ride which was a huge mistake because Noah started screaming and yelling and Cole started crying while we were strapped in the moving seats so we couldn't get off and now the past few nights he's been having nightmares about the ghost who follows you home.

Run-ons are problematic because they create confusion. We can, to some degree, follow the story about my friend's trip to Disney World in this really long run-on sentence, but some of the details are muddled: Which song was Cole singing? Who is having nightmares—Noah or Cole? What is "the ghost who follows you home"? When we have conversations, we don't notice run-ons, and if a detail isn't clearly communicated, the listener has the opportunity to ask for clarification. However, someone who is

reading a text message cannot simply ask for clarification from the author. Many of us have visited Disney World, so we may be able to piece together what my friend meant, but it would be very difficult to understand a story about a foreign country we had never visited if it had been recounted in that way.

Communicating clearly using academic language and word choice

Clarity is especially important in academic and professional writing because in these settings we usually are asked to write about more complex subjects that may be unfamiliar to the reader. When my students adopt the method of "write as you speak," their papers usually become confusing and their explanations are difficult to follow because of both grammatical errors and word choice. Correcting grammatical errors that occur in speech is a bit easier than identifying problematic language. The rules of grammar are much more concrete than rules about word choice, which are virtually non-existent. So, if there is no official guide to choosing acceptable words, how do we know when and what colloquial terms are unacceptable?

One way to decide what word to use is to think about words in terms of audience. The issue with colloquial diction is that it is not inclusive of all audiences. Certain terms and words are only familiar to specific generations or groups.

For example, my roommate used to play an online game called "World of Warcraft." One day we were playing tennis together, and after hitting the game-winning shot, she exclaimed, "I totally pwned you!" I later found out that *pwn* is a verb used by people in the gaming community that means "to dominate, conquer, or gain ownership of." Because I had never played World of Warcraft, the meaning of my friend's celebratory exclamation was lost to me.

A barrier in communication also occurs between generations, especially now that technology has influenced us to use abbreviations and create terms such as *LOL* in order to save time. I can assure you that if my grandmother were to read some of my friends' Facebook posts, she would think that they were speaking a foreign language. My grandmother, then, is not considered a member of the intended audience of my friends' Facebook posts.

Obviously, we can eliminate Web and text language from our academic writing. However, there are several other colloquial terms that are more well-known but are still questionable. So how do we know what terms are unacceptable and why? Keeping in mind that in academic writing we want to be as clear and direct as possible, we can decide against using several of these terms by analyzing if their meaning would be clearly understood by audiences of all groups and generations.

For example, several of my students used the phrase "name dropping" in their papers when analyzing one of President Obama's speeches. While most people have heard the phrase or can infer its intended meaning, it is still rather ambiguous and problematic. When I hear the phrase "name dropping," I don't simply think of people mentioning authoritative figures; I think about people who like to talk about their relationships or interactions with famous or important individuals for no purpose other than to brag. President Obama, however, doesn't mention names simply to feel important. Instead, he establishes his credibility to his audience by referencing people who are knowledgeable about an issue. Students know why President Obama mentions certain people's names and professions, but their use of the term "name dropping" may confuse readers who have different associations with the word. In order to avoid these misconceptions, it is best to replace all colloquial terms—which are often ambiguous—with direct and clear language.

Colloquial diction as part of the writing

process and final product

The assignments you complete in English composition courses will prompt you to carefully identify your chosen audience and write clearly with that particular audience in mind. The choices and changes you make in your writing indicate that you are becoming a more aware writer. This means that you understand who you are writing for, that you know what is appropriate for your audience, and that you have made a deliberate effort to adjust your writing accordingly. When evaluating your papers and projects, instructors read carefully, looking at your sentence structure, voice, tone, and word choice to determine whether or not you have been a rhetorically aware writer. Yet knowing how to make these rhetorical choices does not occur naturally for most of us. Instead, the writing process can help all writers continually think about their audience by providing them with opportunities to make changes during each stage of the drafting process. During phases of revision is also the best time to identify and replace colloquial diction in order to better clarify writing.

Academic writing often should appeal to a broad audience and always should be as clear and direct as possible. As discussed above, it is best to eliminate any and all uses of colloquial diction in order to achieve clarity in your writing. However, many of students find it difficult to write using academic language when they are simultaneously trying to organize their thoughts and to think critically about the assigned topic. Since we don't speak or even think in academic language, shifting from conversational language to more formal language can be extremely difficult. This task may seem less daunting if we approach it as a process of change, including several steps rather than a single giant leap. In the initial draft of a paper, using colloquial language is acceptable because it may be easier to understand and organize your thoughts. During successive drafts, you can then revise sentences in order to eliminate colloquialisms, thereby reaching a broader audience.

Eventually, with practice, writing clearly and directly will come more naturally to you.

This chapter originally appeared in *Writing Commons:* https://writingcommons.org/article/using-academic-language/

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10. Making Sure Your Voice is Present

KYLE D. STEDMAN

The Terror of Voice

I like order. I love the comfort of a beautiful and functional Excel spreadsheet. I organize my CDs by genre and then alphabetically by artist. I eat three meals a day.

But my love of order sometimes butts heads with my love of writing. That's because no matter how much attention I pay to following the rules of writing, I know that to produce writing that astounds readers—moving them, making them gasp, enticing them—I'll have to include more than just *correct* writing. I'll need to find a way to make my voice present.

And sometimes, that terrifies me with the uncertainty of it all. I sometimes wish writing excellently were like working in Excel. I know I can make a spreadsheet *absolutely perfect* if my formulas are coded properly and my data is lined up correctly. Writing excellently is messier than that: it means admitting the difficult truth that even when everything in my essay follows all the grammatical and mechanical rules, my writing can still lack qualities that will make my readers' eyes pop out of their heads with delightful surprise.

I often tell my students that the difference between A-level and B-level writing is voice. In other words, essays often deserve B's even when they have perfect punctuation and grammar, an intriguing concept, brilliant ideas, excellent and well-integrated sources, and a Works Cited page that would earn a standing ovation at the annual MLA convention. An essay can have all of those things but still feel dry and voiceless, reading like a dying man trudging

through the desert, sandal-slap after sandal-slap, lifeless sentence after lifeless sentence.

So What is Voice in Writing?

"Voice" is a weird term, right? We usually say your *voice* is the quality of how you sound when you talk out loud—but aren't we talking about writing?

First, let's think about everything that makes your speaking voice distinctive. It has its own aural quality, formed by the size of your mouth, throat, and tongue, along with your distinctive habits of how you use your body to manipulate the sound of the air exhaling from your lungs.

But beyond the sounds your body naturally produces through your mouth, you also have your own way of choosing words, and that's part of your voice, too. You have words you use more often than others, phrases you rely on, and ways you make the musical tone of your voice go up and down in distinct ways. All of those choices are partly based on how you learned to speak in your family and culture, and they're partly based on what you bring to the table as an individual. Sometimes you just let out whatever you're thinking, and sometimes you pause to consider how you want to sound.

Don't miss that: qualities of spoken voice are, to some extent, *chosen*. Depending on where and when and with whom we're speaking, our voice can change.

Now let's turn to writing. I would define voice in writing as *the quality of writing that gives readers the impression that they are hearing a real person, not a machine*. Voice in writing is therefore multifaceted: it's partly an unconscious, natural ring that dwells in the words you write, but it's also related to the words you choose (stuffy and overused or fresh and appealing?), the phrases you rely on (dictionary-like or lively?), and how you affect your readers'

emotions (bored or engaged?). And it's not something that is magically there for some writers and not there for others. Voice is something that can be cultivated, practiced, watered, even designed.

I'm reminded of a quote from poet D.A. Powell, which I heard on the trailer for a documentary called *Bad Writing*. He says, "Bad art is that which does not succeed in cleansing the language of its dead—stinking dead—usages of the past" (Morris Hill Pictures). Voice in writing is like that: it gives readers the sense that they're hearing a fresh, cleansed voice unlike any they've heard before.

The writing in this documentary is called "bad" because of its lack of an authentic voice.

We Need Voice in Academic Writing, Too

A common misconception among writers is that writing for college, especially in a fancy-looking, citation-filled essay, should have the complexity and difficulty of *Pride and Prejudice*: "She is all affability and condescension, and I doubt not but you will be honoured with some portion of her notice when service is over" (Austen). That is, we sometimes assume that academic writing is where we say things with big words and in roundabout ways that seem sort of something like what we imagine talk is like around a gilded dinner table in a palace, somewhere.

I think this assumption is wrong. Even when reading essays that were written for college classes, readers don't want to be bored or confused. They want liveliness; they want voice. Listen to veteran writing teacher Donald Graves use all of his cute-old-man powers to beg you to use your personal voice in even your standardized writing tests:

Donald Graves on the importance of putting voice in your writing

I recently taught a class that focused entirely on blogging for the first thirteen weeks of the course, followed by a final academic essay at the end of the semester. Students regularly asked me what style they should adopt in their final essay, how formal to be, what kind of voice to adopt. To most of the students, my reply was, "Write it how you wrote your blog!" To which almost all of them said, "Huh? That was *informal*. This is *formal*." To which I said, "You're partly right. You paid less attention to details when you were blogging, sure, but your voices were there. You used sentences that sounded like you! They were *resonant*! I was *moved*! Do you hear the *italics* in my voice? That's how good your writing was! So don't lose that by putting on a new coat of formality when it doesn't fit well!" As the one who was going to read their academic essays, I was afraid that I was going to get a bunch of essays that sounded like *Pride and Prejudice*, with big words and roundabout sentence constructions. I wanted big, complex ideas in these final essays, but I also wanted stylistic liveliness, sentences that made me sit up straight and open my eyes wide. I admit that after the students had written first drafts of their essays, I backed off a little, and we talked about the ways that formal writing situations do indeed demand a different kind of voice than a blog post—but I was always insistent that *no* writing situation called for bored readers.

You should know this: teachers talk about their students. And I've heard the following story, or some variant of it, something like twenty times: "My student wrote this awful draft that confused me to no end. So I emailed the student and told him to come in to my office to talk about it. And he gets there to my office and I say, 'What are you trying to say

> on page 2?' and he explains it, and—get this!—he explains it in this beautifully clear language, and it becomes clear that he knew all along what he wanted to talk about and how to defend it and even how his ideas relate to his sources. So I asked him, 'Why didn't you *write* it that way? Why don't you write the way you talk?' and you know what he says? He says, 'Because I thought I was supposed to write formally.' I swear, sometimes I think students get into more trouble trying to write formally than it's worth."

I'm serious. Every semester, I hear that story.

Of course, I see the other side: there's a place for formality in a lot of writing. Depending on the circumstance, sometimes our most formal coat is indeed what we need to wear. In your future college classes, you might not get much of an idea from your professor about what kind of coat they expect you to wear, so you'll probably have to do some asking. ("Dear Professor X, I'm baffled about what kind of voice to use in my essay. For example, may I write the word *baffled*? Please send examples. Sincerely, Judy Jetson.")

My favorite trick here is one I learned from a small writing textbook called *They Say, I Say*: purposefully mixing the formal and informal in a single sentence or two. If you want to talk about something using a formal term, which is often a good idea in formal writing, use the formal term but then turn around and say it again informally. Like this: "Spoken voice is affected by our use of the epithelium, the vocal ligament, and the vocalis muscle. We've got a lot of ways to make sound." The authors of *They Say, I Say* remind us that "translating the one type of language into the other, the specialized into the everyday, can help drive home a point" (Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst 118).

That leads me to the stuff you're probably here for: actual ideas about how to get this elusive thing called voice into your writing.

Suggestions

1. Trust the gush—but then come back to the gush with a critical eye.

In one of my favorite articles about voice in writing, writing scholar Tom Romano tells the story of a student who turned in a piece of paper with the words "TRUST THE GUSH" messily scribbled on it. Romano expounds on what the phrase means to him:

> Trusting the gush means moving on the heat quickening in you.
> Trusting the gush means being fearless with language.
> Trusting the gush means writing about what you are emotionally moved by and perhaps don't even know why.
> Trusting the gush means putting onto the page those thoughts, connections, and perceptions that stand ready to be uttered. (51)

It's beautiful advice that feels true to me. I've had times where I turn off the screen of my computer and write with no visual reference, letting words gush out of me in their most natural, voice-filled way.

But remember how I said that voice isn't just natural, it's also constructed for specific occasions? My gush is usually full of some good, usable words, phrases, and sentences, but it's also a big, gushy mess. So that's when I back away for a bit of time (more than a day, if possible), returning later to my gush in search of the lines that seem most lively, most full of voice, the ones that fit best into my current writing context.

2. Don't be afraid to use some of speech's informalities,

but always punctuate them in formal ways.

Sometimes students ask if they can use contractions in their academic essays, and I always say yes—but then I regret it when I get "theyre not understanding" and "he said your not smart enough" in submitted work. But on the flip side, I find I'm more willing to be lenient with student writing that is slightly too informal for my taste when the writer shows that they know what they're doing with their punctuation. Life is like that, you know? If you take one step of goodwill (knowing your punctuation), people want to give you lenience in other areas (accepting informality, even if it seems to step over the line).

This advice extends to colons (never mistaking them for semicolons and never using a hyphen as a colon), em-dashes (using them wisely and punctuating them perfectly, as two hyphens between two words and no spaces at all), and commas (especially when someone is being addressed, as in "I agree, Mr. President" and when introducing a quotation immediately after a verb, such as when I write, "Yessiree").

3. Read your work aloud—and don't be afraid to have fun with it.

I tell students to read their stuff aloud all the time, and usually I get a scared, silent look in return. (I think this look might mean, "Do you have any idea how stupid I would look if someone walked in while I was talking to myself?") Well, fine—play around with it:

- Read your own stuff aloud to yourself. I like to do this after printing it out. Listen for places where you stumble, where you seem to be saying the same word over and over, where you think you might be boring. Peter Elbow justifies this well:

> I find that when students have the repeated experience of reading their writing aloud, they are more likely to write sentences that are inviting and comfortable to recite—which in turn makes the sentences better for readers who get them in silence. Putting this differently, the sound of written words when spoken is a crucial benefit for silent readers, yet too few students hear the words they write. When they have to read their writing aloud frequently and thus hear it, they tend to listen more as they write—and readers hear more meaning as they read. (5)

- Have someone else read your stuff aloud to you, with another copy in front of yourself to follow along with and mark spots that feel voiceless. Ask your friend what sounded best, what they most remember on the sentence level, where it sounded like *you*.
- Play The Boring Game: have three people sit down, each with a piece of paper with a line drawn through the middle; this is The Boring Line. Make one person the timekeeper. Start reading your essay out loud to them, and ask the timekeeper to raise his hand every thirty seconds. At those moments, the readers all make a dot on the paper to show how bored they are; a dot way above the boring line means they're absolutely engaged, as if beautiful aliens had just transported into the room, while a dot way below the boring line means they're wondering why they agreed to play the stupid boring game with you. After the essay is done, ask them to connect the dots, showing you a line of where they were relatively more or less bored. Talk to them to help identify what parts of the essay bored them; you probably didn't have much voice in those spots.

4. Surprise Your Readers

I'm serious: make sure that throughout your piece, every once in a while you throw in a word or phrase that makes you think, "I bet they *never* saw that one coming!" (In this piece that you're reading now, one of my attempts at that is my first heading, "The Terror of Voice." I'm counting on readers thinking, "Wait, the *terror* of voice? . . . I'm confused! I'd better read on to figure out what he means!")

My guess is that with a little practice, this won't be too hard to achieve. You could read through a draft of something and highlight (either on paper or the computer) every place where you think you're breaking the expectation of your reader in a surprising way, whether because of the topic you chose to dive into or because of a phrase or sentence they might not have seen coming. Then you skim back through and find places without any highlights around, and try to work something in there.

As with most of my suggestions, this can backfire if you take it too far, which is why I think playing The Boring Game (above) is so important, so you can feel out your choices with real people. Obviously, your readers will be surprised if you start slamming sexually explicit words onto the screen, but that's clearly not the kind of voice I'm talking about. Less dramatically, I've been in situations where I go for a strong, surprising personal voice and later discover (on my own, or with the help of someone else) that it's just not working for that audience.

This happened to me recently when I was writing a piece about integrating sources into essays. I worked up this detailed analogy involving Jane Austen, gardens, statues, and helicopters (seriously), and I even kept the analogy through a few drafts. But a friend, whom I had asked to read my draft, told me she was a little confused by the whole thing. At first I ignored her—I was being surprising! There were helicopters—*helicopters*! But eventually, I realized she was right; I had to back down and rework my surprising analogy into

something that just plain made more sense. The revised version was still surprising (involving Spider-Man), but it was surprising *and it worked*. There's a difference.

5. Use Rhetorical Figures to Help Shape Your Sentences

Sometimes we hear or read something and say, "Wow, there was so much power in those words!" And sometimes, we fall for a common lie: we think that powerful speakers and writers are just plain born that way, that their skill comes from some indefinable something that they have and we don't.

I like rhetorical figures because they expose that thinking as a lie.

Since the days of classical Greece and Rome, instructors in rhetoric have realized that this lie existed, so they formulated organized ways of figuring out what exactly makes some speaking and writing feel so powerful. They labeled these terms and encouraged their students to try using these sentence forms in their own sentences. Here are some examples, all of which are direct quotes from *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*, an awesome site at http://rhetoric.byu.edu/ (Burton):

- anaphora: Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, or lines. Example: This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England, / This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings.
- asyndeton: The omission of conjunctions between clauses, often resulting in a hurried rhythm or vehement effect. Example: Veni, vidi, vici (Caesar: "I came; I saw; I conquered")
- epitasis: The addition of a concluding sentence that merely emphasizes what has already been stated. Example: Clean your bedroom. All of it.

These and dozens of others are available at *Silva Rhetoricae* and at

the (somewhat more manageable) *American Rhetoric* site, especially the page on "Rhetorical Figures in Sound" (Eidenmuller).

The idea is to force yourself to try setting up a sentence or two following the guidelines of one of the rhetorical figures, and then to sit back and gauge the result for yourself. Often, I think you'll be impressed with how excellent you sound, with a very present and powerful tone of voice.

The Terror of Practice

In the end, there's one more terrifying thing about writing with voice: it's unlikely that you'll see a huge change without lots of practice. And that means lots of writing. And that means time. Which you might not have.

So I'm closing with a word of moderation. To see a change in your writing voice in just a short semester, you'll need to think about voice in every piece of writing you do. Shooting off a quick Blackboard forum response? Try using a rhetorical figure. Confirming a meeting time with a friend over text message? Try to surprise them with an unexpected phrase. Writing an in-class essay? Read it over slowly in your head, paying careful attention to how it would sound if you read it out loud. (Or, if your teacher lets you, just read it out loud there in the classroom. This is unlikely.) Writing an essay draft that feels like busy-work? Play around with how you might perfectly punctuate some informal language (and don't be afraid to ask your teacher if you did it correctly).

Even though a YouTube search for "voice in writing" will give you lots of good advice—including one devastatingly cute video of young kids baking brownies while the "Word Chef" talks about what makes for a strong voice in a book about a cockroach (teachertubewriting)—there really is no substitute for practice. Thinking about writing is never, ever the same as practicing writing.

And most of all, breathe. Our voice comes from our breath, the life

that flows from our bodies into the minds of our listeners. Shape it, practice it, use it for good. (That's asyndeton—did you catch it?)

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11. Writing Concisely

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

This handout helps you identify wordiness in your sentences, paragraphs, and essays and offers strategies for writing concisely.

Identifying and addressing wordiness in sentences

If you are a student, pay close attention to your instructors' comments on your essays. Have they written things like "wordy," "passive voice," "filler" or "irrelevant"? By learning to write concisely, you will be able to fill your papers with more substantive information. Getting to the point promptly can help you become a clearer thinker and a more engaging writer.

Outside of school, writing concisely can help you create more effective business letters, email messages, memos, and other documents. Busy readers appreciate getting the information they need quickly and easily.

Here are some strategies to help you identify wordiness and decide whether, and how, to revise it. At times, you may choose to keep a sentence just as it is, even though there are more concise ways to express your idea: you might, for example, use repetition to emphasize a point or include a redundant pair of words (a subject

we're just about to discuss) to create a certain rhythm. What's important is that you make a conscious choice.

1. Eliminate redundant pairs

When the first word in a pair has roughly the same meaning as the second, choose one.

Common examples of redundant pairs include: full and complete, each and every, hopes and dreams, whole entire, first and foremost, true and accurate, always and forever.

> Example: For each and every book you purchase, you will receive a free bookmark.
>
> Revision: For every book you purchase, you will receive a free bookmark

2. Delete unnecessary qualifiers

Often we use qualifiers that really aren't necessary to express our meaning (such as "really" in this sentence). By deleting unnecessary qualifiers, you can often eliminate one or two words per sentence. Tweaks like this may not seem like much, but they can add up.

Common qualifiers include: actually, really, basically, probably, very, definitely, somewhat, kind of, extremely, practically.

> Example: Because a great many of the words in this sentence are basically unnecessary, it would really be a very good idea to edit somewhat for conciseness.
>
> Revision: Because many of the words in this sentence are unnecessary, we should edit it.

3. Identify and reduce prepositional phrases

Overuse of prepositional phrases (which begin with words like "in," "for," "at," "on," "through," and "over") can make a sentence clunky and unclear. To locate this problem, circle the prepositions in your draft and see whether you can eliminate any prepositional phrases without losing your meaning. Sometimes the easiest way to revise a wordy sentence is to ask yourself "What do I really mean here?" and then write a new sentence; this approach can be more efficient than just tinkering with your existing sentence.

> Example: The reason for the failure of the basketball team of the University of North Carolina in the Final Four game against the team from Kansas was that on that day and at that time, some players were frequently unable to rebound the ball.
>
> Revision: UNC's basketball team lost the Final Four game against Kansas because it could not consistently rebound the ball.

4. Locate and delete unnecessary modifiers

Sometimes the meaning of a word or phrase implies its modifier, making the modifier unnecessary.

> Example: Do not try to anticipate in advance those events that will completely revolutionize society.

In this example, "anticipate" already implies that something is in advance, and "revolutionize" already implies that something will be completely changed.

> Revision: Do not try to anticipate revolutionary events.

5. Replace a phrase with a word

Many commonly-used phrases can be replaced with single words. These phrases often crop up in writing that requires a formal tone, but they detract from, rather than add to, meaning.

"The reason for", "due to the fact that", "in light of the fact that", "given the fact that", and "considering the fact that" can be replaced with because, since, or why.

"In the event that" and "under circumstances in which" can be replaced with if."It is necessary that" and "cannot be avoided" can be replaced with must or should.

"For the purpose of" can often be replaced with an infinitive verb (the "to ____" form of the verb).

> Example: In the event that going out for the purpose of eating with them cannot be avoided, it is necessary that we first go to the ATM, in light of the fact that I am out of cash.
>
> Revision: If we must go out to eat with them, we should first go to the ATM because I am out of cash.

For more examples of common phrases that can be replaced with a word, see the Writing Center's handout on style.

6. Identify negatives and change them to affirmatives

Expressing ideas in negative form means you must use an extra word; it also makes readers work harder to figure out your meaning.

> Example: If you do not have more than five years of experience, do not call for an interview if you have not already spoken to human resources.
>
> Revision: Applicants with more than five years of

experience can bypass human resources and call for an interview.

Passive voice

In an active sentence, the subject (the person or thing doing the action) comes first. In a passive sentence, the order of the words is different-the object (the thing that is receiving the action) comes first, and the subject appears at the end of the sentence or isn't included at all. To spot the passive voice, look at the main verb of each sentence-if there's a form of "be" (am, is, are, was, were) and a past tense verb (many end with -ed), the sentence may be passive. The passive voice is not a grammatical error, and it can be useful, especially in scientific writing. But writing in the passive voice often leads to using more words than necessary. Passive sentences can also frustrate or confuse your readers, who must wait patiently to find out who or what did the action of the sentence.

Example: The 1780 constitution of Massachusetts was written by John Adams.

In this passive construction, the meaning of the sentence is clear, but there are more words than necessary. To make this sentence more concise, move the subject to the front and get rid of the "to be" verb (in this case, "was").

Revision: John Adams wrote the 1780 Massachusetts Constitution.

Another example: The letter was taken to the mailbox by Sally.

Revision: Sally took the letter to the mailbox.

Writing concise papers

Now that you know how to avoid wordiness at the sentence level, you may want to try some additional strategies to use the space in your papers efficiently.

Think about your argument

What is the thesis of your paper? What exactly are you trying to accomplish? And what components of your paper are necessary to prove your argument? In a thesis-driven essay, every part of your paper should be geared toward proving that argument. Sometimes this proof will come in the form of direct evidence supporting your thesis; other times you will be addressing counterarguments.

Every paragraph in your essay must have a purpose. When revising, critically examine each paragraph and ask yourself whether it is necessary to your overall thesis. You may decide to cut some paragraphs. This process could be painful, especially if you have done a lot of research you'd like to include or need more words to meet a page limit, but it will strengthen your paper.

Think about your audience

Not all types of writing are thesis-driven, but all writing has an intended audience. When writing, you should always have your readers in mind and consider what they need to know.

For example, when writing a paper for your psychology class on Freud's Interpretation of Dreams, you probably do not have to start by saying "Sigmund Freud is one of the most famous psychiatrists of all time." In most college papers, you should imagine that your

audience is composed of educated readers who are not taking your class and are not experts on your current topic. Most educated readers will know who Freud is and will not need such a general reminder.

For another example, when applying to the business school and working on your one-page resume, rather than using a small font and trying to include every job and activity you took part in, think about your audience and the information they will most need to evaluate your application.

Knowing how to write concisely will serve you well in many situations. For more information on writing concisely, please consult the works below.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

12. Flow

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

This handout will explain what flow is, discuss how it works, and offer strategies to improve the flow of your writing.

What is flow?

Writing that "flows" is easy to read smoothly from beginning to end. Readers don't have to stop, double back, reread, or work hard to find connections between ideas. Writers have structured the text so that it's clear and easy to follow. But how do you make your writing flow? Pay attention to coherence and cohesion.

Coherence—global flow

Coherence, or global flow, means that ideas are sequenced logically at the higher levels: paragraphs, sections, and chapters. Readers can move easily from one major idea to the next without confusing jumps in the writer's train of thought. There's no single way to organize ideas, but there are common organizational patterns, including (but not limited to):

- Chronological (e.g., a history or a step-by-step process)
- Grouping similar ideas (e.g., advantages / disadvantages; causes / effects)
- Moving from large to small (e.g., national to local) or vice versa (local to national)
- Assertion, evidence, reasoning (e.g., an argument essay)
- Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion (e.g., lab reports)

More than a single organizational strategy can be present in a single draft, with one pattern for the draft as a whole and another pattern within sections or paragraphs of that draft. Take a look at some examples:

> Assignment: Describe how domestic and international travel has changed over the last two centuries.
>
> Primary pattern: chronological
>
> Additional pattern: grouping
>
> Travel in the 19th century: Domestic travel. International travel.
>
> Travel in the 20th century: Domestic travel. International travel.
>
> Assignment: "Analyze the contribution of support services to student success."
>
> Primary pattern: Assertion, evidence
>
> Additional patterns: various
>
> (Assertion) Students who actively use support services have a better college experience
>
> (Chronological) Story of first-year student's difficult experience in college
>
> (Grouping) Social and psychological reasons students may avoid using resources
>
> (Evidence) Research on academic resources and academic performance
>
> (Evidence) Research on self-care resources and student well-being

(Chronological) Story of student's much-improved second-year experience in college

Even though there are various patterns, there's also a certain logic and consistency. If your readers can follow your organization and understand how you're connecting your ideas, they will likely feel as though the essay "flows."

You can also preview your organization through signposting. This strategy involves giving your readers a roadmap before they delve into the body of your paper, and it's typically found near the beginning of a shorter essay or at the end of the first section of a longer work, such as a thesis. It may look something like this:

> "This paper examines the value of using resources in university settings. The first section describes the experience of a first-year student at a top-tier university who did not use resources. The following section describes possible reasons for not using them. It then describes the types of resources available and surveys the research on the benefits of using these resources. The essay concludes with an analysis of how the student's experience changed after taking advantage of the available support."

Analyzing coherence

Try these two strategies to analyze the flow of your draft at the global level.

Reverse outlining

A reverse outline allows you to see how you have organized your

topics based on what you actually wrote, rather than what you planned to write. After making the reverse outline, you can analyze the order of your ideas. To learn more about reverse outlining, you can watch our demo of this strategy, or read our Reorganizing Drafts handout for a more in-depth explanation. Some questions to consider:

- How am I ordering ideas? Can I describe the pattern?
- Why are the ideas presented in this order? Would they make more sense if I reorder them?
- What effect does the order of ideas have on my readers?
- How would reordering the information affect my paper?

Color coding

You can use color coding to group similar ideas or ideas that are connected in various ways. After sorting your ideas into differently colored groups, figure out how these ideas relate to one another, both within color groups and between color groups. For example, how do blue ideas relate to one another? How does this blue idea connect to this yellow idea? We have a short color coding demo that illustrates using the strategy before you draft. The reverse outlining demo above illustrates this strategy applied to an existing draft.

Cohesion—local flow

Cohesion, or local flow, means that the ideas are connected clearly at the sentence level. With clear connections between sentences, readers can move smoothly from one sentence to the next without stopping, doubling back, or trying to make sense of the text.

Fortunately, writers can enhance cohesion with the following sentence-level strategies.

Known-to-new sequencing

Readers can process familiar ("known") information more quickly than unfamiliar ("new") information. When familiar information appears at the beginning of sentences, readers can concentrate their attention on new information in later parts of the sentence. In other words, sequencing information from "known to new" can help enhance the flow.

The paragraphs below illustrate this sequencing. They both contain the same information, but notice where the known and new information is located in each version.

> 1. The compact fluorescent bulb has become the standard bulb for household lamps. Until recently, most people used incandescent bulbs in their lamps. Heating a tungsten filament until it glows, throwing off light, is how this type of bulb operates. Unfortunately, approximately 90% of the energy used to produce the light is wasted by heating the filament.
>
> 2. The compact fluorescent bulb has become the standard bulb for household lamps. Until recently, most lamps used incandescent bulbs. This type of bulb operates by heating a tungsten filament until it glows, throwing off light. Unfortunately, heating the filament wastes approximately 90% of the energy used to produce the light.

The second version flows better because it follows the known-to-new strategy. In the second paragraph, notice how "household lamps" appears in the "new" position (the end of the sentence), and in the next sentence, "most lamps" appears in the "known" position (or beginning of the sentence). Similarly, "incandescent bulbs"

appears for the first time in the "new" position, and then "this type of bulb" appears in the "known" position of the next sentence, and so on.

In this example, the new information in one sentence appeared in the known position of the very next sentence, but that isn't always the case. Once the new information has been introduced in the later part of a sentence, it becomes known and can occupy the beginning part of any subsequent sentence.

Transitional expressions

Transitions indicate the logical relationships between ideas—relationships like similarity, contrast, addition, cause and effect, or exemplification. For an in-depth look at how to use transitions effectively, take a look at our transitions handout. For an explanation of the subtle differences between transitional expressions, see our transitions (ESL) handout.

Clear pronoun reference

Flow can be interrupted when pronoun reference is unclear. Pronouns are words like he, she, it, they, which, and this. We use these words to substitute for nouns that have been mentioned earlier. We call these nouns "antecedents." For example,

> Clear reference: Active listening **strategies** help you learn. *They* focus your attention on important lecture content.

It's clear that "strategies" is the antecedent for "they" because it's the only noun that comes before the pronoun. When there's more than one possible antecedent, the choice may be less clear, and the cohesion won't be as strong. Take a look at the example below.

> Unclear reference: I went by the bookstore earlier and bought some **textbooks** and **notebooks** for my classes, but I'm going to have to return *them* because I bought the wrong ones.

Here, "them" could refer to two antecedents: the textbooks or the notebooks. It's unclear which of these purchases needs to be returned, so your reader may have to pause to try to figure it out, thus interrupting the flow of the reading experience. Generally, this problem can be fixed by either adding another noun, or rephrasing the sentence. Let's try both strategies by adding a noun and breaking the sentence in two.

Now, it is clear what needs to be returned.

A common cause of confusion in a text is the use of "which." Look at this example:

> Unclear reference: I've begun **spending more time in the library** and have been **getting more sleep**, *which* has resulted in an improvement in my test scores.

Does "which" here refer to spending more time in the library, getting more sleep, or both? Again, let's solve this by splitting it into two sentences and changing our wording:

> Clear reference: I've begun spending more of my free time in the library and have been getting more sleep. These habits have resulted in an improvement in my test scores.

Here's another example of "which" being used in a sentence. In this sentence, "which" only has one antecedent, the roommate's habit of staying up late, so it is clear why the writer is having difficulties sleeping.

> Clear reference: My new roommate tends to stay up late, which has made it hard for me to get enough sleep.

This/these + summary noun

Another way to clarify the reference of pronouns like "this" or "these" is to add a summary noun. Look at this example:

> The school board put forth a motion to remove the school vending machines and a motion to move detention to the weekend instead of after school. This created backlash from students and parents.

In the sentence above, "this" is vague, and could be referring to a number of things. It could refer to:

- The removal of vending machines
- The moving of detention
- Both motions

We can make this sentence more clear by adding something called a "summary noun," like so:

> The school board put forth a motion to remove the school vending machines, and a motion to move detention to the weekend instead of after school. These motions created backlash from students and parents.

By adding "motions," the sentence can now only refer to both motions, rather than either individually.

Parallel structure

Parallel structure means using the same grammatical structure for things that come in sets. The similarity creates a rhythm that helps the writing flow.

Not parallel: walking, talked, and chewing gum

Parallel: walking, talking, and chewing gum

Not parallel: teenagers…people in their thirties…octogenarians

Parallel: people in their teens…people in their thirties…people in their eighties

Not parallel: To perform at your peak, you will need to get enough sleep each night, read the material and prepare questions before class every day, and be eating nutritious, well-balanced meals.

Parallel: To perform at your peak, you will need to get enough sleep each night, read the material and prepare questions before class every day, and eat nutritious, well-balanced meals.

Getting to the verb

Academic writers often disguise actions as things, making those things the subject of the sentence.

Action	**Thing**
Decide	Decision
Notify	Notification
Provoke	Provocation
Emerge	Emergence
Procrastinate	Procrastination
Act	Action

This change is called "nominalization" ("changing a verb to a noun"). It can be a useful strategy, but it can lead to excessively long subjects, pushing the verb far away from the beginning of the

sentence. When there are too many words before the verb, the connection between the verb and the subject may not be clear. Readers may have to look backward in the sentence to find the subject, interrupting the flow of their reading.

Look at this example:

> Student government's recent decision to increase the rental fee on spaces that student groups reserve in the Union for regular meetings or special events, especially during high demand periods of the semester like homecoming week or the Week of Welcome but not during low-demand periods like midterm or finals week, elicited a response from several groups that were concerned about the potential impact of the change on their budgets.

"Student government's decision…elicited a response." There are 50 words before the verb "elicited" in this sentence! Compare this revision:

> Student government recently decided to increase the rental fee on spaces that student groups reserve in the Union for regular meetings or special events, especially during high demand periods of the semester like homecoming week or the Week of Welcome but not during low-demand periods like midterm or finals week. This decision elicited a response from several groups that were concerned about the potential impact of the change on their budgets.

By changing the thing "decision" into the action "decided," we've created a sentence with just two words before the verb, so it's very clear who did what. We've also split the longer sentence into two, keeping the verb "elicited" and adding "this decision."

Look for nouns that have underlying actions and try turning them into verbs near the beginning of your sentence: decision–>decide; emergence–>emerge; notification–>notify; description–>describe; etc.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

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13. Style

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What this handout is about

This handout will help you determine and achieve the most effective writing style for the context in which you're writing.

What do we mean by style?

Have you ever wondered what your instructors mean when they write "wordy" or "awk" in the margins of your paper? Do you sometimes sense that your sentences could be stronger, clearer, shorter, or more effective? Do you often feel that you know what you mean but do not know how to say it? If you sometimes get feedback from your instructors that you need to "tighten your prose" or "look at your word choice," these can all be reactions to writing style.

Part of the problem with style is that it's subjective. Different readers have different ideas about what constitutes good writing style, and so do different instructors and different academic departments. For example, passive voice may be used differently in the sciences than in the humanities. You may have an instructor who keeps circling items in your paper and noting "word choice" or "awkward" and another who comments only on content. Confusingly, some of what readers identify as writing problems may technically be grammatically correct. A sentence can be wordy and

still pass all the rules in the grammar handbooks. This fact may make it harder for you to see where a reader's reaction is coming from. Feedback on style can help you avoid distracting from your argument and learn to express your ideas more directly, elegantly, and persuasively in the eyes of an intended audience.

Say what you mean

First, remember that your goal in academic writing is not to sound intelligent, but to get your intelligent point across. You may be reading complicated textbooks and articles, and even when they don't make sense to you, they all sound smart. So when you have to write a paper, you may try to imitate this type of writing. But sometimes when you imitate a complicated style, you sacrifice communicating and being understood.

Say it in the appropriate tone

You may also receive feedback on style if you write exactly like you speak to your friends over lunch at Lenoir. We've written this pamphlet in a chatty, friendly style, hoping that you'll read it and think, "This isn't such a painful way to learn about style." This may not be the appropriate style for every academic paper. Some instructors may invite slang and colloquialisms in their assignments, but most won't. When in doubt, aim for clear, broadly accessible language, and don't assume that because a discipline is "artsy" or "out there" that instructors in that discipline want you to write creatively.

These cautions don't mean you should write all your sentences in a choppy, obvious, "see Jane run" style. It just means that you should

make sure that your instructor isn't distracted from what you are trying to say by how you are saying it.

How to improve

If you learn how to recognize matters of style in your writing, you will have more control over your writing—the way someone reads your paper will be a result of choices you have made. If those choices are deliberate, you'll have more control over how the reader reacts to your argument. So let's look at what instructors often perceive as the biggest style "crimes." You probably don't have trouble with all of these, so focus your attention on those issues most relevant to your own writing. First we'll explain some common, style-related writing problems, then we'll show you some handy tips for finding them, and finally we'll work on correcting them in your revision process. (That's right: at first you may have to include a revision devoted entirely to style in your writing process, at least until you get used to recognizing and correcting these issues as you write.)

Wordiness

This term is used to cover a couple of style problems that involve using more words than you absolutely need to say something. Especially when we talk, we use a lot of little "filler" words that don't actually have anything to add to the meaning of our sentences. (The previous sentence has several examples—see if you can take five words out of it without losing any of its meaning.) In writing, these filler words and phrases become more obvious and act as delays in getting the reader to your point. If you have enough delays in your sentence, your readers might get frustrated. They might even start

skimming your paper, which seems a shame after all of your efforts to communicate with them.

Your wordiness may derive from a problem unrelated to your writing style: uncertainty about your topic, lack of a developed argument, or lack of evidence. If you're not sure what you want or have to say, you may have trouble saying it. As you struggle to find what you mean or play with a vague idea or concept, you may write garbled or rambling sentences. If this happens to you, it doesn't mean that you are a "bad" writer or that you have a "bad" writing style or "bad" ideas. It simply indicates that you are using writing as a way to think—to discover your point. It's okay to let yourself think on the page and write to discover precisely what you mean. Taking thirty minutes (or more) to let yourself write and clarify your point for yourself may save you lots of time later. Write to yourself until you can quickly explain to a friend what you are writing about, why you believe it, and what evidence supports your position. Then, sit down to write your paper with your reader in mind. Note: Some writers, in an effort to make a page limit, will be wordy on purpose—this tactic will be obvious to the reader, and most instructors will be less than impressed. If you find yourself struggling to meet length requirements, see our handout on how to read an assignment for some tips. If you are still way off on page length and our handout hasn't helped you, you may want to talk to your instructor. (If that seems too daunting a task, take a look at our handout about asking for feedback.)

Wordy constructions such as cliches, qualifiers, and redundant pairs are easy to fix once you recognize your tendency to use them. **Read several of your old papers and see if you can locate any of these tendencies or consider whether they have become a habit for you in your writing:**

1. **Problem**: Clichés
   Example: *France bit off more than it could chew in Vietnam, and America's intervention was too little, too late.*
   How to correct it: Clichés stand in for more precise

descriptions of something. Slow down and write exactly, precisely what you mean. If you get stuck, ask yourself "why? or "how?"

Better example: *As the French faltered in Vietnam, even American intervention could not save the collapsing regime.*

2. **Problem**: Lots of qualifiers (very, often, hopefully, practically, basically, really, mostly)
   Example: *Most people usually think that many puppies are generally pretty cute.*
   How to correct it: Eliminate some of these qualifiers and you will have a stronger, more direct point. Some qualifiers are necessary, but you should use them carefully and thoughtfully.
   Better example: *Most people think that puppies are cute.*
3. **Problem**: Using two words that mean the same thing.
   Example: *Adrienne fulfilled all our hopes and dreams when she saved the whole entire planet.*
   How to correct it: Choose the most precise term and delete the extra one.
   Better example: *Adrienne fulfilled all our hopes when she saved the planet.*

Some "wordy" constructions take a little more practice locating and correcting:

1. **Problem**: Overuse of prepositional phrases (prepositions are little words such as in, over, of, for, at, etc.)
   Example: *The reason for the failure of the economic system of the island was the inability of Gilligan in finding adequate resources without incurring expenses at the hands of the headhunters on the other side of the island.*
   How to locate and correct this problem: Locate this problem by circling all of the prepositional phrases in your paper. A few are okay, but several in a sentence (as demonstrated here) make the reader struggle to find and follow your subject and point. Correct this problem by reading the sentence, looking

away from it, and writing or saying out loud what you meant when you wrote the sentence. Try asking yourself "Who did what to whom?" Replace the first sentence with your new sentence.

Better example: *Gilligan hurt the economic system of the island because he couldn't find adequate resources without angering the headhunters.*

Problem: Stock phrases you can replace with one or two words.
Examples: *The fact that I did not like the aliens affected our working relationship.*
The aliens must be addressed in a professional manner.
How to locate and correct this problem: Locate this problem as you do cliches. Is this just something people say? What do the words actually mean? Correct this problem by looking for a single word that expresses your meaning.
Better examples: *My dislike of the aliens affected our working relationship.*
The aliens must be addressed professionally.
Here's a list of common or stock phrases to find in your paper and replace with a single word (see Joseph M. Williams, Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace):

The reason for For the reason that Due to the fact that Owing to the face that In light of the fact that Considering the fact that On the grounds that	because, since, why

Despite the fact that Regardless of the fact that	although, even though

In the event that If it should happen that Under circumstances in which	if

On the occasion of In a situation in which Under circumstances in which	when

As regards In reference to With regard to Concerning the matter of Where ___ is concerned	about

It is crucial that It is necessary that There is a need/necessity for It is important that	must, should

Is able to Is in a position to Has the opportunity to Has the capacity for Has the ability to	can

It is possible that There is a chance that It could happen that The possibility exists for	may, might, can, could

Prior to In anticipation of Subsequent to Following on At the same time as Simultaneously with	before, when, as, after

Not different	similar
Not many	few
Not have	lack
Not include	omit
Not consider	ignore
Not the same	different
Not often	rarely
Not allow	prevent
Not admit	deny
Not accept	reject

Verb trouble

Nouns (person, place, thing, or concept) and verbs (words that describe an action or state of being) are the hearts and souls of all sentences. These become the essential elements—what your grammar teacher may have called the "subject" and the "predicate" or the "actor" and "action" of every sentence. The reader should be able to clearly locate the main subject and verb of your sentences and, ideally, the subject and verb should be close together in the sentence. Some style "crimes" are varied symptoms of one problem: the subjects and verbs or the actor and action of your sentence are hiding from the reader. The reader has trouble following who is doing what to whom. Instructors may write comments like "passive

voice" or "weak verbs" in your paper's margins. While using passive voice or weak verbs is grammatically correct, it may make the reader work too hard to decipher your meaning. Use passive voice and weak verbs strategically once you get the hang of them. If you're still struggling to figure out what they are, you need to aim for "active voice" and "strong verbs" to improve your writing.

1. **Problem: Passive voice.** When you hide the actor by putting it somewhere after the action (not in the usual subject part of the sentence) and add a "to be" verb, you are using passive voice. For more detailed coverage, see our handout on the passive voice.

   Examples: Here's a passive sentence with the actor at the end of the sentence (not at the beginning, where you would usually expect the subject): *The alien remains were lost by the government.*

   Some passive sentences omit actor entirely: *The alien remains were lost.*

   The car was wrecked.

   Better (active) examples: *The government lost the alien remains.*

   I wrecked the car.

   How to locate and correct this problem: Locate passive voice in your papers by circling every "to be" verb (am, is, are, was, were, be, been, being) in your paper. Not all of these verbs will indicate a passive construction or one you want to change, but if the "to be" verb is sitting next to another verb, especially one that ends in "ed," ("was lost", "was wrecked") then you may be using passive voice. If you have trouble finding "to be" verbs, try finding the subject, verb, and object in each sentence. Can the reader tell who or what is doing the action in your sentence? Correct passive constructions by putting that actor back in the subject of the sentence and getting rid of the "to be" verb. Note that you may have to add information in the sentence; you have to specify who in your sentence and

thereby keep the reader from guessing—that's good.

2. **Problem**: **Nominalization**—a fancy term for making verbs and adjectives into nouns. Again, sometimes you want to use nominalization and may do so purposefully. But too much nominalization in a paper can sound abstract and make the reader work to decipher your meaning. (Professional academic writing often has a lot of nominalization—that's one reason why you may struggle with some of your assigned reading in your courses!)
   Examples: *The discovery of the aliens was made by the government.*
   The car wreck was a result of a lack of visual focus.
   How to locate and correct the problem: Locate nominalization in your papers by circling all of the nouns. Do you have several in a single sentence? You might be hiding the action (the verb) of your sentence inside of a noun. Correct nominalization by returning the abstract noun to its function as verb or adjective. This will take practice—focus on making the sentence simpler in structure (actor and action):
   The government discovered the aliens.
   My sister wrecked the car when she forgot to wear her glasses.
   Also, look for sentences that begin with the following phrases: there is, there are, this is, that is, it is. Sometimes you need these phrases to refer to an immediately preceding sentence without repeating yourself, but they may be hiding nominalizations.
   Example: *There is a need for further study of aliens.*
   How to locate and correct this problem: Circle these phrases in your paper and try omitting them from the sentence. Who is doing what to whom?
   Better example: *We need to study aliens further.*
3. **Problem: Weak verbs.** If you have located and corrected passive voice and nominalization problems in your essay but your sentences still seem to lack meaning or directness, look for "weak" verbs. Verbs such as "to be" verbs and "have" verbs

can often be replaced by "strong" verbs, verbs that carry specific meaning. Concentrate on what the subject of your sentence does and make that the verb in the sentence.
Example: *The aliens have a positive effect on our ecosystem.*
How to locate and correct this problem: Locate weak verbs by circling all of the "to be" and "have" verbs in your paper. Correct weak verbs by omitting them and replacing them with a more meaningful verb. Notice that you will need to add information as you specify the nature of the action.
Answer the question: "What does the subject really *do*?"
Better example: *The aliens improve our ecosystem.*

Ostentatious erudition

You may be inclined to improve your style by sounding more "collegiate" or by using multi-syllabic words. Don't ever do so without looking up those words to make sure you know exactly what they mean. And don't blindly accept the recommendations of your word processing program's thesaurus—these tools may be dangerous unless you double-check the meaning of the words in a dictionary. Many times, an inappropriate synonym will make you sound like you don't know what you are talking about or, worse yet, give the impression that you are plagiarizing from a source you don't understand. Never use a word you can't clearly define. It's okay to use big words if you know them well and they fit your overall tone—just make sure your tone is consistent. In other words, don't say "That miscreant has a superlative aesthetic sense, but he's dopey."

You may use overly "erudite" words because you think it is wrong to use the same words over and over again in an essay. In fact, it's often okay to repeat the same word(s) in your paper, particularly when they are significant or central terms. For example, if your paper discusses the significance of memory represented by the

scent of wisteria in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, you are going to write the words "memory" and "wisteria" a lot. Don't start saying "recollection," "reminiscence," "summoning up of past events," and "climbing woody vine" just to get a little variation in there. A thesaurus might even lead you to say that the significance of nostalgia is represented by the odiferous output of parasitic flowering vegetation. Such sentences may cloud rather than clarify your point.

Now you are ready to edit

You are probably not guilty of every style "crime" in this handout. If you consistently struggle with one of these issues, focus your attention on that one. If you struggle with two or more, work on one at a time. If you try to fix all of them at once, you may find your approach too scattered or the task just plain overwhelming. You may also find that you use different styles for different assignments, with different responses from instructors. Whatever the case, the next time you finish a paper, take the issue you want to address and isolate it. Edit your paper using our "locate and correct" suggestions for that one issue. Ignore everything else (spelling, punctuation, content) and look for only that one issue. This strategy may sound time-consuming, but by isolating your style problems, you will find them easier to fix. As you become more proficient, you will include fewer and fewer style problems in your initial draft, and therefore your draft will need less editing. In the end, you will be a better writer—so what are a few minutes now?

If, after reading this handout and looking at your own writing, you are still struggling to understand style problems, bring a few of your old papers to an appointment at the Writing Center. Using already finished papers will help your tutor show you where your chronic style problems occur, why they occur, and how you can fix them.

By the way, a lot of students who come to the Writing Center

almost immediately locate their own problem sentences when they read them aloud. Try this technique yourself, before you hand in your paper. Check out our handout on proofreading techniques for more tips.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

Lanham, Richard A. 2007. *Revising Prose*, 7th ed. New York: Pearson Longman.

Strunk, William, and E. B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Williams, Joseph, and Joseph Bizup. 2017. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 12th ed. Boston: Pearson.

This chapter originally appeared as part of the UNC-CH Writing Center *Tips and Tools* page: https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

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https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

PART III
MECHANICS

14. Getting the Mechanics Right

AMY GUPTILL

"Correctness" in writing

Many students assume—or fear—that college writing is judged primarily on its grammatical correctness. Ideas, evidence, and arguments matter more than the mechanics of grammar and punctuation; however, many of the rules of formal writing exist to promote clarity and precision which writers much achieve in order to effectively convey ideas, evidence, and arguments. In addition, texts that observe the rules of formal written English tend to be more persuasive by making the author appear well informed and careful. Writing replete with errors does not make a great impression, and most educators want to help students present themselves well. Correctness, then, isn't *the* most important thing, but it does matter.

Another common assumption among students is that one is either good at grammar or not good at grammar, and that such is one's immutable fate. Not true. Once you master a particular rule or practice, it becomes second nature, and then you can focus your attention on mastering another. I finally nailed down commas and semicolons in college and some finer points of grammar in graduate school. I do a lot of formal writing in the course of my career, and I still look things up in a writing handbook from time to time. You can master the practices of formal written English, and college is a great time to use the feedback from your professors to identify your common errors and learn to correct them.

In thinking about correctness, it's important to recognize that some rules are more important than others. Joseph Williams helpfully distinguishes three kinds of rules.[1] First, there are rules that are basic to English, such as "the car" not "car the." For example,

> INCORRECT: I thought whether true claims not.
>
> CORRECT: I hadn't thought about whether the claims were true.

If you've gotten most of your formal education in English, you probably observe these rules routinely. If your writing has mismatches of number (singular/plural) or tense, it might be due

to haste or carelessness rather than unawareness. Similarly, capitalizing the first word of a sentence and ending with appropriate punctuation are basic rules that most people comply with automatically when writing for a professor or in other formal situations.

Williams' second category is comprised of rules that distinguish standard written English from the informal variants that people use in their day-to-day lives. Most students with middle-class and non-immigrant backgrounds use informal vernaculars that closely parallel standard written English. Students with working-class or more modest backgrounds or who are members of transnational and multi-lingual communities may use informal variants of English in their everyday lives that are quite different from standard written English. It's an unfortunate reality of social inequality that such students have to expend more effort than their middle-class English-speaking counterparts to master the standard conventions. It's not really fair, but at least the mechanics and rules of formal writing are documented and unambiguous. Learning to communicate effectively in different social contexts is part of becoming an educated person.

Some examples:

> INFORMAL:We ain't got no more of them cookies.
>
> FORMAL: We don't have any more of those cookies.
>
> INFORMAL: My coat, my phone, and my keys was all lock in the car.
>
> FORMAL: My coat, my phone, and my keys were all locked in the car.
>
> INFORMAL: u shd go 2 café b4 wrk bc coffee
>
> FORMAL: You should go the café before work to get some coffee.

The informal versions are clearly English, and they're widely

understandable to others. The first and second examples contain choices of tense, number, and punctuation that are inappropriate in standard written English even though they don't actually impede communication. Most students already understand that these first two categories of rules (rules fundamental to English and the rules of standard written English) are obligatory for formal writing.

There is a third category of rules that Williams notes and enthusiastically criticizes; he calls them "invented rules" because they usually arise from busybody grammarians rather than enduring patterns of customary language use. Some invented rules Williams calls "options": those that your reader will notice when you *observe* them and not care if you don't. Here's an example of the fabled don't-end-a-sentence-with-a-preposition rule:

> OBSERVING THE RULE: With which concept can we analyze this problem?
>
> IGNORING THE RULE: Which concept can we analyze this problem with?

Some grammarians would claim that only the first version is correct. However, you probably have the (accurate) impression that professional writers are much more likely to choose the second version. This rule does not reflect real-life customary practice, even in standard written English. That's why Williams calls it an "invented rule." Most of your professors are fine with the second version above, the one that ends a sentence with a preposition.

Similarly, there's this murky idea out there that one should not split infinitives; that is, one should not have any words between "to" and the verb that follows. Here's an example:

> OBSERVED: to go boldly where no one has gone before
>
> IGNORED: to boldly go where no one has gone before

Again, while some grammarians have argued that conscientious writers should avoid splitting infinitives, most professional writers

have ignored that claim. The second version, which puts the adverb ("boldly") within the infinitive (that is, between "to" and "go") makes for a perfectly clear and pleasing phrase. The invented rule about splitting infinitives is an attempt to solve a problem that doesn't exist. If you want to give your writing more of a scholarly air, you could observe some or all of these optional rules. But, unless your professor has a particular penchant for one of these invented rules, you can safely ignore them.

Williams calls the second sub-category of invented rules "folklore." They're invented rules (like "options") in that grammarians think writers should observe them, but, in reality, no one does. Williams gleefully lists instances in which the very grammarians who propose these rules go on to unselfconsciously violate them.[2] You may have heard of these rules, but they're widely considered absurd.

For example, some grammarians are dismayed that people use "that" and "which" interchangeably, and they argue that writers should use "that" to indicate restrictive elements and "which" to indicate non-restrictive elements. A restrictive element is one that makes a necessary specification about something; a non-restrictive element is one that simple adds extra information. Consider these two examples:

Version 1:

> The party that Alex went to was shut down by the police.

Version 2:

> The party which Alex went to was shut down by the police.

For almost all readers, versions 1 and 2 are saying the exact same thing. For the persnickety grammarian, version 1 is specifying the

party that *Alex* went to, and not the party that, say, Jordan went to, while version 2 is simply inserting extra information about Alex's attendance at the party. According to these grammarians, "that Alex went to" adds critically needed information (restrictive) while "which Alex went to" adds bonus information (non-restrictive).

As Williams and some others explain: it's bullshit. Professional writers use commas and carefully chosen words to do the job of distinguishing restrictive and non-restrictive elements, and they choose whichever relative pronoun ("that" or "which") sounds better in context. You could observe the distinction between that and which if you like, but no one would notice. More importantly, observing this invented rule wouldn't necessarily make your writing any clearer, more concise, or more graceful.

There is one rule that Williams calls "folklore" that you probably have to observe in college papers nonetheless: that is, the rule that you can't start sentences with But, And, So, For, or Yet (or other coordinating conjunctions). I'm sure you could browse through assigned readings and articles published in major newspapers and magazines that violate this so-called rule. Here are two examples that took me about 10 minutes to find:

> From the front page of the *New York Times* January 7, 2014:[3] "But since the financial crisis, JPMorgan has become so large and profitable that it has been able to weather the government's legal blitz, which has touched many parts of the bank's sprawling operations." And a little further down we see, "Yet JPMorgan's shares are up 28 percent over the last 12 months."

> From a news article in *Science*, December 21, 2007:[4] "Altered winds blew in more warm air from the subtropics only in models in which mid-latitude oceans warmed as observed; apparently, the warmer oceans altered the circulation. And that ocean warming is widely viewed as being driven by the strengthening greenhouse."

If you're writing a paper for my class, feel free to begin sentences with conjunctions. As the above examples show, it's a concise way to support clarity and effective flow. However, I suspect most instructors still hold to the old rule. Thus, you shouldn't start sentences with "And," "But" or other coordinating conjunctions unless you've been specifically invited to.

There are countless other rules that I don't discuss here. The point of these examples is to show that you don't have to observe every little rule you've ever heard of. There are some elements of mechanics that you have to master; I summarize some common ones below. These practices will gradually become second nature. It's sometimes hard to know at the outset which rules are standard, which are options, and which are folklore. With the help of a good handbook and your instructors, you'll learn them over time. The larger point I want to make here is that that observing rules isn't about traversing a minefield of potential errors; it's just about learning and adopting the practices appropriate to your audience, which is one of the first rules of writing well.

Elements of punctuation and language you must master

If you've gotten most or all of your formal education in English, you've mastered the vast majority of the real rules of grammar. Most of the students I work with just have to nail down a few additional practices to produce appropriate academic writing. There isn't any great secret to learning them; they're learned through repeated practice and feedback.

1. Comma usage

I didn't really master correct comma usage until my college years. There was a year or so in which I constantly checked my work against a style guide, but since then I haven't often had to think about commas. Here's a brief run-down of the rules of comma usage that I see many students violating. For a more complete explanation, and an invaluable set of online exercises, see the website of handbook author Diana Hacker.

A. Use a comma to join two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction:

> CORRECT: Her misdeed was significant, but the punishment was excessive.
>
> ALSO CORRECT: Her misdeed was significant but justified by the circumstances.

In the first example, the comma is telling the reader that one clause (her misdeed was significant) is ending and another (the punishment was excessive) beginning. The second example does not use a comma, because the words that follow "but" (justified by the circumstances) do not add up to an independent clause; they make a dependent clause that could not stand alone as a sentence.

Note: "Because" is NOT a coordinating conjunction. It's a subordinating conjunction. Therefore, it does not use a comma:

> INCORRECT: Conspiracy theories can be compelling, because many people distrust the government.
>
> CORRECT: Conspiracy theories can be compelling because many people distrust the government.

"Because," like other subordinating conjunctions (such as "although,"

"unless," or "until"), is meant to knit together one indivisible thought; hence, no comma. Including a comma weakens the connection in the mind of your reader.

B. Use a comma to mark the end of an introductory element

> CORRECT: While we were eating, the baby crawled out of the room.
>
> CORRECT: Alongside the road, we found the perpetrator's gun.
>
> CORRECT: Because many distrust the government, conspiracy theories can be compelling.

The first example would be comically confusing without the comma. The second example shows how the comma helps your reader separate the introductory element from the part that followed. The third example might be confusing. The sentence from part A, above, beginning with "Conspiracy theories" does not use a comma, but in this example, a dependent clause is serving as as an introductory element.

Learn these rules, and if you hate them, learn to love them. In college, writing stops being about "how well did you understand fill-in-the-blank" and becomes "how professionally and strongly do you argue your point." Professionalism, I have found, is the key to the real world, and college is, in part, preparing you for it. If you do not learn how to write in a way that projects professionalism (i.e. these rules), then expect to get, at best, Cs on your papers.

Kaethe Leonard

C. Use a comma to set off non-essential information (so-called non-restrictive elements)

Both of these sentences are correct, but they convey different ideas:

> EXAMPLE 1: Gathering places vital to their communities are worth the investment.
>
> EXAMPLE 2: Gathering places, vital to their communities, are worth the investment.

The first says that *only* those gathering places that are vital to their communities are worth the investment (implying that some are not vital and therefore not worth investing in). In that first example, "vital to their communities" is a restrictive element. In the second example "vital to their communities" is extra information. The sentence implies that gathering places *in general* are worth the investment (ostensibly because they're vital to their communities). The commas mark the phrase as non-essential information, which is a non-restrictive element. In writing the second sentence, you might enclose the non-essential information in parentheses instead.

2. Use punctuation and coordinating conjunctions to avoid sentence fragments

At some point, you were probably instructed that all sentences must have a subject (which includes a noun) and a predicate (which includes a verb) and that they must be written to stand alone. Consider this example of a sentence fragment:

> INCORRECT: When you go to the supermarket. You don't often think about the work behind the scenes.

It has a subject (you) and predicate (go to the supermarket), but

the “when” indicates that the sentence is incomplete. When people write sentence fragments, they usually have the missing elements in the preceding or following sentences, so it’s really a punctuation error.

> CORRECT: When you go to the supermarket, you don’t often think about the work behind the scenes.
>
> ALSO CORRECT: You don’t often think about the work behind the scenes when you go to the supermarket.

In the first version the dependent clause (the part that couldn’t stand alone) comes first, necessitating a comma. In the second, the main clause (the part that could stand alone) comes first, so no comma is used.

3. Use punctuation and coordinating conjunctions to avoid run-on sentences and comma splices

A run-on sentence (one that smooshes two sentences together) may be incorrectly connected with a comma, which is then called a comma splice. This error is easily corrected with punctuation and some coordinating words.

> INCORRECT (run-on): The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest literary works it had a major influence on Mesopotamian culture.
>
> INCORRECT (comma splice): The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest literary works, it had a major influence on Mesopotamian culture.

Clearly, the writer wants the reader to see these two sentences as

connected. He or she has three options to show their reader how the sentences relate.

> CORRECT OPTION 1 (semi-colon): The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest literary works; it had a major influence on Mesopotamian culture.

The semi-colon is an elegant and underutilized option. By joining two sentences with a semi-colon, the writer can subtly tell the reader that the epic's earliness and influence, together, make it important.

> CORRECT OPTION 2 (comma and coordinating conjunction): The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest literary works, and it had a major influence on Mesopotamian culture.

The use of "and" in this option also tells the reader to put the two claims together. A more specific conjunction—such as "but," "so", or "yet"—is usually a better choice than "and" or a semi-colon because it would provide more information about how the two claims relate.

> CORRECT OPTION 3 (separate sentences): The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest literary works. It had a major influence on Mesopotamian culture.

If you don't want your reader to consider the two sentences closely related, you can convey that by choosing separate sentences. With the Gilgamesh example, you might choose this option if the paragraph is mostly about the influence of the epic on Mesopotamian culture but you have a good reason to include a sentence about how early it is. These two sentences would function well as the first two sentences of an introductory paragraph.

4. Use colons correctly for lists, quotations, and explanatory information

> INCORRECT: We packed: clothes, camping equipment, and a first-aid kit.
>
> CORRECT: We packed the essentials: clothes, camping equipment, and a first-aid kit.

For lists, use a colon when the part before the colon can stand alone as a sentence. Otherwise, leave the colon out ("We packed clothes, camping equipment, and a first-aid kit").

> INCORRECT: Mitchell explains that: "Part of the fascination of *Gilgamesh*is that, like any great work of literature, it has much to tell us about ourselves."[5]
>
> CORRECT: Mitchell explains the power of the epic: "Part of the fascination of *Gilgamesh* is that, like any great work of literature, it has much to tell us about ourselves."[6]

You can use a colon to introduce a quote if the parts before and after the colon can stand as complete sentences. A comma is an option here as well. Introducing a quote with your own complete sentence and a colon is another underutilized trick in student writing. Remember that you have to use source material within your own analytical thread. Introducing a quote with your own complete sentence can make it immediately clear why the quote you choose is important to your argument.

5. Use modifiers clearly and precisely

Modifiers are words and phrases that add information to a sentence. They specify the meaning of (that is, they modify) a noun or verb.

Sometimes the modifier is misplaced, ambiguous, or not clearly pertaining to a noun or verb (a so-called dangling modifier). These problems can lead the reader to wonder what exactly you're claiming.

> MISPLACED: The ski-jumper looked sleek in his new suit weighing only 140 pounds.
>
> CORRECT: The ski-jumper looked sleek wearing a new suit and weighing only 140 pounds.

The suit didn't weigh 140 pounds (one hopes); the ski-jumper did.

> AMBIGUOUS: When formal rules and day-to-day practices differ, they should be changed.
>
> CLEAR: Formal rules should be changed to match day-to-day practices.
>
> CLEAR: Day-to-day practices should be changed to match the formal rules.

In the first version, it's not clear what should be changed. The two clear versions make it obvious what the author is arguing.

> DANGLING: Walking down the street, the houses glowed pink in the sunset.
>
> CORRECT: Walking down the street, she saw houses glowing pink in the sunset.

The first version suggests that the houses were walking down the street. The pronoun to which that first phrase refers ("she") is missing. The second version corrects that by bringing in the needed pronoun.

6. Choose correct words

Many wrong-word errors that I see seem to be artifacts of the spell-checkers built into word-processing programs. For example, I often see "costumers" where students meant "customers," "defiantly" instead of "definitely" and, somewhat comically, "martial" instead of "marital."

Other wrong-word errors come from homonyms, two or more words that sound the same, such as the there/their/they're or your/you're errors. In college writing, another common one is the misuse of effect/affect. Use "effect" if you're talking about the result of a cause as a noun, and "affect" if you mean influence or talking about emotion in psychology (in which case it's pronounced AF-fect).

> CORRECT: The effects of the conflict have been long-lasting.
>
> CORRECT: The conflict has affected everyday life throughout the country.
>
> CORRECT: Research shows that the presence of living plants impact both cognition and affect.

"Effect" can also be a verb, in which case it means to bring about:

> CORRECT: The conflict effected major international policy changes.

That sentence is saying that the conflict *brought about* policy changes. If you wanted to say that the conflict influenced (but did not itself cause) policy changes, you would write that the conflict affected policy changes.

The dilemma of gendered language in

English

What to do about gender with an unspecified subject? In the past, the consensus was to always use "he" and readers were supposed to understand that the subject might be female. As you know, that's no longer accepted. The culture of formal academic writing hasn't settled on a widely supported solution yet, which creates a pervasive problem for the student writer.

Informally, using "they/their" as the neutral singular is becoming a common practice. For example, if a Facebook friend hasn't specified a gender, Facebook used to exhort you to "write on their timeline" for "their birthday." I hear this more and more in spoken language as well. For example, most people who hear this sentence spoken wouldn't note a glaring problem: "A doctor who makes a mistake is often too scared to admit their slip-up." However, in an academic paper, that sentence would be considered a pronoun-antecedent error because "doctor" is singular and "their" is still considered plural. Most of your professors still don't accept they/their as a gender-neutral singular possessive. Hopefully in coming years, academic writing will come to accept this perfectly reasonable solution to the gendered language problem, but we're not there yet.

My first semester in college, it was my standard practice to rotate back and forth between the male and female pronouns. I did not want to appear sexist and was unsure how to avoid doing so. Referring to the same hypothetical person in one of my papers I wrote, "When one is confronted by new information that does not fit tidily onto her personal map…" Later in the paragraph I referred to the same individual by saying, "This new information demands that he forsake the world of the Cave in which he had been raised." Obviously, in retrospect, that was confusing and certainly not the best option. But it illustrates the point that this can be a challenging

dilemma. Thankfully for you, three more appropriate solutions are provided in this chapter.

Peter Farrell

So what to do? Here are three possible solutions.

1. *Choose plurals when possible*. For example, "Doctors who make mistakes are often too scared to admit their slip-ups."
2. *Write "he or she" or "his or her" if it's not too repetitive*. You don't want to have more than two or three such "ors" in a paragraph, but a couple wouldn't be tedious for the reader. For example, one might write, "A doctor who makes a mistake is often too scared to admit his or her slip-up. He or she might be forbidden from doing so by hospital attorneys."
3. *Consider whether a real-life example is better than a hypothetical subject*. Long passages about hypothetical people and situations often lack argumentative force. If you're writing a paper about medical errors, you might do better to replace hypothetical claims like the above example with real-life examples of physicians who have made mistakes but were reluctant or forbidden to acknowledge them. Better yet, discuss the results of studies of medical errors and their outcomes. In addition to solving the gendered language problem, real examples are more persuasive.

Remember, it's about precision and respect. Whatever you do, don't just write "he" for doctors, attorneys, and construction workers and "she" for nurses, social workers, and flight attendants. You also shouldn't just write "he" or "his" for everything, expecting your readers to mentally fill in the "or she" and "or her" themselves. Doing so seems lazy, if not actively sexist. Showing respect through precise language about gender makes you seem much more credible.

Conclusion

This chapter does not (and could not) provide a complete run-down of formal English language usage. You would do well to bookmark a couple good reference sources to consult when questions arise. If your writing usually has a lot of errors in it, don't despair. Identify one or two practices to master and then learn them, using the feedback from your instructors as a guide. You can't become a flawless writer overnight (and no one writes flawlessly all the time). But over the course of a few semesters, you can certainly produce more precise text that presents your ideas in their best light.

Exercises and other resources

1. Most college libraries subscribe to online reference sources for their students. Go to your library's website and look for proprietary guides like the Oxford Dictionary of American Usage and Style. These are often of much higher quality than the first few hits you get on Google.
2. In Andrea Lunsford's *The Everyday Writer* 5th ed. (New York: Bedford-St.Martin's, 2012) she includes a list of the 20 most common errors in student writing. This site also offers *free online exercises* in mechanics.

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[1] The three types of rules are explained in Williams and Bizup's Style. Williams first described invented rules in J.M. Williams, "A

Phenomenology of Error," College Composition and Communication, 32, no. 2 (1981): 152-168.

[2] J.M. Williams, *Phenomenology of Error*

[3] Peter Eavis, "Steep Penalties Taken in Stride by JPMorgan Chase," *New York Times*, January 7, 2014, page A1.

[4] Richard A. Kerr, "Global Warming Coming Home to Roost in the American Midwest," *Science* 318, no. 5858 (2007): 1859.

[5] Stephen Mitchell, *Gilgamesh: A New English Version* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

[6] Ibid.

This chapter is adapted from Amy Guptill's *Writing In College: From Competence to Excellence*, https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/writing-in-college-from-competence-to-excellence/

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15. Fragments and Run Ons

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

If instructors have ever returned your papers with "frag," "S.F.," "R.O.," or "run-on" written in the margin, you may find this handout useful. It will help you locate and correct sentence fragments and run-ons.

The basics

Before we get to the problems and how to fix them, let's take a minute to review some information that is so basic you've probably forgotten it.

What is a complete sentence? A complete sentence is not merely a group of words with a capital letter at the beginning and a period or question mark at the end. **A complete sentence has three components:**

1. a subject (the actor in the sentence)
2. a predicate (the verb or action), and
3. a complete thought (it can stand alone and make sense—it's independent).

Some sentences can be very short, with only two or three words expressing a complete thought, like this:

They waited.

This sentence has a subject (They) and a verb (waited), and it expresses a complete thought. We can understand the idea completely with just those two words, so again, it's independent—an independent clause. But independent clauses (i.e., complete sentences) can be expanded to contain a lot more information, like this:

They waited for the bus all morning.

They waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday.

Wishing they'd brought their umbrella, they waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday.

Wishing they'd brought their umbrella and dreaming of their nice warm bed, they waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday, determined to make it to class for their test.

As your sentences grow more complicated, it gets harder to spot and stay focused on the basic elements of a complete sentence, but if you look carefully at the examples above, you'll see that the main thought is still that they waited—one main subject and one main verb. No matter how long or short the other sentence parts are, none of them can stand alone and make sense.

Being able to find the main subject, the main verb, and the complete thought is the first trick to learn for identifying fragments and run-ons.

Sentence fragments

A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. Some fragments are incomplete because they lack either a subject or a verb, or both. The fragments that most students have trouble with, however, are

dependent clauses—they have a subject and a verb, so they look like complete sentences, but they don't express a complete thought. They're called "dependent" because they can't stand on their own (just like some people you might know who are SO dependent!). Look at these dependent clauses. They're just begging for more information to make the thoughts complete:

Because their car was in the shop (…What did they do?)
After the rain stops (…What then?)
When you finally take the test (…What will happen?)
Since you asked (…Will you get the answer?)
If you want to go with me (…What should you do?)

Does each of these examples have a subject? Yes. Does each have a verb? Yes. So what makes the thought incomplete? It's the first word (Because, After, When, Since, If). These words belong to a special class of words called subordinators or subordinating conjunctions. If you know something about subordinating conjunctions, you can probably eliminate 90% of your fragments.

First, you need to know that subordinating conjunctions do three things:

1. join two sentences together
2. make one of the sentences dependent on the other for a complete thought (make one a dependent clause)
3. indicate a logical relationship

Second, you need to recognize the subordinators when you see them. **Here is a list of common subordinating conjunctions and the relationships they indicate:**

- **Cause / Effect:** because, since, so that
- **Comparison / Contrast:** although, even though, though, whereas, while
- **Place & Manner:** how, however, where, wherever
- **Possibility / Conditions:** if, whether, unless

- **Relation:** that, which, who
- **Time:** after, as, before, since, when, whenever, while, until

Third, you need to know that the subordinator (and the whole dependent clause) doesn't have to be at the beginning of the sentence. The dependent clause and the independent clause can switch places, but the whole clause moves as one big chunk. Look at how these clauses switched places in the sentence:

> Because their car was in the shop, they took the bus.
> They took the bus because their car was in the shop.

Finally, you need to know that every dependent clause needs to be attached to an independent clause (remember, the independent clause can stand on its own).

How do you find and fix your fragments? Remember the basics: subject, verb, and complete thought. If you can recognize those things, you're halfway there. Then, scan your sentences for subordinating conjunctions. If you find one, first identify the whole chunk of the dependent clause (the subject and verb that go with the subordinator), and then make sure they're attached to an independent clause.

> They took the bus. (Independent clause. So far, all is well!)
> Because their car was in the shop. (Dependent clause all by itself. Uh oh! Fragment!)
> They took the bus because their car was in the shop.

Run-ons

These are also called fused sentences. You are making a run-on when you put two complete sentences (a subject and its predicate and another subject and its predicate) together in one sentence without separating them properly. Here's an example of a run-on:

> My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is very garlicky.

This one sentence actually contains two complete sentences. But in the rush to get that idea out, I made it into one incorrect sentence. Luckily, there are many ways to correct this run-on sentence.

You could use a semicolon:

> My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus; it is very garlicky.

You could use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so):

> My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, for it is very garlicky. -OR- My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, and it is very garlicky.

You could use a subordinating conjunction (see above):

> My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus because it is very garlicky. -OR- Because it is so garlicky, my favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus.

You could make it into two separate sentences with a period in between:

> My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus. It is very garlicky.

You could use an em-dash (a long dash) for emphasis:

> My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus—it is very garlicky.

NOTE: You CANNOT simply add a comma between the two sentences, or you'll end up with what's called a "**comma splice**." Here's an example of a comma splice:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, it is very garlicky.

You can fix a comma splice the same way you fix a run-on—either change the punctuation or add a conjunction. The good news is that writers tend to be either comma splicers or run-on artists, but almost never both. Which one are you? If you have particular trouble with comma splices, try looking at our handout on commas.

Finding run-ons

As you can see, fixing run-ons is pretty easy once you see them—but how do you find out if a sentence is a run-on if you aren't sure? Rei R. Noguchi, in his book Grammar and the Teaching of Writing, recommends two methods for testing your sentences. **Try these two tests:**

1. Turn your sentences into yes/no questions.
2. Turn your sentences into tag questions (sentences that end with a questioning phrase at the very end—look at our examples below).

These are two things that nearly everyone can do easily if the sentence is not a run-on, but they become next to impossible if it is.

Look at the following sentence:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus.

If you turn it into a question that someone could answer with a yes or no, it looks like this:

Is my favorite Mediterranean spread hummus?

If you turn it into a tag question, it looks like this:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, isn't it?

The first sentence is complete and not a run-on, because our test worked.

Now, look again at the original run-on sentence:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is very garlicky.

The yes/no question can only be made with each separate thought, not the sentence as a whole:

Is my favorite Mediterranean spread hummus? Is it very garlicky?

But not:

Is my favorite Mediterranean spread hummus is it very garlicky?

The tag question can also only be made with each separate thought, rather than the whole:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, isn't it? It's very garlicky, isn't it?

But never:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is very garlicky, isn't it?

Unlike the complete sentence, the run-on sentence doesn't pass these tests. When you try to turn the run-on sentence into a single question, you immediately see that the sentence has more than one complete concept. Make sure you try both tests with each of your problem sentences, because you may trick yourself by just putting a tag on the last part and not noticing that it doesn't work on the first. Some people might not notice that "My favorite Mediterranean

spread is hummus it is very garlicky isn't it?" is wrong, but most people will spot the yes/no question problem right away.

Every once in a while, you or your instructor will see a really long sentence and think it's a run-on when it isn't. Really long sentences can be tiring but not necessarily wrong—just make sure that yours aren't wrong by using the tests above.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

16. Quotations

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

Used effectively, quotations can provide important pieces of evidence and lend fresh voices and perspectives to your narrative. Used ineffectively, however, quotations can clutter your text and interrupt the flow of your argument. This handout will help you decide when and how to quote like a pro.

When should I quote?

Use quotations at strategically selected moments. You have probably been told by teachers to provide as much evidence as possible in support of your thesis. But packing your paper with quotations will not necessarily strengthen your argument. The majority of your paper should still be your original ideas in your own words (after all, it's your paper). And quotations are only one type of evidence: well-balanced papers may also make use of paraphrases, data, and statistics. The types of evidence you use will depend in part on the conventions of the discipline or audience for which you are writing. For example, papers analyzing literature may rely heavily on direct quotations of the text, while papers in the social sciences may have more paraphrasing, data, and statistics than quotations.

Discussing specific arguments or ideas

Sometimes, in order to have a clear, accurate discussion of the ideas of others, you need to quote those ideas word for word. Suppose you want to challenge the following statement made by John Doe, a well-known historian:

> "At the beginning of World War Two, almost all Americans assumed the war would end quickly."

If it is especially important that you formulate a counterargument to this claim, then you might wish to quote the part of the statement that you find questionable and establish a dialogue between yourself and John Doe:

> Historian John Doe has argued that in 1941 "almost all Americans assumed the war would end quickly" (Doe 223). Yet during the first six months of U.S. involvement, the wives and mothers of soldiers often noted in their diaries their fear that the war would drag on for years.

Giving added emphasis to a particularly authoritative source on your topic.

There will be times when you want to highlight the words of a particularly important and authoritative source on your topic. For example, suppose you were writing an essay about the differences between the lives of male and female slaves in the U.S. South. One of your most provocative sources is a narrative written by a former slave, Harriet Jacobs. It would then be appropriate to quote some of Jacobs's words:

> Harriet Jacobs, a former slave from North Carolina,

> published an autobiographical slave narrative in 1861. She exposed the hardships of both male and female slaves but ultimately concluded that "slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women."

In this particular example, Jacobs is providing a crucial first-hand perspective on slavery. Thus, her words deserve more exposure than a paraphrase could provide.

Jacobs is quoted in Harriet A. Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

Analyzing how others use language.

This scenario is probably most common in literature and linguistics courses, but you might also find yourself writing about the use of language in history and social science classes. If the use of language is your primary topic, then you will obviously need to quote users of that language.

Examples of topics that might require the frequent use of quotations include:

> Southern colloquial expressions in William Faulkner's Light in August
>
> Ms. and the creation of a language of female empowerment
>
> A comparison of three British poets and their use of rhyme

Spicing up your prose.

In order to lend variety to your prose, you may wish to quote a source with particularly vivid language. All quotations, however,

must closely relate to your topic and arguments. Do not insert a quotation solely for its literary merits.

One example of a quotation that adds flair:

> President Calvin Coolidge's tendency to fall asleep became legendary. As H. L. Mencken commented in the American Mercury in 1933, "Nero fiddled, but Coolidge only snored."

How do I set up and follow up a quotation?

Once you've carefully selected the quotations that you want to use, your next job is to weave those quotations into your text. The words that precede and follow a quotation are just as important as the quotation itself. You can think of each quote as the filling in a sandwich: it may be tasty on its own, but it's messy to eat without some bread on either side of it. Your words can serve as the "bread" that helps readers digest each quote easily. Below are four guidelines for setting up and following up quotations.

In illustrating these four steps, we'll use as our example, Franklin Roosevelt's famous quotation, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

1. Provide context for each quotation.

Do not rely on quotations to tell your story for you. It is your responsibility to provide your reader with context for the quotation. The context should set the basic scene for when, possibly where, and under what circumstances the quotation was spoken or written. So, in providing context for our above example, you might write:

> When Franklin Roosevelt gave his inaugural speech on

March 4, 1933, he addressed a nation weakened and demoralized by economic depression.

2. Attribute each quotation to its source.

Tell your reader who is speaking. Here is a good test: try reading your text aloud. Could your reader determine without looking at your paper where your quotations begin? If not, you need to attribute the quote more noticeably.

Avoid getting into the "he/she said" attribution rut! There are many other ways to attribute quotes besides this construction. Here are a few alternative verbs, usually followed by "that":

add	remark	exclaim
announce	reply	state
comment	respond	estimate
write	point out	predict
argue	suggest	propose
declare	criticize	proclaim
note	complain	opine
observe	think	note

Different reporting verbs are preferred by different disciplines, so pay special attention to these in your disciplinary reading. If you're unfamiliar with the meanings of any of these words or others you find in your reading, consult a dictionary before using them.

3. Explain the significance of the quotation.

Once you've inserted your quotation, along with its context and attribution, don't stop! Your reader still needs your assessment of why the quotation holds significance for your paper. Using our Roosevelt example, if you were writing a paper on the first one-hundred days of FDR's administration, you might follow the quotation by linking it to that topic:

> With that message of hope and confidence, the new president set the stage for his next one-hundred days in office and helped restore the faith of the American people in their government.

4. Provide a citation for the quotation.

All quotations, just like all paraphrases, require a formal citation. For more details about particular citation formats, see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. In general, you should remember one rule of thumb: Place the parenthetical reference or footnote/endnote number after—not within—the closed quotation mark.

> Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" (Roosevelt, Public Papers, 11).
>
> Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."[1]

How do I embed a quotation into a sentence?

In general, avoid leaving quotes as sentences unto themselves. Even if you have provided some context for the quote, a quote standing alone can disrupt your flow. Take a look at this example:

> Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression. "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).

Standing by itself, the quote's connection to the preceding sentence is unclear. There are several ways to incorporate a quote more smoothly:

Lead into the quote with a colon.

> Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression: "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).

The colon announces that a quote will follow to provide evidence for the sentence's claim.

Introduce or conclude the quote by attributing it to the speaker. If your attribution precedes the quote, you will need to use a comma after the verb.

> Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression. He states, "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).
>
> When faced with a twelve-foot mountain troll, Ron gathers his courage, shouting, "Wingardium Leviosa!" (Rowling, p. 176).
>
> The Pirate King sees an element of regality in their

impoverished and dishonest life. "It is, it is a glorious thing/ To be a pirate king," he declares (Pirates of Penzance, 1983).

Interrupt the quote with an attribution to the speaker. Again, you will need to use a comma after the verb, as well as a comma leading into the attribution.

"There is nothing either good or bad," Hamlet argues, "but thinking makes it so" (Hamlet 2.2).

"And death shall be no more," Donne writes, "Death thou shalt die" ("Death, Be Not Proud," l. 14).

Dividing the quote may highlight a particular nuance of the quote's meaning. In the first example, the division calls attention to the two parts of Hamlet's claim. The first phrase states that nothing is inherently good or bad; the second phrase suggests that our perspective causes things to become good or bad. In the second example, the isolation of "Death thou shalt die" at the end of the sentence draws a reader's attention to that phrase in particular. As you decide whether or not you want to break up a quote, you should consider the shift in emphasis that the division might create.

Use the words of the quote grammatically within your own sentence.

When Hamlet tells Rosencrantz that he "could be bounded in a nutshell and count [him]self a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2), he implies that thwarted ambition did not cause his depression.

Ultimately, death holds no power over Donne since in the

> afterlife, "death shall be no more" ("Death, Be Not Proud," l. 14).

Note that when you use "that" after the verb that introduces the quote, you no longer need a comma.

> The Pirate King argues that "it is, it is a glorious thing/to be a pirate king" (Pirates of Penzance, 1983).

How much should I quote?

As few words as possible. Remember, your paper should primarily contain your own words, so quote only the most pithy and memorable parts of sources. Here are guidelines for selecting quoted material judiciously:

Excerpt fragments.

Sometimes, you should quote short fragments, rather than whole sentences. Suppose you interviewed Jane Doe about her reaction to John F. Kennedy's assassination. She commented:

> "I couldn't believe it. It was just unreal and so sad. It was just unbelievable. I had never experienced such denial. I don't know why I felt so strongly. Perhaps it was because JFK was more to me than a president. He represented the hopes of young people everywhere."

You could quote all of Jane's comments, but her first three sentences are fairly redundant. You might instead want to quote Jane when she arrives at the ultimate reason for her strong emotions:

> Jane Doe grappled with grief and disbelief. She had viewed

> JFK, not just as a national figurehead, but as someone who "represented the hopes of young people everywhere."

Excerpt those fragments carefully!

Quoting the words of others carries a big responsibility. Misquoting misrepresents the ideas of others. Here's a classic example of a misquote:

> John Adams has often been quoted as having said: "This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it."

John Adams did, in fact, write the above words. But if you see those words in context, the meaning changes entirely. Here's the rest of the quotation:

> Twenty times, in the course of my late reading, have I been on the point of breaking out, 'this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it!!!!' But in this exclamation, I should have been as fanatical as Bryant or Cleverly. Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in public company—I mean hell.

As you can see from this example, context matters!

This example is from Paul F. Boller, Jr. and John George, They Never Said It: A Book of Fake Quotes, Misquotes, and Misleading Attributions (Oxford University Press, 1989).

Use block quotations sparingly.

There may be times when you need to quote long passages.

However, you should use block quotations only when you fear that omitting any words will destroy the integrity of the passage. If that passage exceeds four lines (some sources say five), then set it off as a block quotation.

Be sure you are handling block quotes correctly in papers for different academic disciplines–check the index of the citation style guide you are using. **Here are a few general tips for setting off your block quotations:**

- Set up a block quotation with your own words followed by a colon.
- Indent. You normally indent 4-5 spaces for the start of a paragraph. When setting up a block quotation, indent the entire paragraph once from the left-hand margin.
- Single space or double space within the block quotation, depending on the style guidelines of your discipline (MLA, CSE, APA, Chicago, etc.).
- Do not use quotation marks at the beginning or end of the block quote—the indentation is what indicates that it's a quote.
- Place parenthetical citation according to your style guide (usually after the period following the last sentence of the quote).
- Follow up a block quotation with your own words.

So, using the above example from John Adams, here's how you might include a block quotation:

> After reading several doctrinally rigid tracts, John Adams recalled the zealous ranting of his former teacher, Joseph Cleverly, and minister, Lemuel Bryant. He expressed his ambivalence toward religion in an 1817 letter to Thomas Jefferson:
>
> > Twenty times, in the course of my late reading, have I been on the point of breaking out, 'this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion

> in it!!!!' But in this exclamation, I should have been as fanatical as Bryant or Cleverly. Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in public company—I mean hell.

Adams clearly appreciated religion, even if he often questioned its promotion.

How do I combine quotation marks with other punctuation marks?

It can be confusing when you start combining quotation marks with other punctuation marks. You should consult a style manual for complicated situations, but the following two rules apply to most cases:

Keep periods and commas within quotation marks.

So, for example:

> According to Professor Poe, werewolves "represent anxiety about the separation between human and animal," and werewolf movies often "interrogate those boundaries."

In the above example, both the comma and period were enclosed in the quotation marks. The main exception to this rule involves the use of internal citations, which always precede the last period of the sentence. For example:

> According to Professor Poe, werewolves "represent anxiety about the separation between human and animal," and

> werewolf movies often "interrogate those boundaries" (Poe 167).

Note, however, that the period remains inside the quotation marks when your citation style involves superscript footnotes or endnotes. For example:

> According to Professor Poe, werewolves "represent anxiety about the separation between human and animal," and werewolf movies often "interrogate those boundaries."[2]

Place all other punctuation marks (colons, semicolons, exclamation marks, question marks) outside the quotation marks, except when they were part of the original quotation.

Take a look at the following examples:

> I couldn't believe it when my friend passed me a note in the cafe saying the management "started charging $15 per hour for parking"!
>
> The coach yelled, "Run!"

In the first example, the author placed the exclamation point outside the quotation mark because she added it herself to emphasize the outrageous nature of the parking price change. The original note had not included an exclamation mark. In the second example, the exclamation mark remains within the quotation mark because it is indicating the excited tone in which the coach yelled the command. Thus, the exclamation mark is considered to be part of the original quotation.

How do I indicate quotations within quotations?

If you are quoting a passage that contains a quotation, then you use single quotation marks for the internal quotation. Quite rarely, you quote a passage that has a quotation within a quotation. In that rare instance, you would use double quotation marks for the second internal quotation.

Here's an example of a quotation within a quotation:

> In "The Emperor's New Clothes," Hans Christian Andersen wrote, "'But the Emperor has nothing on at all!' cried a little child."

Remember to consult your style guide to determine how to properly cite a quote within a quote.

When do I use those three dots (. . .)?

Whenever you want to leave out material from within a quotation, you need to use an ellipsis, which is a series of three periods, each of which should be preceded and followed by a space. So, an ellipsis in this sentence would look like . . . this. There are a few rules to follow when using ellipses:

Be sure that you don't fundamentally change the meaning of the quotation by omitting material.

Take a look at the following example:

> "The Writing Center is located on the UNC campus and serves the entire UNC community."

> "The Writing Center . . . serves the entire UNC community."

The reader's understanding of the Writing Center's mission to serve the UNC community is not affected by omitting the information about its location.

Do not use ellipses at the beginning or ending of quotations, unless it's important for the reader to know that the quotation was truncated.

For example, using the above example, you would NOT need an ellipsis in either of these situations:

> "The Writing Center is located on the UNC campus . . ."
>
> The Writing Center " . . . serves the entire UNC community."

Use punctuation marks in combination with ellipses when removing material from the end of sentences or clauses.

For example, if you take material from the end of a sentence, keep the period in as usual.

> "The boys ran to school, forgetting their lunches and books. Even though they were out of breath, they made it on time."
>
> "The boys ran to school. . . . Even though they were out of breath, they made it on time."

Likewise, if you excerpt material at the end of clause that ends in a comma, retain the comma.

> "The red car came to a screeching halt that was heard by nearby pedestrians, but no one was hurt."
>
> "The red car came to a screeching halt . . . , but no one was hurt."

Is it ever okay to insert my own words or change words in a quotation?

Sometimes it is necessary for clarity and flow to alter a word or words within a quotation. You should make such changes rarely. In order to alert your reader to the changes you've made, you should always bracket the altered words. Here are a few examples of situations when you might need brackets:

Changing verb tense or pronouns in order to be consistent with the rest of the sentence.

Suppose you were quoting a woman who, when asked about her experiences immigrating to the United States, commented "nobody understood me." You might write:

> Esther Hansen felt that when she came to the United States "nobody understood [her]."

In the above example, you've changed "me" to "her" in order to keep the entire passage in third person. However, you could avoid the need for this change by simply rephrasing:

> "Nobody understood me," recalled Danish immigrant Esther Hansen.

Including supplemental information that your reader needs in order to understand the quotation.

For example, if you were quoting someone's nickname, you might want to let your reader know the full name of that person in brackets.

> "The principal of the school told Billy [William Smith] that his contract would be terminated."

Similarly, if a quotation referenced an event with which the reader might be unfamiliar, you could identify that event in brackets.

> "We completely revised our political strategies after the strike [of 1934]."

Indicating the use of nonstandard grammar or spelling.

In rare situations, you may quote from a text that has nonstandard grammar, spelling, or word choice. In such cases, you may want to insert [sic], which means "thus" or "so" in Latin. Using [sic] alerts your reader to the fact that this nonstandard language is not the result of a typo on your part. Always italicize "sic" and enclose it in brackets. There is no need to put a period at the end. Here's an example of when you might use [sic]:

> Twelve-year-old Betsy Smith wrote in her diary, "Father is afraid that he will be guilty of beach [sic] of contract."

Here [sic] indicates that the original author wrote "beach of contract," not breach of contract, which is the accepted terminology.

Do not overuse brackets!

For example, it is not necessary to bracket capitalization changes that you make at the beginning of sentences. For example, suppose you were going to use part of this quotation:

"The colors scintillated curiously over a hard carapace, and the beetle's tiny antennae made gentle waving motions as though saying hello."

If you wanted to begin a sentence with an excerpt from the middle of this quotation, there would be no need to bracket your capitalization changes.

> "The beetle's tiny antennae made gentle waving motions as though saying hello," said Dr. Grace Farley, remembering a defining moment on her journey to becoming an entomologist.
>
> Not: "[T]he beetle's tiny antennae made gentle waving motions as though saying hello," said Dr. Grace Farley, remembering a defining moment on her journey to becoming an entomologist.

Works consulted

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encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/

17. Punctuation

JENIFER KURTZ

1. **Commas**
2. **Semicolons**
3. **Colons**
4. **Quotes**
5. **Apostrophes**
6. **Parentheses**
7. **Dashes**
8. **Hyphens**

1. Commas

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of items in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word**: Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists**: The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives**: He was a tired, hungry boy.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences**: The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words**: I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters**: The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.
- **Clarification**: Let's eat, Grandma.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.

2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.

3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.

4. Every year we go camping in the woods.

5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.

6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.

7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.

8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When listing several nouns in a sentence, separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. The Oxford comma is when one adds a comma before the *and* that precedes the last item in the list. This is a style choice and is often optional.

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are most often separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

It was a bright, windy, clear day. (a list of coordinating adjectives–no *and* needed)

Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight. (a list of nouns–*and* needed)

Not all uses of two adjectives require a comma, though.

The class was made up of dedicated medical students. (both dedicated and medical describe students, but medical is essential to confirm what type of students so no comma is needed.)

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.

2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.

3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio

reviews next week.

4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.

5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.

6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses that are included in the same sentence. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*. For a full list of conjunctions, see **"Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?".**

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.

7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

9. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of

the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense. In other words, you can take out the interrupting words, and the sentence will still be complete and sensible.

My sister, a psychologist, lives in New York.

Her car, which has side air bags, has a higher insurance rate than her truck.

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.

2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.

3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.

4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.

5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.

6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write a date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

Also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the

person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,

Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,

Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.

Sincerely,

Jack Fromont

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010

Alexa Marché

14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6

New Castle Maine 90342

Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is

your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you

Alexa

Commas for Clarification

Sometimes no specific rule calls for a comma, yet one is needed to clarify or eliminate confusion.

Unclear: To Emily Frank was an annoying person.

Clear: To Emily, Henry was an annoying person.

Unclear: The room was full of crying babies and mothers.

Clear: The room was fully of crying babies, and mothers.

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.

2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in

charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.

3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.

4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence and convey meaning.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

2. Semicolons

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Tip

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, and *but*.

Exercise 7

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.

2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?

3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.

4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.

5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.

6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

3. Colons

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Dear Hiring Manager:
To: Human Resources
From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quote

You can use a colon to introduce a quote.

Mark Twain said it best: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than forty words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than forty words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

My father always loved Mark Twain’s words:

> There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Tip

Long quotations, which are more than four typed lines, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers. For more information about block quotations, see **this resource** (https://tinyurl.com/nwzhlbk).

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like *such as* or *for example*.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Also, do not use a colon after introductory verbs.

Correct: My favorite things to eat are dark chocolate, taffy, and french fries.

Incorrect: My favorite things to eat are: dark chocolate, taffy, and french fries.

Tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true."

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Exercise 8

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following

sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write OK.

1. Don't give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

7. The boss's message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.

8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking "We should have stayed home."

10. Trust me I have done this before.

Key Takeaways

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and

memos.

4. Quotes

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Direct quotation: Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writing at Work

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this

can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to a computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- The client said, "He thought our manuscript was garbage."

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word "garbage"? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client's words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is "he" in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding puntcuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person's exact words. Often, you should identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Beginning: Madison said, "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

Middle: "Let's stop at the farmers' market," Madison said, "to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

End: "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner," Madison said.

Speaker not identified: "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, "When is lunch?"

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were "the next Picasso"?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, "Thanks for all of your hard work!"

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I "single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars"!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (' ') to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Theresa said, "I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, 'No dogs allowed.'"

"When you say, 'I can't help it,' what exactly does that mean?"

"The instructions say, 'Tighten the screws one at a time.'"

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, articles in periodicals, and

chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

"Annabelle Lee" is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

Writing at Work

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

Exercise 9

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

1. Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.
2. Where should we go? said Russell.

3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.

4. I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.

5. Perfect! said Yasmin.

6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.

7. I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?

8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

10. That's the one said Russell.

Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

5. Apostrophes

An apostrophe (') is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add 's.

Jen**'s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog**'s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess**'s** sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s ('s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe ('). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s ('s).

Plural noun that ends in s: The drummers' sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in s: The people's votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

> **Tip**
>
> Do not use apostrophes for plurals. It is a common mistake and easy to find in signs and even newspapers.

Correct: The 1980s were when neon colors came into their own in the world of fashion.

Incorrect: The 1980's were when neon color's came into their own in the world of fashion.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

I do not like ice cream.

I **don't** like ice cream.

Notice how the words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don't*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

Figure 0.1 "Commonly Used Contractions"

COMMONLY USED CONTRACTIONS	
aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse *it's* with *its*. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun.

It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

Exercise 10

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add ’s to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s. Add ’ to plural nouns that end in s.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

6. Parentheses

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 11

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?

2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.

3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.

4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.

5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?

6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Key Takeaways

- Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.
- Parentheses are always used in pairs.

7. Dashes

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a

sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 12

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Key Takeaways

- Dashes indicate a pause in text.

- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

8. Hyphens

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

The fifty–five–year–old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit–forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet–
ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

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Figure 9.1 "Commonly Used Contractions," Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

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PART IV
ELEMENTS

18. The Guiding Idea and Argumentative Thesis Statement

RHONDA DIETRICH

Two Types of Essays

Your composition professor has given you an assignment, requiring you to write an essay in which you identify your favorite book and explain why you like it best. Later they assign an essay in which you take a stand either for or against homeschooling.

Both assignments require you to write a paper, yet the essays called for are in two different genres. Thus, you will need to present your views in two different ways.

Two Types of Main Point

Although these genres are different, they are similar in that both require your essay to have a main point. In fact, it is crucial that you have a central idea in both types of essay. Neither paper will be successful without it. *It's that important.* It is also highly recommended that you present your main idea toward the end of your first paragraph, so readers will know at the onset what point you plan to make in your essay. It also should be around 1-2 sentences long. However, that's where the similarity ends. As you will see, you need to present a *guiding idea* when discussing your favorite book; however, when taking a position on the controversial

issue of homeschooling, you will have to present your point of view in an *argumentative thesis statement*. Let's take a closer look at both ways of presenting the main point of an essay to get a better idea of why and how each is used.

The Guiding Idea

Purpose

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

Criteria

For the guiding idea to be effective it must be:

1. Clear: If readers can't understand it, it is as if your paper doesn't have one.
    1. Example of a good guiding idea: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*is my favorite book because it includes a wide variety of characters. *Note: The sentence is clear and leaves no question in the reader's mind regarding what the student wants to say in the essay.*

    2. Example of an unclear guiding idea: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is good, so I like it. *Note: The sentence is unclear because the reader doesn't know if this is the student's favorite book or why the student thinks it is "good."*
2. Specific: If it contains vague words such as "good" and "things," it will not be effective in getting your point across.
    1. Example of a specific guiding idea: During the summer of my thirteenth year, I developed a passion for British Romantic poetry due to its celebration of nature. *Note: This makes clear what the writer's main idea is. It is also likely to make the reader want to read on.*
    2. Example of a vague guiding idea: During the summer of my thirteenth year, I learned that there are a lot of good things about Romantic poetry. *Note: The words "good things" are too vague to give the reader a clear understanding of the writer's main point. The vague terms may also make the statement a little boring for the reader and may not entice them to read on.*
3. Simple to support. In other words, if it is presented unclearly, vaguely, or in an overly complex way, it will be very difficult to back it up effectively in the rest of the essay.
    1. Example of a supportable guiding idea: If you follow these five easy steps, you will soon be enjoying a delicious piece of chocolate cake with your friends. *Note: Here the student only has to explain in detail each of these steps in order to support the central point of the essay.*
    2. Example of an unsupportable guiding idea: Nobody likes baking cakes. *Note: There is nowhere to go in this paper. The writer doesn't know everyone, so it would be impossible to prove this in the essay.*

The Argumentative Thesis Statement

Purpose

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

Criteria

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

1. It must be logical and reasonable. Clearly, if you want your reader to "listen" to what you have to say, you need to show that you have thought out your argument from all angles.
    1. Example of a reasonable thesis: The habit of bullying is caused by parental neglect. *Note: Whether or not the reader agrees, it seems like a reasonable claim and one that could*

be supported in the essay.

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

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

   1. Example of a controversial thesis: The Health Care Reform Act threatens our civil liberties. *Note: If you have watched the news lately, you know that many liberals and conservatives battle over this issue. Thus, no matter what position you choose, half of your readers will probably disagree with your stance, and you will definitely need to convince them that your view is valid.*
   2. Example of a non-controversial thesis: War is bad. *Note: Most readers would agree. Thus, the writer has no need to prove anything in the paper, and it will be boring to write and to read. Also, many times students who present this type of thesis find it very hard to fill the assigned number of pages.*

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

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

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

4. It must be an opinion. This rule may seem obvious but is sometimes difficult for students used to writing facts-based papers. Often they are convinced that putting an opinion in a paper constitutes bias and, thus, it should be avoided. However, hopefully, by now it has become clear that all effective arguments are based on opinions.
    1. For an example of the effective opinion-based thesis, review the logical, controversial, and provable thesis statements given above. *Note: Each one presents a personal viewpoint that will need to be backed up through supporting arguments and evidence in order to be convincing to readers.*
    2. Example of a fact-based thesis: There are many types of dogs. *Note: This thesis presents a fact rather than an opinion; thus, the writer will simply report data concerning various dogs. There is no personal viewpoint that needs to be backed up by supportive evidence.*

Other Requirements of the Argumentative Thesis

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

Exercise 2

Read each thesis statement below and determine if it is effective. If it isn't stated, identify which of the characteristics discussed above that it violates.

Example: *It is important to spay or neuter pets.*
Answer: *This thesis is not controversial.*

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

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19. Introductions

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

This handout will explain the functions of introductions, offer strategies for creating effective introductions, and provide some examples of less effective introductions to avoid.

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. Usually when you sit down to respond to an assignment, you have at least some sense of what you want to say in the body of your paper. You might have chosen a few examples you want to use or have an idea that will help you answer the main question of your assignment; these sections, therefore, may not be as hard to write. And it's fine to write them first! But in your final draft, these middle parts of the paper can't just come out of thin air; they need to be introduced and concluded in a way that makes sense to your reader.

Your introduction and conclusion act as bridges that transport your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis. If your readers pick up your paper about education in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, for example, they need a transition to help them leave behind the world of Chapel Hill, television, e-mail, and The Daily Tar Heel and to help them temporarily enter the world of nineteenth-century American slavery. By providing an introduction that helps your readers make a transition between their own world and the issues you will be writing about, you give your readers the tools they need to get into your topic and care about what you are saying. Similarly, once you've hooked your readers with the introduction and offered evidence to prove your thesis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help

your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. (See our handout on conclusions.)

Note that what constitutes a good introduction may vary widely based on the kind of paper you are writing and the academic discipline in which you are writing it. If you are uncertain what kind of introduction is expected, ask your instructor.

Why bother writing a good introduction?

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The opening paragraph of your paper will provide your readers with their initial impressions of your argument, your writing style, and the overall quality of your work. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper.

Your introduction is an important road map for the rest of your paper. Your introduction conveys a lot of information to your readers. You can let them know what your topic is, why it is important, and how you plan to proceed with your discussion. In many academic disciplines, your introduction should contain a thesis that will assert your main argument. Your introduction should also give the reader a sense of the kinds of information you will use to make that argument and the general organization of the paragraphs and pages that will follow. After reading your introduction, your readers should not have any major surprises in store when they read the main body of your paper.

Ideally, your introduction will make your readers want to read your paper. The introduction should capture your readers' interest, making them want to read the rest of your paper. Opening with a compelling story, an interesting question, or a vivid example can get your readers to see why your topic matters and serve as an

invitation for them to join you for an engaging intellectual conversation (remember, though, that these strategies may not be suitable for all papers and disciplines).

Strategies for writing an effective introduction

Start by thinking about the question (or questions) you are trying to answer. Your entire essay will be a response to this question, and your introduction is the first step toward that end. Your direct answer to the assigned question will be your thesis, and your thesis will likely be included in your introduction, so it is a good idea to use the question as a jumping off point. Imagine that you are assigned the following question:

> Drawing on the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, discuss the relationship between education and slavery in 19th-century America. Consider the following: How did white control of education reinforce slavery? How did Douglass and other enslaved African Americans view education while they endured slavery? And what role did education play in the acquisition of freedom? Most importantly, consider the degree to which education was or was not a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

You will probably refer back to your assignment extensively as you prepare your complete essay, and the prompt itself can also give you some clues about how to approach the introduction. Notice that it starts with a broad statement and then narrows to focus on specific questions from the book. One strategy might be to use a similar model in your own introduction—start off with a big picture sentence or two and then focus in on the details of your argument about Douglass. Of course, a different approach could also be very successful, but looking at the way the professor set up the question

can sometimes give you some ideas for how you might answer it. (See our handout on understanding assignments for additional information on the hidden clues in assignments.)

Decide how general or broad your opening should be. Keep in mind that even a "big picture" opening needs to be clearly related to your topic; an opening sentence that said "Human beings, more than any other creatures on earth, are capable of learning" would be too broad for our sample assignment about slavery and education. If you have ever used Google Maps or similar programs, that experience can provide a helpful way of thinking about how broad your opening should be. Imagine that you're researching Chapel Hill. If what you want to find out is whether Chapel Hill is at roughly the same latitude as Rome, it might make sense to hit that little "minus" sign on the online map until it has zoomed all the way out and you can see the whole globe. If you're trying to figure out how to get from Chapel Hill to Wrightsville Beach, it might make more sense to zoom in to the level where you can see most of North Carolina (but not the rest of the world, or even the rest of the United States). And if you are looking for the intersection of Ridge Road and Manning Drive so that you can find the Writing Center's main office, you may need to zoom all the way in. The question you are asking determines how "broad" your view should be. In the sample assignment above, the questions are probably at the "state" or "city" level of generality. When writing, you need to place your ideas in context—but that context doesn't generally have to be as big as the whole galaxy!

Try writing your introduction last. You may think that you have to write your introduction first, but that isn't necessarily true, and it isn't always the most effective way to craft a good introduction. You may find that you don't know precisely what you are going to argue at the beginning of the writing process. It is perfectly fine to start out thinking that you want to argue a particular point but wind up arguing something slightly or even dramatically different by the time you've written most of the paper. The writing process can be an important way to organize your ideas, think through complicated issues, refine your thoughts, and develop a sophisticated argument.

However, an introduction written at the beginning of that discovery process will not necessarily reflect what you wind up with at the end. You will need to revise your paper to make sure that the introduction, all of the evidence, and the conclusion reflect the argument you intend. Sometimes it's easiest to just write up all of your evidence first and then write the introduction last—that way you can be sure that the introduction will match the body of the paper.

Don't be afraid to write a tentative introduction first and then change it later. Some people find that they need to write some kind of introduction in order to get the writing process started. That's fine, but if you are one of those people, be sure to return to your initial introduction later and rewrite if necessary.

Open with something that will draw readers in. **Consider these options (remembering that they may not be suitable for all kinds of papers):**

- **an intriguing example**—for example, Douglass writes about a mistress who initially teaches him but then ceases her instruction as she learns more about slavery.
- **a provocative quotation that is closely related to your argument**—for example, Douglass writes that "education and slavery were incompatible with each other." (Quotes from famous people, inspirational quotes, etc. may not work well for an academic paper; in this example, the quote is from the author himself.)
- **a puzzling scenario**—for example, Frederick Douglass says of slaves that "[N]othing has been left undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind; and yet how wonderfully they have sustained the mighty load of a most frightful bondage, under which they have been groaning for centuries!" Douglass clearly asserts that slave owners went to great lengths to destroy the mental capacities of slaves, yet his own life story proves that these efforts could be unsuccessful.

- **a vivid and perhaps unexpected anecdote**—for example, "Learning about slavery in the American history course at Frederick Douglass High School, students studied the work slaves did, the impact of slavery on their families, and the rules that governed their lives. We didn't discuss education, however, until one student, Mary, raised her hand and asked, 'But when did they go to school?' That modern high school students could not conceive of an American childhood devoid of formal education speaks volumes about the centrality of education to American youth today and also suggests the significance of the deprivation of education in past generations."
- **a thought-provoking question**—for example, given all of the freedoms that were denied enslaved individuals in the American South, why does Frederick Douglass focus his attentions so squarely on education and literacy?

Pay special attention to your first sentence. Start off on the right foot with your readers by making sure that the first sentence actually says something useful and that it does so in an interesting and polished way.

How to evaluate your introduction draft

Ask a friend to read your introduction and then tell you what he or she expects the paper will discuss, what kinds of evidence the paper will use, and what the tone of the paper will be. If your friend is able to predict the rest of your paper accurately, you probably have a good introduction.

Five kinds of less effective introductions

1. **The placeholder introduction.** When you don't have much to say on a given topic, it is easy to create this kind of introduction. Essentially, this kind of weaker introduction contains several sentences that are vague and don't really say much. They exist just to take up the "introduction space" in your paper. If you had something more effective to say, you would probably say it, but in the meantime this paragraph is just a place holder.

> Example: Slavery was one of the greatest tragedies in American history. There were many different aspects of slavery. Each created different kinds of problems for enslaved people.

2. **The restated question introduction.** Restating the question can sometimes be an effective strategy, but it can be easy to stop at JUST restating the question instead of offering a more specific, interesting introduction to your paper. The professor or teaching assistant wrote your question and will be reading many essays in response to it—he or she does not need to read a whole paragraph that simply restates the question.

> Example: The *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* discusses the relationship between education and slavery in 19th century America, showing how white control of education reinforced slavery and how Douglass and other enslaved African Americans viewed education while they endured. Moreover, the book discusses the role that education played in the acquisition of freedom. Education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

3. **The Webster's Dictionary introduction.** This introduction begins by giving the dictionary definition of one or more of the words in the assigned question. Anyone can look a word up in the dictionary and copy down what Webster says. If you want to open with a

discussion of an important term, it may be far more interesting for you (and your reader) if you develop your own definition of the term in the specific context of your class and assignment. You may also be able to use a definition from one of the sources you've been reading for class. Also recognize that the dictionary is also not a particularly authoritative work—it doesn't take into account the context of your course and doesn't offer particularly detailed information. If you feel that you must seek out an authority, try to find one that is very relevant and specific. Perhaps a quotation from a source reading might prove better? Dictionary introductions are also ineffective simply because they are so overused. Instructors may see a great many papers that begin in this way, greatly decreasing the dramatic impact that any one of those papers will have.

> Example: Webster's dictionary defines slavery as "the state of being a slave," as "the practice of owning slaves," and as "a condition of hard work and subjection."

4. **The "dawn of man" introduction.** This kind of introduction generally makes broad, sweeping statements about the relevance of this topic since the beginning of time, throughout the world, etc. It is usually very general (similar to the placeholder introduction) and fails to connect to the thesis. It may employ cliches—the phrases "the dawn of man" and "throughout human history" are examples, and it's hard to imagine a time when starting with one of these would work. Instructors often find them extremely annoying.

> Example: Since the dawn of man, slavery has been a problem in human history.

5. **The book report introduction.** This introduction is what you had to do for your elementary school book reports. It gives the name and author of the book you are writing about, tells what the book is about, and offers other basic facts about the book. You might resort to this sort of introduction when you are trying to fill space because it's a familiar, comfortable format. It is ineffective because it

offers details that your reader probably already knows and that are irrelevant to the thesis.

> Example: Frederick Douglass wrote his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* , in the 1840s. It was published in 1986 by Penguin Books. In it, he tells the story of his life.

And now for the conclusion…

Writing an effective introduction can be tough. Try playing around with several different options and choose the one that ends up sounding best to you!

Just as your introduction helps readers make the transition to your topic, your conclusion needs to help them return to their daily lives–but with a lasting sense of how what they have just read is useful or meaningful. Check out our handout on conclusions for tips on ending your paper as effectively as you began it!

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

Douglass, Frederick. 1995. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*. New York: Dover.

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20. Paragraph Development

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

This handout will help you understand how paragraphs are formed, how to develop stronger paragraphs, and how to completely and clearly express your ideas.

Paragraphs are the building blocks of papers. Many students define paragraphs in terms of length: a paragraph is a group of at least five sentences, a paragraph is half a page long, etc. In reality, though, the unity and coherence of ideas among sentences is what constitutes a paragraph. A paragraph is defined as "a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit" (Lunsford and Connors 116). Length and appearance do not determine whether a section in a paper is a paragraph. For instance, in some styles of writing, particularly journalistic styles, a paragraph can be just one sentence long. Ultimately, a paragraph is a sentence or group of sentences that support one main idea. In this handout, we will refer to this as the "controlling idea," because it controls what happens in the rest of the paragraph.

How do I decide what to put in a paragraph?

Before you can begin to determine what the composition of a particular paragraph will be, you must first decide on an argument and a working thesis statement for your paper. What is the most important idea that you are trying to convey to your reader? The information in each paragraph must be related to that idea. In other

words, your paragraphs should remind your reader that there is a recurrent relationship between your thesis and the information in each paragraph. A working thesis functions like a seed from which your paper, and your ideas, will grow. The whole process is an organic one—a natural progression from a seed to a full-blown paper where there are direct, familial relationships between all of the ideas in the paper.

The decision about what to put into your paragraphs begins with the germination of a seed of ideas; this "germination process" is better known as brainstorming. There are many techniques for brainstorming; whichever one you choose, this stage of paragraph development cannot be skipped. Building paragraphs can be like building a skyscraper: there must be a well-planned foundation that supports what you are building. Any cracks, inconsistencies, or other corruptions of the foundation can cause your whole paper to crumble.

So, let's suppose that you have done some brainstorming to develop your thesis. What else should you keep in mind as you begin to create paragraphs? **Every paragraph in a paper should be**:

- **Unified**: All of the sentences in a single paragraph should be related to a single controlling idea (often expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph).
- **Clearly related to the thesis**: The sentences should all refer to the central idea, or thesis, of the paper (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Coherent**: The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Well-developed**: Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paragraph's controlling idea (Rosen and Behrens 119).

How do I organize a paragraph?

There are many different ways to organize a paragraph. The organization you choose will depend on the controlling idea of the paragraph. **Below are a few possibilities for organization, with links to brief examples:**

- **Narration**: Tell a story. Go chronologically, from start to finish. (See an example.)
- **Description**: Provide specific details about what something looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels like. Organize spatially, in order of appearance, or by topic. (See an example.)
- **Process**: Explain how something works, step by step. Perhaps follow a sequence—first, second, third. (See an example.)
- **Classification**: Separate into groups or explain the various parts of a topic. (See an example.)
- **Illustration**: Give examples and explain how those examples support your point. (See an example in the 5-step process below.)

5-step process to develop a paragraph that illustrates a point

Let's walk through a 5-step process for building a paragraph that illustrates a point in an argument. For each step there is an explanation and example. Our example paragraph will be about human misconceptions of piranhas.

Step 1. Decide on a controlling idea and create a topic sentence

Paragraph development begins with the formulation of the controlling idea. This idea directs the paragraph's development. Often, the controlling idea of a paragraph will appear in the form of a topic sentence. In some cases, you may need more than one sentence to express a paragraph's controlling idea.

Controlling idea and topic sentence

> — Despite the fact that piranhas are relatively harmless, many people continue to believe the pervasive myth that piranhas are dangerous to humans.

Step 2. Elaborate on the controlling idea

Paragraph development continues with an elaboration on the controlling idea, perhaps with an explanation, implication, or statement about significance. Our example offers a possible explanation for the pervasiveness of the myth.

Elaboration

> — This impression of piranhas is exacerbated by their mischaracterization in popular media.

Step 3. Give an example (or multiple examples)

Paragraph development progresses with an example (or more) that illustrates the claims made in the previous sentences.

Example

— For example, the promotional poster for the 1978 horror film *Piranha* features an oversized piranha poised to bite the leg of an unsuspecting woman.

Step 4. Explain the example(s)

The next movement in paragraph development is an explanation of each example and its relevance to the topic sentence. The explanation should demonstrate the value of the example as evidence to support the major claim, or focus, in your paragraph.

Continue the pattern of giving examples and explaining them until all points/examples that the writer deems necessary have been made and explained. NONE of your examples should be left unexplained. You might be able to explain the relationship between the example and the topic sentence in the same sentence which introduced the example. More often, however, you will need to explain that relationship in a separate sentence.

Explanation for example

— Such a terrifying representation easily captures the imagination and promotes unnecessary fear.

Notice that the example and explanation steps of this 5-step process (steps 3 and 4) can be repeated as needed. The idea is that you continue to use this pattern until you have completely developed the main idea of the paragraph.

Step 5. Complete the paragraph's idea or transition into the next paragraph

The final movement in paragraph development involves tying up the loose ends of the paragraph. At this point, you can remind your

reader about the relevance of the information to the larger paper, or you can make a concluding point for this example. You might, however, simply transition to the next paragraph.

Sentences for completing a paragraph

> — While the trope of the man-eating piranhas lends excitement to the adventure stories, it bears little resemblance to the real-life piranha. By paying more attention to fact than fiction, humans may finally be able to let go of this inaccurate belief.

Finished paragraph

> Despite the fact that piranhas are relatively harmless, many people continue to believe the pervasive myth that piranhas are dangerous to humans. This impression of piranhas is exacerbated by their mischaracterization in popular media. For example, the promotional poster for the 1978 horror film *Piranha* features an oversized piranha poised to bite the leg of an unsuspecting woman. Such a terrifying representation easily captures the imagination and promotes unnecessary fear. While the trope of the man-eating piranhas lends excitement to the adventure stories, it bears little resemblance to the real-life piranha. By paying more attention to fact than fiction, humans may finally be able to let go of this inaccurate belief.

Troubleshooting paragraphs

Problem: the paragraph has no topic sentence

Imagine each paragraph as a sandwich. The real content of the sandwich—the meat or other filling—is in the middle. It includes all the evidence you need to make the point. But it gets kind of messy to eat a sandwich without any bread. Your readers don't know what to do with all the evidence you've given them. So, the top slice of bread (the first sentence of the paragraph) explains the topic (or controlling idea) of the paragraph. And, the bottom slice (the last sentence of the paragraph) tells the reader how the paragraph relates to the broader argument. In the original and revised paragraphs below, notice how a topic sentence expressing the controlling idea tells the reader the point of all the evidence.

Original paragraph

> Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Revised paragraph

> Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Once you have mastered the use of topic sentences, you may decide that the topic sentence for a particular paragraph really shouldn't be the first sentence of the paragraph. This is fine—the topic sentence can actually go at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph; what's important is that it is in there somewhere so that readers know what the main idea of the paragraph is and how it relates back to the thesis of your paper. Suppose that we wanted to start the piranha paragraph with a transition sentence—something that reminds the reader of what happened in the previous paragraph—rather than with the topic sentence. Let's suppose that the previous paragraph was about all kinds of animals that people are afraid of, like sharks, snakes, and spiders. Our paragraph might look like this (the topic sentence is bold):

> Like sharks, snakes, and spiders, piranhas are widely feared. **Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless**. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Problem: the paragraph has more than one controlling idea

If a paragraph has more than one main idea, consider eliminating sentences that relate to the second idea, or split the paragraph into two or more paragraphs, each with only one main idea. Watch our short video on reverse outlining to learn a quick way to test whether your paragraphs are unified. In the following paragraph, the final two sentences branch off into a different topic; so, the

revised paragraph eliminates them and concludes with a sentence that reminds the reader of the paragraph's main idea.

Original paragraph

> Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. ~~A number of South American groups eat piranhas. They fry or grill the fish and then serve them with coconut milk or tucupi, a sauce made from fermented manioc juices.~~

Revised paragraph

> Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Problem: transitions are needed within the paragraph

You are probably familiar with the idea that transitions may be needed between paragraphs or sections in a paper (see our handout on transitions). Sometimes they are also helpful within the body

of a single paragraph. Within a paragraph, transitions are often single words or short phrases that help to establish relationships between ideas and to create a logical progression of those ideas in a paragraph. This is especially likely to be true within paragraphs that discuss multiple examples. Let's take a look at a version of our piranha paragraph that uses transitions to orient the reader:

> Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, except in two main situations, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' instinct is to flee, not attack. But there are two situations in which a piranha bite is likely. The first is when a frightened piranha is lifted out of the water—for example, if it has been caught in a fishing net. The second is when the water level in pools where piranhas are living falls too low. A large number of fish may be trapped in a single pool, and if they are hungry, they may attack anything that enters the water.

In this example, you can see how the phrases "the first" and "the second" help the reader follow the organization of the ideas in the paragraph.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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21. Transitions

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

In this crazy, mixed-up world of ours, transitions glue our ideas and our essays together. This handout will introduce you to some useful transitional expressions and help you employ them effectively.

In both academic writing and professional writing, your goal is to convey information clearly and concisely, if not to convert the reader to your way of thinking. Transitions help you to achieve these goals by establishing logical connections between sentences, paragraphs, and sections of your papers. In other words, transitions tell readers what to do with the information you present to them. Whether single words, quick phrases, or full sentences, they function as signs that tell readers how to think about, organize, and react to old and new ideas as they read through what you have written.

Transitions signal relationships between ideas—relationships such as: "Another example coming up—stay alert!" or "Here's an exception to my previous statement" or "Although this idea appears to be true, here's the real story." Basically, transitions provide the reader with directions for how to piece together your ideas into a logically coherent argument. Transitions are not just verbal decorations that embellish your paper by making it sound or read better. They are words with particular meanings that tell the reader to think and react in a particular way to your ideas. In providing the reader with these important cues, transitions help readers understand the logic of how your ideas fit together.

Signs that you might need to work on your transitions

How can you tell whether you need to work on your transitions? **Here are some possible clues:**

- Your instructor has written comments like "choppy," "jumpy," "abrupt," "flow," "need signposts," or "how is this related?" on your papers.
- Your readers (instructors, friends, or classmates) tell you that they had trouble following your organization or train of thought.
- You tend to write the way you think—and your brain often jumps from one idea to another pretty quickly.
- You wrote your paper in several discrete "chunks" and then pasted them together.
- You are working on a group paper; the draft you are working on was created by pasting pieces of several people's writing together.

Organization

Since the clarity and effectiveness of your transitions will depend greatly on how well you have organized your paper, you may want to evaluate your paper's organization before you work on transitions. In the margins of your draft, summarize in a word or short phrase what each paragraph is about or how it fits into your analysis as a whole. This exercise should help you to see the order of and connection between your ideas more clearly.

If after doing this exercise you find that you still have difficulty linking your ideas together in a coherent fashion, your problem may not be with transitions but with organization. For help in this

area (and a more thorough explanation of the "reverse outlining" technique described in the previous paragraph), please see the Writing Center's handout on organization.

How transitions work

The organization of your written work includes two elements: (1) the order in which you have chosen to present the different parts of your discussion or argument, and (2) the relationships you construct between these parts. Transitions cannot substitute for good organization, but they can make your organization clearer and easier to follow. Take a look at the following example:

El Pais, a Latin American country, has a new democratic government after having been a dictatorship for many years. Assume that you want to argue that El Pais is not as democratic as the conventional view would have us believe.

One way to effectively organize your argument would be to present the conventional view and then to provide the reader with your critical response to this view. So, in Paragraph A you would enumerate all the reasons that someone might consider *El Pais* highly democratic, while in Paragraph B you would refute these points. The transition that would establish the logical connection between these two key elements of your argument would indicate to the reader that the information in paragraph B contradicts the information in paragraph A. As a result, you might organize your argument, including the transition that links paragraph A with paragraph B, in the following manner:

Paragraph A: points that support the view that El Pais's new government is very democratic.

Transition: Despite the previous arguments, there are many reasons to think that El Pais's new government is not as democratic as typically believed.

Paragraph B: points that contradict the view that El Pais's new government is very democratic.

In this case, the transition words "Despite the previous arguments," suggest that the reader should not believe paragraph A and instead should consider the writer's reasons for viewing El Pais's democracy as suspect.

As the example suggests, transitions can help reinforce the underlying logic of your paper's organization by providing the reader with essential information regarding the relationship between your ideas. In this way, transitions act as the glue that binds the components of your argument or discussion into a unified, coherent, and persuasive whole.

Types of transitions

Now that you have a general idea of how to go about developing effective transitions in your writing, let us briefly discuss the types of transitions your writing will use.

The types of transitions available to you are as diverse as the circumstances in which you need to use them. A transition can be a single word, a phrase, a sentence, or an entire paragraph. In each case, it functions the same way: First, the transition either directly summarizes the content of a preceding sentence, paragraph, or section or implies such a summary (by reminding the reader of what has come before). Then, it helps the reader anticipate or comprehend the new information that you wish to present.

1. **Transitions between sections:** Particularly in longer works, it may be necessary to include transitional paragraphs that summarize for the reader the information just covered and specify the relevance of this information to the discussion in the following section.
2. **Transitions between paragraphs:** If you have done a good job

of arranging paragraphs so that the content of one leads logically to the next, the transition will highlight a relationship that already exists by summarizing the previous paragraph and suggesting something of the content of the paragraph that follows. A transition between paragraphs can be a word or two (however, for example, similarly), a phrase, or a sentence. Transitions can be at the end of the first paragraph, at the beginning of the second paragraph, or in both places.

3. **Transitions within paragraphs:** As with transitions between sections and paragraphs, transitions within paragraphs act as cues by helping readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases.

Transitional expressions

Effectively constructing each transition often depends upon your ability to identify words or phrases that will indicate for the reader the kind of logical relationships you want to convey. The table below should make it easier for you to find these words or phrases. Whenever you have trouble finding a word, phrase, or sentence to serve as an effective transition, refer to the information in the table for assistance. Look in the left column of the table for the kind of logical relationship you are trying to express. Then look in the right column of the table for examples of words or phrases that express this logical relationship.

Keep in mind that each of these words or phrases may have a slightly different meaning. Consult a dictionary or writer's handbook if you are unsure of the exact meaning of a word or phrase.

LOGICAL RELATIONSHIP	TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION
Similarity	also, in the same way, just as ... so too, likewis
Exception/Contrast	but, however, in spite of, on the one hand ... o nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, i still, yet
Sequence/Order	first, second, third, ... next, then, finally
Time	after, afterward, at last, before, currently, dur later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneous
Example	for example, for instance, namely, specifically
Emphasis	even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly
Place/Position	above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, so, therefo
Additional Support or Evidence	additionally, again, also, and, as well, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, then
Conclusion/Summary	finally, in a word, in brief, briefly, in conclusio analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to s in summary

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22. Conclusions

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

This handout will explain the functions of conclusions, offer strategies for writing effective ones, help you evaluate conclusions you've drafted, and suggest approaches to avoid.

Introductions and conclusions can be difficult to write, but they're worth investing time in. They can have a significant influence on a reader's experience of your paper.

Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to synthesize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.

Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the prompt and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.

Your conclusion should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. It can suggest broader implications that

will not only interest your reader, but also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

Strategies for writing an effective conclusion

One or more of the following strategies may help you write an effective conclusion:

- **Play the "So What" Game.** If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" Then ponder that question and answer it. Here's how it might go: You: Basically, I'm just saying that education was important to Douglass. Friend: So what? You: Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen. Friend: Why should anybody care? You: That's important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally. You can also use this strategy on your own, asking yourself "So What?" as you develop your ideas or your draft.
- **Return to the theme or themes in the introduction.** This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.
- **Synthesize, don't summarize.** Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you

made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.

- **Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.**
- **Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study.** This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.
- **Point to broader implications.** For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.

Strategies to avoid

- Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as "in conclusion," "in summary," or "in closing." Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as wooden and trite in writing.
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion.
- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement without any substantive changes.
- Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
- Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

Four kinds of ineffective conclusions

1. **The "That's My Story and I'm Sticking to It" Conclusion.** This conclusion just restates the thesis and is usually painfully short. It does not push the ideas forward. People write this kind of conclusion when they can't think of anything else to say. Example: In conclusion, Frederick Douglass was, as we have seen, a pioneer in American education, proving that education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.
2. **The "Sherlock Holmes" Conclusion.** Sometimes writers will state the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion. You might be tempted to use this strategy if you don't want to give everything away too early in your paper. You may think it would be more dramatic to keep the reader in the dark until the end and then "wow" him with your main idea, as in a Sherlock Holmes mystery. The reader, however, does not expect a mystery, but an analytical discussion of your topic in an academic style, with the main argument (thesis) stated up front. Example: (After a paper that lists numerous incidents from the book but never says what these incidents reveal about Douglass and his views on education): So, as the evidence above demonstrates, Douglass saw education as a way to undermine the slaveholders' power and also an important step toward freedom.
3. **The "America the Beautiful"/"I Am Woman"/"We Shall Overcome" Conclusion.** This kind of conclusion usually draws on emotion to make its appeal, but while this emotion and even sentimentality may be very heartfelt, it is usually out of character with the rest of an analytical paper. A more sophisticated commentary, rather than emotional praise, would be a more fitting tribute to the topic. Example: Because of the efforts of fine Americans like Frederick Douglass, countless others have seen the shining beacon of light that is

education. His example was a torch that lit the way for others. Frederick Douglass was truly an American hero.

4. **The "Grab Bag" Conclusion.** This kind of conclusion includes extra information that the writer found or thought of but couldn't integrate into the main paper. You may find it hard to leave out details that you discovered after hours of research and thought, but adding random facts and bits of evidence at the end of an otherwise-well-organized essay can just create confusion. Example: In addition to being an educational pioneer, Frederick Douglass provides an interesting case study for masculinity in the American South. He also offers historians an interesting glimpse into slave resistance when he confronts Covey, the overseer. His relationships with female relatives reveal the importance of family in the slave community.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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PART V
NARRATIVE

23. Storytelling, Narration, and the "Who I Am" Story

CATHERINE RAMSDELL

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

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

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

Introduction

Are stories just a form of entertainment—like movies, television shows, books, and video games? Or are they something more? This chapter takes the stance that stories are a fundamental and primary form of communication, and without them, we would lose an important way to teach our children, to train our employees, to sell our products, and to make information memorable to those of any age.

Consider a Jewish story Annette Simmons references in her

book *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling*:

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

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

In her book, *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling*, Simmons talks about seven different kinds of stories everyone should learn how to tell. One of them is the "Who I Am" story. Simply put, a Who I Am story shows something about its author, and this type of story fits into the genre of memoir or creative nonfiction. Here is an example from Simmons' book:

> Skip looked into the sea of suspicious stockholders and wondered what might convince them to follow his leadership. He was 35, looked 13 and was third generation rich. He could tell they assumed he would be an unholy disaster as a leader. He decided to tell them a story. "My first job was drawing the electrical engineering plans for a boat building company. The drawings had to be perfect because if the wires were not accurately placed before the fiberglass

> form was poured, a mistake might cost a million dollars, easy. At 25, I already had two masters' degrees. I had been on boats all my life and frankly, I found drawing these plans a bit . . . mindless. One morning I got a call at home from a $6/hour worker asking me 'are you sure this is right?' I was incensed. Of course I was sure—'just pour the damn thing.' When his supervisor called me an hour later and woke me up again and asked 'are you sure this is right?' I had even less patience. 'I said I was sure an hour ago and I'm still sure.'
>
> It was the phone call from the president of the company that finally got me out of bed and down to the site. If I had to hold these guys by the hand, so be it. I sought out the worker who had called me first. He sat looking at my plans with his head cocked to one side. With exaggerated patience I began to explain the drawing. But after a few words my voice got weaker and my head started to cock to the side as well. It seems that I had (being left-handed) transposed starboard and port so that the drawing was an exact mirror image of what it should have been. Thank God this $6/hour worker had caught my mistake before it was too late. The next day I found this box on my desk. The crew bought me a remedial pair of tennis shoes for future reference. Just in case I got mixed up again— a red left shoe for port, and a green right one for starboard. These shoes don't just help me remember port and starboard. They help me remember to listen even when I think I know what's going on." As he held up the shoebox with one red and one green shoe, there were smiles and smirks. The stockholders relaxed a bit. If this young upstart had already learned this lesson about arrogance, then he might have learned a few things about running companies, too. (1–2)

This example shows some of the reasons why people tell Who I Am stories. Chances are that if Skip had gone into this meeting and said "Look, I know I'm young, but I've got a lot of experience, I know

what I'm doing, I've learned a lot from my mistakes. Just trust me," he would not have won over his audience.

Please keep this example and the basic definition of the Who I Am story in mind while reading through the next section, which provides a little background and theory about the fine art of narration and storytelling.

Narrative Theory

Roland Barthes was arguably one of the most important literary theorists of the twentieth century. To begin, we'll look at his thoughts on narrative:

> The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances—as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think Carpaccio's Saint Ursula), stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite discovery of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (qtd. in Abbott 1–2)

In the forty-five years since Barthes penned this passage, nearly every book on storytelling or narrative theory has referenced this quote. Even if this quote is not referenced directly, often authors simply make a similar statement in their own words. For example, twenty-one years after Barthes voiced his thoughts on narrative, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, authors of *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, stated:

> No single period or society can do without narratives. And, a good number of contemporary thinkers hasten to add, whatever you say and think about a certain time or place becomes a narrative in its own right. From the oldest myths and legends to postmodern fabulation, narration has always been central. Postmodern philosophers . . . also contend that everything amounts to a narrative, including the world and the self. If that is correct, then the study of narrative . . . unveils fundamental culture-specific opinions about reality and humankind, which are narrativized in stories and novels. (1)

Whether authors quote Barthes directly or voice the same sentiment in their own words, one of the few things almost all authors, scholars, and critics can agree on is that narrative is part of humankind, it always has been, and it always will be.

Of course, what Barthes and Herman call narration, many, myself included, call story. H. Porter Abbott notes in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, "Many speakers of English grow up using story to mean what we [Abbott and Barthes among others] are referring to here as a narrative" (16). Technically, however, there are some differences between the words "story" and "narrative." In his book *The Classical Plot and Invention of Western Narrative*, N. J. Lowe talks about these differences using the terms *fabula* and *sjuzhet*:

> This distinction is a cornerstone of modern narrative theory, even though there has been huge disagreement over the

> precise definition of the two terms and the boundary between them, and scarcely less over how to present them in English. *Fabula* (in English, usually 'story') is the series of events the work recounts, but imagined stripped of all the artifices of storytelling: a series of actual events in their natural order, in what merely happens to be a fictional world. In contrast, *sjuzhet* is the account of those same events that we actually get, reordered and reshaped in the process of telling to reach and affect the audience or reader in a particular and deliberate way. (5)

As Lowe mentions, scholars and writers have disagreed over the exact meaning of words like story and narrative. Abbot, for example, talks about "three distinctions: narrative is the representation of events consisting of story and narrative discourse; story is the event or sequence of events (the action), and narrative discourse is those events as represented" (16). In this chapter, we'll use these definitions: a story (or fabula) encompasses the events or action in the story, and narrative discourse (or sjuzhet) is the way these events or actions are related. For example, all stylistic choices or organizational strategies, such as flashback, are part of the narrative discourse. Narrative discourse can encompass numerous things, but story almost always includes two primary parts: events and characters. After all, what story does not have these two characteristics? A story by its very nature includes events, and as Abbott contends, "what are events but the actions or reactions of [characters]?" (17).

Characters and events (or actions) may seem inextricably linked, but which is more important has been debated since Aristotle's time. Aristotle took the stance that action was most important. In Poetics, he states: "Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of Character: character comes in as a subsidiary to the actions" (62–63). Still, character was important to Aristotle; he believed it was the second

most important element in a drama and that character brought morality to a text (64). In the twentieth century, however, many authors started to think character was more important. For example, as author Andrew Horton notes, "Flannery O'Conner says 'it is the character's personality that creates the action of the story' and not the other way around." Horton goes on to state that usually the characters connect an audience emotionally to a story (2).

Because the purpose of a Who I Am story is to illustrate something about oneself, some might assume that character is the most important aspect of the Who I Am story, but in truth, as novelist Henry James asserts, both character and action are important in this type of story. James believes: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? . . . It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on the table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is the expression of character" (qtd. in Abbott 124).

Granted, thinking of the people in a Who I Am story as characters may seem odd because most likely they will be real people. However, consider Theodore A. Rees Cheney's thoughts:

> Traditional nonfiction, particularly journalistic nonfiction, never concerned itself with developing characters. Fiction writers worked at characterization; nonfiction writers concentrated on events. Creative nonfiction writers say that because so many events occur as the result of human interactions, the event cannot be fully understood without also understanding something of the people (characters) surrounding it. (134)

So while thinking of yourself, friends, or family as characters may not feel completely natural, remember some similarities do exist between characters and real people in that the people/characters in a Who I Am story need to be developed, interesting, and understandable, just like characters in a fiction work. Of course,

some differences exist as well. Since the characters in a Who I Am story are real people, you will not be creating characters, as a fiction writer does; instead, as Cheney notes, you will be revealing them:

> When I write about character development, I'm talking about how the writer goes about revealing a person's character . . . The creative nonfiction writer does not 'create' characters; rather, he or she reveals them to the reader as honestly and accurately as possible. Like most contemporary fiction writers, creative nonfiction writers reveal character much as it happens in real life—bit by bit. (134)

Generally speaking, authors reveal their characters in two ways: direct and indirect characterization. With direct characterization, the author simply tells the audience something about a character. The line "He was 35, looked 13 and was third generation rich" from the Who I Am story at the beginning of this chapter is an example of direct characterization. With indirect characterization, the audience learns about characters by watching or listening to them. Indirect characterization can also include descriptions of characters. The Who I Am story at the start of this chapter primarily utilizes indirect characterization. The entire story Skip tells about his first job, the mindless drawing, being upset about an hourly worker calling him at home—all indirect characterization. Since indirect characterization shows what a character does, indirect characterization often directly relates to the sequence of actions, again showing how character and action can intertwine.

Another important piece of a story and narrative discourse is the difference between real time and narrative time. Consider the following passage:

> Amy dropped a mug of coffee. It shattered on the kitchen floor. Coffee and shattered glass were everywhere. Amy got a towel and began cleaning up the mess.

This is real time, but if a few details are added, we get narrative time:

> Amy dropped a mug of coffee. It shattered with a loud crash onto the kitchen floor. She felt the hot liquid burn through her socks into her feet. Coffee and shattered glass were everywhere. Amy sighed; there was no more coffee in the pot, and she had really needed a caffeine burst. Moving carefully through the mess, Amy grabbed an old towel out of the drawer and began cleaning up the remains of her breakfast.

Abbott explains the difference between real (or clock) time and narrative time:

> Clock time . . . always relates back to itself, so that one speaks in terms of numbers or seconds or their multiples (minutes, hours) and fractions (nanoseconds). Narrative time, in contrast, relates to events or incidents. And while clock time is necessarily marked off by regular intervals of a certain length, narrative time is not necessarily any length at all. (4–5)

Abbott adds that writers can slow the "whole sequence down by simply adding details" and "conversely, we can make narrative time go like the wind" by using phrases like "in the following months" or "a few weeks later" (5).

The universality of narrative, fabula and sjuzhet, character and action, indirect and direct representation, real time and narrative time are just a few aspects of narrative theory, but these terms and this information will provide a solid foundation as we begin thinking more specifically about the Who I Am story.

Starting the "Who I Am" Story

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

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

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

Writing the "Who I Am" Story

Once you have the topic, just start writing. Writing a story is not

like baking a cake—there is no formula or recipe that guarantees a perfect story. But here are some steps to consider:

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

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

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

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

5. Think about creating a dominant impression. Is the story sad, thoughtful, sarcastic, or humorous? If you have trouble deciding on a dominant impression, think about setting the story to music. What song would you pick—Mozart's "Moonlight Sonata," something by the Violent Femmes, a sultry jazz tune—and what emotion does this song conjure up?

6. Keeping the main point and dominant impression in mind, add details and expand the most important parts of your story. Real time should now become narrative time. Add concrete details and imagery. Imagine the different senses to which the story could appeal. We are a very visual culture, but go beyond describing what

things look like—consider incorporating smells or sounds. Think about the way something feels when touched. Also think about how these details can help draw a reader in. Consider this an example from a student's Who I Am story:

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

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

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

8. Make certain the story shows and does not tell. The ultimate

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

> On the first day of class last year, I allowed students to take seats at their leisure. I sat on my desk and when everyone was settled, I quietly commanded their attention by placing a large black top hat upon my head. Conversations abruptly stopped as my curious audience took notice. 'If I were to say that hats are a metaphor for the different roles we play in our lives, what do you think that means?' I was met with blank stares. 'What if I said that I play many roles every day? I am a teacher, a mother, a daughter, a coworker, and a friend. Are the expectations for those different roles the same or different?' A hand raises and a girl with pale skin, lively eyes and thick auburn hair answers, 'Of course they're different. I don't act the same around my friends as I do in front of my parents!' She has a smug 'as if' expression.
>
> 'You're absolutely right,' I acknowledge. 'Now what if I were to ask you to define the expectations of my role as your teacher?' Eyebrows rise as the class considers this. 'I'm going to pass out sticky notes and I want each of you to write down a word or phrase that describes what my job is as your teacher. When you are done, I want you to place your note on the strip of blue paper that runs up the wall in the back of the room. Each of you should place your note above the note of the person that went before you so that we create a column of sticky notes. Does everyone understand?' A thin-faced, black boy with large eyes and bright teeth pipes up, "So we get to tell you how to do your job?' I thoughtfully pause before answering, 'Well . . . yah!'

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

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

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

This is the first paragraph of the student's Who I Am essay, and it does several things nicely. The conversational tone draws us in. We almost feel as if we are getting to peek inside the author's head. "Tripp's Wife," "Janice's Daughter," "chef," "personal shopper" are lovely specifics, and equally important, these are specifics to which most people can relate. Perhaps we are Bob's son or Suzie's boyfriend instead of a daughter or a wife, but we can still see the

similarities between the author's life and our own. And because of that, we want to know how she answers the question "who am I?"

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

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

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

Looking Forward: Storytelling in the Professional World

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, storytelling is not just for entertainment anymore. It's not just a mindless academic exercise either; storytelling is quickly becoming a cornerstone of the nonprofit and corporate worlds. Storytelling can be a part of corporate training, public relations, politics, journalism, and of

course, the two industries we are going to focus on: grantwriting and advertising.

Cheryl Clarke's book *Storytelling for Grantseekers: A Creative Guide to Nonprofit Fundraising* has been highly praised by both grantwriters and grant readers. For decades grants have been notoriously boring— both to write and to read. Clarke's book is starting to change all that.

Clarke begins by noting the similarities between grantwriting and storytelling:

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

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

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

> Nonprofit agencies do heroic work, and they are the heroes of every proposal we write. Throughout the world today, nonprofits are working diligently to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, heal the sick, teach children, conserve the environment, save endangered species, and present music performances and art exhibitions, among other important

> activities. . . . As grantwriters, we have the opportunity to tell others these amazing stories. (52)

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

Clarke clearly shows the advantages of using storytelling techniques in grantwriting, and many believe storytelling is an equally important part of advertising as a close examination of the "1984" Macintosh commercial will indicate. In 1984, Apple was in trouble. As Richard Maxwell and Robert Dickman note in their book *The Elements of Persuasion: Use Storytelling to Pitch Better, Sell Faster and Win More Business:*

> at that time the computer industry was in transition . . . Apple had been a major player when computers were seen as expensive toys for hobbyists or learning platforms for children. But when corporations began seriously going digital, they naturally turned to a name they had come to trust—IBM. IBM PC computers became 'industry standard,' with all the purchasing and advertising muscle that implied. (11)

In response, Apple's CEO Steve Jobs created the Macintosh computer, but he needed an advertisement that would bring attention to this computer. The "1984" commercial did just that. The "1984" commercial (available on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=OYecfV3ubP8) shows a dystopia: a dismal gray world where Big Brother is seen (and heard)

on every television screen. Row after row of people stare mindlessly at huge television screens, watching propaganda. A woman in red shorts runs through the crowd and hurls a hammer at the largest screen, destroying it and silencing Big Brother. The commercial closes with the tagline "On January 24, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984."

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

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

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

Again, storytelling now appears in many forms of professional and workplace communication; grantwriting and advertising are only two examples. So have fun telling your stories, enjoy them, learn to make them come alive. At the same time, you'll be developing

a marketable skill because, appropriately enough, storytelling has become a valuable commodity in corporate America.

Exercises

Discussion

1. Maxwell and Dickman believe that "a story is a fact, wrapped in an emotion that compels us to take an action that transforms our world." How would you define the term story? What do you think are the most important elements of a good story? What examples help support your thoughts?
2. How could stories and storytelling fit into your major field of study? What types of stories do you think professionals in your field might find useful?

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24. Employing Narrative in an Essay

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Mark Twain once wrote, "Don't say the old lady screamed—bring her on and let her scream." What he was trying to convey is the power of storytelling, or narration, in a piece of writing. Many times it is more effective to tell a story, to let the old lady scream, than to just state facts or state an argument—that is, to say the old lady screamed. Narrative essays are essays that enable you to tell a story (or stories) to make a point.

A well-chosen and well-told story will capture and hold your readers' attention, arousing their curiosity or sympathy, and making your ideas more thought-provoking and memorable.

A narrative essay is usually focused around a single event or person, and is often personal in nature. A narrative essay is a writing occasion in which you will likely use "I." But, a narrative does not necessarily have to be biographical; it could be a story about someone you know, or even an event from popular culture or history. The important thing is that the story is compelling (if it's not going to interest your reader, why would you tell it?) and that it makes some kind of point. Remember, even though it is a narrative essay, it is still an essay. Although a narrative essay is not a traditional argumentative essay, in which you have a thesis and several supporting points, it still has a purpose and tries to get the reader to think a certain way about something; it just seeks to achieve this purpose through a story rather than facts and quotations, etc.

Here are some things to keep in mind when brainstorming and writing a narrative essay:

- Choose your story thoughtfully. Don't just write about the first

thing that comes to mind. If you are writing a personal essay, brainstorm about people and events in your life that have been particularly challenging, inspiring, or that changed you in some way. Chances are, if it is a gripping story to you, it will be to your readers. But you don't have to write about great, dramatic things to be interesting. Everyday things can often be the most profound.

- Think about the significance of your story. Why does it matter to you, why are you wanting to tell it? What do you want to convey to your readers?
- Consider the most effective way to relate your narrative. Should you start at the beginning of the story, in the middle of things, or at the end, looking back? Which parts of the action should be emphasized? What is your point of view in the story? Would a snatch of dialogue or a direct quotation from people in the story be useful or should you paraphrase/summarize what they say?
- Employ clear, concrete, meaningful details. You want your story to be evocative, to describe people and places and experiences, but you don't want to overload your reader with unnecessary information.
- Use vivid action verbs. Flee from blandness.
- Don't just show—tell: the story should show the event's significance, but you will also need to explain the significance, at least a little bit, likely in your introduction or conclusion.

You can also use narrative in essays that are not specifically narrative essays. An anecdote is a type of narrative often deployed in regular argumentative essays. An anecdote is simply a brief, especially interesting story, usually something that could be related in a few sentences. Good essay writers often give an anecdote in their introduction as a hook or sometimes in their conclusion to drive their point home more powerfully. These narratives do not tend to be personal, but are generally stories from history, literature, or contemporary culture. In a short essay on how the

essence of love is waiting, Roland Barthes concludes his text with this anecdote:

> A mandarin fell in love with a courtesan. "I shall be yours," she told him, "when you have spend a hundred nights waiting for me, sitting on a stool, in my garden, beneath my windows." But on the ninety-ninth night, the mandarin stood up, put his stool under his arm, and went away (40). [1]

By using a brief story rather than just reiterating his point, Barthes makes his conclusion much more forceful and his entire essay more memorable. So even when you are not writing narrative essays, always be thinking about how you can apply the rhetorical richness of narrative to all your essays, and make note of particularly compelling stories you hear, so you can always be prepared to breathe life into a lifeless essay with a little narrative.

Exercises

Read one or two narrative essays; you might consider texts by Annie Dillard, Joan Didion, or David Sedaris. Analyze the way they tell their stories, how they convey significance, how they describe people/places, and what kinds of verbs and diction they use.

[1] Barthes, Roland. *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 2001.

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25. "I need you to say 'I'": Why First Person Is Important in College Writing

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At this point in your development as a writer, you may have learned to write "I-less" prose, without first person. I-less-ness is fine; writing habits, like all habits, are best simplified when first learned or re-learned. Jazz pianists learn strict scales before they are allowed to improvise. Someone might go on a strict diet and then return to a modified menu after the desired weight is lost, and the bad eating habits are broken. Constructing arguments without using "I" is good practice for formal "improvisation" at higher levels of thinking and writing. Avoiding personal pronouns forces you to be objective. It also "sounds" more formal; you're more likely to maintain an appropriate tone if you stay away from the personal.

But writing in various academic and professional contexts needs to be more flexible, sophisticated, and subtle than writing for high school English classes. In college, you should start using first-person pronouns in your formal academic writing, where appropriate. First person has an important place—an irreplaceable place—in texts that report research and engage scholarship. Your choices about where you place yourself as subject are largely determined by context and the conventions of the field in which you're writing. The key is making sure that your choices are appropriate for the context of your paper— whom you're writing it for, and the kind of information it's meant to communicate. Here I'll list some ways in which first person improves written argument and show you some examples of the ways scholars use first person, and then I'll propose places where it might be used appropriately in your own writing.

Why "I"?

First person can support the following characteristics of good written argument (and good writing in general).

1. Objectivity and Integrity

The main reason most teachers give for the discipline of I-lessness is that it keeps your writing "objective." They want to make sure that you don't rely on personal experiences or perspectives where you should be providing concrete, researched support for your arguments. Your best friend at summer camp doesn't "prove" a sociological theory. Your memory of a "fact"—the average rainfall in a town, the actions of a character in a film, the tendencies of groups of people to behave in certain ways, or the population of Kenya—is not a reliable source in academic contexts. You shouldn't write, "because I think so," or "I know that . . ." But if you consider some of the higher-level implications of perspective's effects on argument, there are some well-chosen places where "I" can give your argument more objectivity and intellectual integrity.

Take scientific writing, for example. Up until very recently, when writing observational and experimental reports, scientists, as a rule, avoided first person. Methodology was (and is still, in many cases) described in the passive voice. That is, instead of writing, "We took measurements of ice thickness on the first and 15th day of every month," scientists wrote, "Measurements of ice thickness were taken on the first and 15th day of every month." Taking out the "we" focuses the reader's attention on the phenomenon (object) being observed, not the observer taking the readings (subject). Or at least that was the reasoning behind passive voice in science writing.

But during the last half of the last century, mostly because of

developments in physics, scientists have talked a lot about a thing called the "observer effect": while observing or experimenting with a social or even physical system, the scientist watching can affect the system's behavior. When particle physicists try to measure the motion of something as tiny as an electron, their very observation almost certainly changes that motion. Because of the observer effect, the passive voice convention I've described above has been called into question. Is it really honest to act like "measurements are taken" by some invisible hand? Is the picture minus the researcher the whole picture? Not really. The fact is, someone took the measurements, and those measurements might reflect that observer's involvement. It's more truthful, complete, and objective, then, to put the researchers in the picture. These days, it's much more common to "see" the researchers as subjects—"We measured ice thickness . . ."—in methodology sections.

That same kind of "whole picture" honesty applies to you making written claims, too. When you first learned to write an essay, you were probably taught to make claims as though they were true; write "The sky is blue," not "I think that the sky is blue." That second claim isn't arguable—who can disprove that you think something? But a much more sophisticated claim includes your perspective and implies the effect it may have on your stance: "From my position standing on the earth's surface in the daytime, I see the sky as blue." You can make that claim without using first person, of course, and in some contexts (i.e. for a scientific argument), you probably should. When you're taking a stance on an issue, though, first person just makes sense. Defining your perspective gives your reader context for your stance: "As a volunteer at a bilingual preschool, I can see that both language immersion and individualized language instruction have benefits," or "As a principal at an elementary school with a limited budget, I would argue that language immersion makes the most sense." Consider those two positions; without the "whole picture" that the statement of perspective implies, you might assume that the two claims disagree. The subtlety of the subject—who the writer is—lets you see quite a bit about why the

claim is being made. If you asked the second writer to take a stance on the immersion/bilingual instruction issue with only learning objectives in mind, she might agree with the first writer. The "truth" might not be different, but the position it's observed from can certainly cast a different light on it.

2. Clarifying Who's Saying What

A clear description of your perspective becomes even more important when your stance has to incorporate or respond to someone else's. As you move into more advanced college writing, the claims you respond to will usually belong to scholars. Some papers may require you to spend almost as much time summarizing a scholarly conversation as they do presenting points of your own. By "signification," I mean little phrases that tell the reader, "This is my opinion," "This is my interpretation." You need them for two big reasons.

First of all, the more "voices" you add to the conversation, the more confusing it gets. You must separate your own interpretations of scholars' claims, the claims themselves, and your argument so as not to misrepresent any of them. If you've just paraphrased a scholar, making your own claim without quite literally claiming it might make the reader think that the scholar said it. Consider these two sentences: "Wagstaff et al. (2007) conclude that the demand for practical science writing that the layperson can understand is on the rise. But there is a need for laypeople people to increase their science literacy, as well." Is that second claim part of Wagstaff's conclusion, or is it your own reflection on the implications of Wagstaff's argument? By writing something like, "Wagstaff et al. (2007) conclude that the demand for practical science that the layperson can understand is on the rise. I maintain that there is a need for laypeople to increase their science literacy, as well," you

avoid the ambiguity. First person can help you express, very simply, who "says" what.

Secondly, your perceptions, and therefore your interpretations, are not always perfect. Science writing can help me illustrate this idea, as well. In the imaginary observation report I refer to above, the researchers may or may not use first person in their methodology section out of respect for the observer effect, but they are very likely to use first person in the discussion/conclusion section. The discussion section involves interpretation of the data—that is, the researchers must say what they think the data means. The importance of perspective is compounded, here. They might not be right. And even if they are mostly right, the systems scientists study are usually incredibly complex; one observation report is not the whole picture. Scientists, therefore, often mark their own interpretations with first person pronouns. "We interpret these data to imply . . ." they might say, or, "We believe these findings indicate . . . ," and then they go on to list questions for further research. Even the experts know that their understanding is almost always incomplete.

3. Ownership, Intellectual Involvement, and Exigency

Citing scholarship contextualizes and strengthens your argument; you want to defer to "experts" for evidence of your claims when you can. As a student, you might feel like an outsider—unable to comment with authority on the concepts you're reading and writing about. But outsider status doesn't only mean a lack of expertise. Your own, welldefined viewpoint might shed new light on a topic that the experts haven't considered (or that your classmates haven't considered, or that your professor hasn't mentioned in class, or even, quite simply, that you hadn't thought of and so you're excited

about). In that case, you want to say, "This is mine, it's a new way of looking at the issue, and I'm proud of it."

Those kinds of claims are usually synthetic ones—you've put information and/or interpretations from several sources together, and you've actually got something to say. Whether your new spin has to do with a cure for cancer or an interpretation of Batman comics, pride in your own intellectual work is important on many levels. As a student, you should care; such investment can help you learn. Your school community should also care; good teachers are always looking for what we call "critical thinking," and when students form new ideas from existing ones, we know it's happening. On the larger scale, the scholarly community should care. Having something new to say increases the exigency of your argument in the larger, intellectual exchange of ideas. A scholarly reader should want to pay attention, because what you say may be a key to some puzzle (a cure for cancer) or way of thinking about the topic (interpreting Batman). That's the way scholars work together to form large bodies of knowledge: we communicate about our research and ideas, and we try to combine them when we can.

An emphatic statement like "Much discussion has addressed the topic of carbon emissions' relationship to climate change, but I would like to ask a question from a new perspective," will make your reader sit up and take notice. In I-less form, that might look like: "Much discussion has addressed the topic of carbon emissions' relationship to climate change, but some questions remain unconsidered." In this case, second sentence still sounds like summary—the writer is telling us that research is incomplete, but isn't giving us a strong clue that his or her (new! fresh!) argument is coming up next. Be careful, of course, not to sound arrogant. If the writer of the sentences above was worried about his or her lack of expertise in an assignment involving scholarly sources, he or she could write: "What scholarly discussion I have read so far has addressed the topic of carbon emissions' relationship to climate change, but I would like to ask a question from a new perspective."

He or she can use first person to employ both deference and ownership/involvement in the same sentence.

4. Rhetorical Sophistication

Some writing assignments focus on one simple task at a time: "Summarize the following . . ." "Compare the readings . . ." "analyze," or "argue." When you write a simple five-paragraph essay, your mode rarely changes—you can write an introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion without explaining too many shifts in what the paper is "doing." Writing at the college level and beyond often has to "do" a few things in the same text. Most involved writing assignments expect you to do at least two things. You may need to summarize/ report and respond, or (more likely) you'll need to summarize/report, synthesize, and respond. A good introduction, as you've learned, needs to anticipate all of it so the reader knows what to expect. Anticipating the structure of a complex argument in I-less mode is tricky. Often, it comes out as a summary of the document that follows and is redundant. First person can clear that problem right up. Consider the introduction to this article; when I come to the part where I need to tell you what I'm going to do, I just . . . tell you what I'm going to do! My writing students usually find this rhetorical trick (or is it an un-trick?) refreshing and liberating. The same concept can be applied to transitions between sections and ideas: "Now that I've done this thing, I'd like to move into this other part of my argument . . ." I'll use this type of transition, myself, when I move into the section of this text called, "When, and When not?"

Academic Examples

The fact is, using first person for rhetorical clarity and to ease transitions isn't just easier—it's common in many academic contexts. It's accepted, even expected, in some cases, for scholarly writing such as abstracts, position papers, theses, and dissertations in many fields to employ first person in the ways I've just described. In almost all genres, formats, and fields, the scholarly writer is expected to describe the research done thus far by her peers and then make her own claims—a structure that lends itself to first person.

Robert Terrill, a cultural studies scholar, begins his article, "Put on a Happy Face: Batman as Schizophrenic Savior," with an evaluation of Tim Burton's movie's box office success, and then spends several paragraphs discussing other scholars' applications of psychological frameworks to film studies. Throughout the literature review section, Terrill's own voice stays remote; he uses third person. But look at what happens when he is ready to begin his own argument:

> Because much of my analysis is grounded in the theories of Carl C. Jung, I will begin by outlining relevant aspects of that theory. Then I suggest that Gotham City is a dream world, a representative projection of image-centered dreams. Within the framework of Jung's model, I show the principal characters to be archetypal manifestations that erupt from Gotham's unconscious. Wayne/Batman is a splintered manifestation of a potential whole; his condition represents the schizophrenia required of a hero dedicated to preservation of the shattered psyche of Gotham. (321)

Terrill's move to first person separates his own claims from the scholars he's summarized in his introduction, and it allows him to take ownership of his main claim. The way he "maps out" his article is also typical of academic argument.

First person is used similarly in the sciences. Unlike Terrill, who

argues for a certain interpretation of a text, psychologists Jennifer Kraemer and David Marquez report research findings in their article, "Psychosocial Correlates and Outcomes of Yoga or Walking Among Older Adults." Much like Terrill, however, their introduction consists of a review of literature in the third person. For almost three pages, Kraemer and Marquez describe studies which have explored health and injury patterns in old age, as well as studies which have investigated various fitness programs for the elderly. When it comes time for Kraemer and Marquez to describe their own study, they shift into first person:

> We hypothesized that an acute bout of yoga would be more effective at improving mood and reducing state anxiety among older adults when compared with acute bouts of walking. We further hypothesized that older adults who practice yoga would have lower levels of depression and higher quality of life when compared with those who walk for exercise. We did not make direct hypotheses for exercise barriers and barriers self-efficacy because, to date, there is no research that has examined those variables in this population. (393)

Kraemer and Marquez continue in first person as they describe their methodology. "We recruited a total of 51 participants (8 men, 43 women)" they write, "through classes at local yoga studios and mall walking groups" (393). The researchers themselves, in first person, are the subjects who "do" every action in the methods: "We asked questions on . . . We measured state anxiety by . . . We measured mood using . . ."(393–4). By putting themselves in the picture, Kraemer and Marquez acknowledge themselves as variables in their own study—a key aspect of any scientific methodology, and especially those which involve human subjects and use interviews to collect data.

On the other hand, some academic communities and genres stay away from first person. Susan Clark, a professor at Yale who writes about the communication and implementation of sustainable

forestry practices, describes her study without putting herself in the picture. Where Kraemer and Marquez describe themselves "doing" the methods of their study, Clark has her article as the agent in her description of analysis:

> This article (a) describes the intelligence function in conceptual terms, including its sequential phases (as described by McDougal, Lasswell, & Reisman, 1981); (b) uses examples to illustrate the intelligence activity from Reading and Miller (2000), Endangered Animals: A Reference Guide to Conflicting Issues, which gives 70 cases by 34 authors in 55 countries that focus on species, ecosystem, and sustainability challenges; and employs a "problem-oriented" look at intelligence activities across all these cases (Lasswell, 1971). It does so by asking and answering five questions . . . (637)

Clark's methods are to analyze others' processes—hers, then, is metaanalysis. It's appropriate for her to remove herself rhetorically as she deals with many actions and many, diverse actors. She is more a describer than a "do-er."

At the very end of her article, in a "call to action" that directly applies her findings, Clark does finally use first person. "We can increase the possibility of better biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, and better sustainability overall," she writes, "if we choose to use an effective intelligence activity. Success is more likely if we increase the rationality of our own directed behavior" (659). Clark's "we" is different from Kraemer and Marquez's "we," though. It refers to Clark's audience—the community of sustainable forestry as a whole—and predicts future action in which she will be active.

When (and When Not) to Use First Person?

Now that I've convinced you to try first person in some of your academic writing, I should talk about how to use it appropriately. (See? I just used "I" for a clear transition to a new idea.) The key is: don't go "I" crazy. Remember the self-discipline you practiced with I-less writing.

Probably the best way to approach first person in an academic context is this: use it to make yourself clear. You'll need "I" for clarity when one of the ideals I described above is in question. Either 1) you'll need to describe an aspect of your personal perspective that will help the reader see (your) whole picture; 2) you'll need to make the divide between your voice and the scholars' as clear as possible in order to avoid misrepresenting the scholars' claims; 3) your own claim will need to stand apart from the other perspectives you've presented as something new; or 4) you'll need to guide your reader through the organization of your text in some way.

Below, I've listed a few common writing situations/assignments that first person can potentially support.

Try "I" when . . .

. . . the assignment asks you to. Personal position papers, personal narratives, and assignments that say "tell what you did/read and provide your reaction," all explicitly ask you to use first person.

. . . you're asked to "Summarize and respond." You

might transition into the response part of the paper with "I."

. . . you're introducing a paper with a complicated structure: "I will summarize Wagstaff's argument, and then respond to a few key points with my own interpretation."

. . . you are proud of and intellectually invested in what you have to say, and you want to arrange it in reference to others' voices: "Many scholars have used psychological frameworks to interpret the Batman movies, but I would argue that a historical perspective is more productive . . ."

. . . you are unsure of your interpretation of a source, or you feel that the claim you're making may be bigger than your level of expertise: "If I read Wagstaff correctly, her conclusions imply . . ."

"I" Is a Bad Idea When . . .

. . . you use it only once. You don't want to overuse the first person, but if you're going to assert your position or make a transition with "I," give the reader a hint of your voice in the introduction. An introduction that

anticipates structure with "I will," for instance, works well with transitions that use "I" as well. If you use first person only once, the tone shift will jar the reader.

. . . The assignment is a simple summary. In that case, you need only report; you are "eye," not "I."

. . . you're writing a lab report for a science class, as a general rule. But you might ask your teacher about the issues of objectivity I've addressed above, especially in terms of objective methodology.

Exercises

Discussion

1. Can you remember a writing task during which you struggled to avoid using the first person? What about the nature of the content made "I" hard to avoid? Can you link the difficulty to one of the four values that first person "supports," according to this essay?
2. McKinney Maddalena claims that scientists use "I"

more often in research reports, nowadays. Find a scientific article in your school's research databases that employs first person: "I" or "we." In what section is first person used, and how? Does its usage reflect one of the values this essay points out?

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26. In The Moment: A Write-from-Experience Activity

JASON WIRTZ

This assignment asks you to craft a story based on personal experience. This is different from literary analysis or research paper assignments which ask you to open with a thesis to continually reference and support. Stories are constructed differently. Successful stories describe events in such a way that readers get to experience the story as if they were directly observing events. Consider the following when drafting, writing, and revising:

Place your readers into a significant moment you've experienced. Narrow your focus from the start. Select a story out of one, tiny, narrow corner of your life and avoid expanding on all the details around the story. Do not give us an introduction that explains everything before it happens. Let the story speak for itself and trust your readers work at discovering what your story is about. Try to drop your readers into the action of your story to create immediacy.

> A large disk of snow lifted in the wind from the top of the semi-truck in front of me. I took hold of the steering wheel with both hands as the sheet of snow fell and burst onto my windshield. I had successfully resisted the instinctive pull to turn the wheel sharply to the right or left and now, with the snow melting on the windshield, I turned on my wipers to clear my line of sight behind the truck. "Slow and easy," I tell myself, and concentrate on keeping the car balanced between tracks of snow in the road.

Context should be embedded into your story throughout, not provided as a separate section of your story.

> Not until I had pulled into the parking lot of the indoor soccer arena, found a parking spot, and turned off the car did I let my arms relax their grip on the steering wheel. I reached back and pulled my soccer bag from the backseat before opening the door and leaning into the wind, jogging cautiously to the front door of the arena. Once inside, the sights, sounds, and smells were all familiar. I had been playing indoor co-ed soccer for years with the same group of friends. We met in front of court three where we were scheduled to be playing tonight.

Pay particular attention to character development by asking yourself what actions best represent the people you plan to include into your story.

> The first person to greet me was Rob.
>
> "So you made it through the blizzard—too bad," Rob said with a wide grin. He was always sarcastic in his humor. Rob was born in England and had moved to the U.S. for college. He was our captain on what he called "the pitch," always shouting for us to get back on defense. "Stupid Americans," he would say after a loss, "always wanting to score instead of play good defense." He pronounced it de-FENSE as opposed to the American pronunciation of DE-fense. We always laughed at him berating Americans before bringing up our successful revolution and the fact that here he was living in America by choice.

Try experimenting with dialogue as dialogue always brings your story into active, present tense which is enlivening for your readers. On a related note, successful dialogue on the page is not merely an accurate representation of what people say in real life, it is

oftentimes pared down to the most important, well-stated things that people say.

> I can't remember if the game was an important one or not, whether we were playing one of our heated rivalry games against the team from Bell's Brewery that usually ended in a shoving match or if our shot at the championship was swinging in the balance. What I do remember is joking with Rob at halftime. He said he was done telling me to get back on defense since I never listened anyway.
>
> "The best defense is offense," I told him.
>
> "I'm really starting to dislike you," he said. Again with that smile to tell me he was joking along with me. He wrapped his arm around my shoulders and said, "You've got a lot to learn from me."

Relate your story in a way that reveals its significance to you. If the story is revealing itself to you as you write then your readers will experience it as a revelation also. In other words, don't simply write about the event; show us how you experienced it as opposed to what it means to you or what you learned from the experience. This is very tricky to pull off successfully. On the one hand, you don't want to over-tell the story in such a way that gives your readers nothing to make sense of on their own. On the other hand, you don't want to alienate your readers by confusing them with not enough information to comprehend your moment.

> At the start of the second half I was on the field when something happened. Something I still don't quite understand. It came upon all of us, a type of twilight wherein time seemed sticky and disjointed. We collectively knew something was wrong. Rob had collapsed onto the turf and we all stood there, staring. The ball silently rolled into a corner and stopped with no one in pursuit.

Use concrete and specific detail to represent your point of view

and your situation. Avoid direct explanation in favor of concrete details that show the reader what you mean, rather than tell the reader. Attach your ideas to visible things. In general, you want to dramatize your situation so that your readers experience it as though it were happening before their eyes, so that the readers are in the position of an observer at the scene. This is different than a narrative in which you offer a synopsis, in effect telling the reader about something which has happened to you instead of allowing the reader to witness the event for themselves.

> Rather than the usual flow of time that moves on undetected, the next ten minutes occurred like quick photographs blurred at their edges. There was a scramble to get inside bags for a cell phone. A call to 911. Shouts to the administrator's office in the center of the arena. The color purple rising to the surface of Rob's cheeks. Questions: "What happened?" "Does anyone know CPR?" The thick black boots with reflective yellow trim of the firefighters that came through the door. The relief that everything would be ok now that they were here followed by a reinvigorated sense of fear once I realized that they were moving too slowly. The scratch of artificial turf beneath the rubber soles of my soccer shoes. Ripping the goal from the wall so that Rob could be carried to an ambulance on a stretcher. The smell of his urine and shit as they carried him through the opening of the goal and into the blinking ambulance. The crunch and grind of ice beneath the tires of the ambulance as it finally drove off.

Avoid explanatory, epilogue conclusions that try to sum up everything for your readers. Trust your readers to draw their own conclusions from the moment you've crafted for them to experience.

> I was reckless on my drive home—weaving in-and-out of traffic, feeling the car slip several times from my control as

the snow and ice disconnected what should have been a firm line from my hands to the steering wheel to the tires to the road. Later that evening I thought of the soccer ball, how it had rolled into the corner with no one running after it. With so many lights strung to the ceiling of the arena it cast a strange shadow sitting there in the corner of the field. I wondered if anyone had walked over to retrieve it before turning out the lights and locking the doors.

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PART VI

CRITICAL THINKING

27. Critical Thinking in College Writing: From the Personal to the Academic

GITA DASBENDER

There is something about the term "critical thinking" that makes you draw a blank every time you think about what it means. It seems so fuzzy and abstract that you end up feeling uncomfortable, as though the term is thrust upon you, demanding an intellectual effort that you may not yet have. But you know it requires you to enter a realm of smart, complex ideas that others have written about and that you have to navigate, understand, and interact with just as intelligently. It's a lot to ask for. It makes you feel like a stranger in a strange land.

As a writing teacher I am accustomed to reading and responding to difficult texts. In fact, I like grappling with texts that have interesting ideas no matter how complicated they are because I understand their value. I have learned through my years of education that what ultimately engages me, keeps me enthralled, is not just grammatically pristine, fluent writing, but writing that forces me to think beyond the page. It is writing where the writer has challenged herself and then offered up that challenge to the reader, like a baton in a relay race. The idea is to run with the baton.

You will often come across critical thinking and analysis as requirements for assignments in writing and upper-level courses in a variety of disciplines. Instructors have varying explanations of what they actually require of you, but, in general, they expect you to respond thoughtfully to texts you have read. The first thing you should remember is not to be afraid of critical thinking. It does not mean that you have to criticize the text, disagree with its premise, or attack the writer simply because you feel you must. Criticism is the process of responding to and evaluating ideas, argument,

and style so that readers understand how and why you value these items.

Critical thinking is also a process that is fundamental to all disciplines. While in this essay I refer mainly to critical thinking in composition, the general principles behind critical thinking are strikingly similar in other fields and disciplines. In history, for instance, it could mean examining and analyzing primary sources in order to understand the context in which they were written. In the hard sciences, it usually involves careful reasoning, making judgments and decisions, and problem solving. While critical thinking may be subject-specific, that is to say, it can vary in method and technique depending on the discipline, most of its general principles such as rational thinking, making independent evaluations and judgments, and a healthy skepticism of what is being read, are common to all disciplines. No matter the area of study, the application of critical thinking skills leads to clear and flexible thinking and a better understanding of the subject at hand.

To be a critical thinker you not only have to have an informed opinion about the text but also a thoughtful response to it. There is no doubt that critical thinking is serious thinking, so here are some steps you can take to become a serious thinker and writer.

Attentive Reading: A Foundation for Critical Thinking

A critical thinker is always a good reader because to engage critically with a text you have to read attentively and with an open mind, absorbing new ideas and forming your own as you go along. Let us imagine you are reading an essay by Annie Dillard, a famous essayist, called "Living like Weasels." Students are drawn to it because the idea of the essay appeals to something personally fundamental to all of us: how to live our lives. It is also a provocative

essay that pulls the reader into the argument and forces a reaction, a good criterion for critical thinking.

So let's say that in reading the essay you encounter a quote that gives you pause. In describing her encounter with a weasel in Hollins Pond, Dillard says, "I would like to learn, or remember, how to live . . . I don't think I can learn from a wild animal how to live in particular . . . but I might learn something of mindlessness, something of the purity of living in the physical senses and the dignity of living without bias or motive" (220). You may not be familiar with language like this. It seems complicated, and you have to stop ever so often (perhaps after every phrase) to see if you understood what Dillard means. You may ask yourself these questions:

- What does "mindlessness" mean in this context?
- How can one "learn something of mindlessness?"
- What does Dillard mean by "purity of living in the physical senses?"
- How can one live "without bias or motive?"

These questions show that you are an attentive reader. Instead of simply glossing over this important passage, you have actually stopped to think about what the writer means and what she expects you to get from it. Here is how I read the quote and try to answer the questions above: Dillard proposes a simple and uncomplicated way of life as she looks to the animal world for inspiration. It is ironic that she admires the quality of "mindlessness" since it is our consciousness, our very capacity to think and reason, which makes us human, which makes us beings of a higher order. Yet, Dillard seems to imply that we need to live instinctually, to be guided by our senses rather than our intellect. Such a "thoughtless" approach to daily living, according to Dillard, would mean that our actions would not be tainted by our biases or motives, our prejudices. We would go back to a primal way of living, like the weasel she observes. It may take you some time to arrive at this understanding on your

own, but it is important to stop, reflect, and ask questions of the text whenever you feel stumped by it. Often such questions will be helpful during class discussions and peer review sessions.

Listing Important Ideas

When reading any essay, keep track of all the important points the writer makes by jotting down a list of ideas or quotations in a notebook. This list not only allows you to remember ideas that are central to the writer's argument, ideas that struck you in some way or the other, but it also you helps you to get a good sense of the whole reading assignment point by point. In reading Annie Dillard's essay, we come across several points that contribute toward her proposal for better living and that help us get a better understanding of her main argument. Here is a list of some of her ideas that struck me as important:

1. "The weasel lives in necessity and we live in choice, hating necessity and dying at the last ignobly in its talons" (220).
2. "And I suspect that for me the way is like the weasel's: open to time and death painlessly, noticing everything, remembering nothing, choosing the given with a fierce and pointed will" (221).
3. "We can live any way we want. People take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience—even of silence—by choice. The thing is to stalk your calling in a certain skilled and supple way, to locate the most tender and live spot and plug into that pulse" (221).
4. "A weasel doesn't 'attack' anything; a weasel lives as he's meant to, yielding at every moment to the perfect freedom of single necessity" (221).
5. "I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it

limp wherever it takes you" (221).

These quotations give you a cumulative sense of what Dillard is trying to get at in her essay, that is, they lay out the elements with which she builds her argument. She first explains how the weasel lives, what she learns from observing the weasel, and then prescribes a lifestyle she admires—the central concern of her essay.

Noticing Key Terms and Summarizing Important Quotes

Within the list of quotations above are key terms and phrases that are critical to your understanding of the ideal life as Dillard describes it. For instance, "mindlessness," "instinct," "perfect freedom of a single necessity," "stalk your calling," "choice," and "fierce and pointed will" are weighty terms and phrases, heavy with meaning, that you need to spend time understanding. You also need to understand the relationship between them and the quotations in which they appear. This is how you might work on each quotation to get a sense of its meaning and then come up with a statement that takes the key terms into account and expresses a general understanding of the text:

> **Quote 1:** Animals (like the weasel) live in "necessity," which means that their only goal in life is to survive. They don't think about how they should live or what choices they should make like humans do. According to Dillard, we like to have options and resist the idea of "necessity." We fight death—an inevitable force that we have no control over—and yet ultimately surrender to it as it is the necessary end of our lives.
>
> **Quote 2:** Dillard thinks the weasel's way of life is the best way to live. It implies a pure and simple approach to life

where we do not worry about the passage of time or the approach of death. Like the weasel, we should live life in the moment, intensely experiencing everything but not dwelling on the past. We should accept our condition, what we are "given," with a "fierce and pointed will." Perhaps this means that we should pursue our one goal, our one passion in life, with the same single-minded determination and tenacity that we see in the weasel.

Quote 3: As humans, we can choose any lifestyle we want. The trick, however, is to go after our one goal, one passion like a stalker would after a prey.

Quote 4: While we may think that the weasel (or any animal) chooses to attack other animals, it is really only surrendering to the one thing it knows: its need to live. Dillard tells us there is "the perfect freedom" in this desire to survive because toher, the lack of options (the animal has no other option than to fight to survive) is the most liberating of all.

Quote 5: Dillard urges us to latch on to our deepest passion in life (the "one necessity") with the tenacity of a weasel and not let go. Perhaps she's telling us how important it is to have an unwavering focus or goal in life.

Writing a Personal Response: Looking Inward

Dillard's ideas will have certainly provoked a response in your mind, so if you have some clear thoughts about how you feel about the essay this is the time to write them down. As you look at the quotes you have selected and your explanation of their meaning, begin to

create your personal response to the essay. You may begin by using some of these strategies:

1. Tell a story. Has Dillard's essay reminded you of an experience you have had? Write a story in which you illustrate a point that Dillard makes or hint at an idea that is connected to her essay.
2. Focus on an idea from Dillard's essay that is personally important to you. Write down your thoughts about this idea in a first person narrative and explain your perspective on the issue.
3. If you are uncomfortable writing a personal narrative or using "I" (you should not be), reflect on some of her ideas that seem important and meaningful in general. Why were you struck by these ideas?
4. Write a short letter to Dillard in which you speak to her about the essay. You may compliment her on some of her ideas by explaining why you like them, ask her a question related to her essay and explain why that question came to you, and genuinely start up a conversation with her.

This stage in critical thinking is important for establishing your relationship with a text. What do I mean by this "relationship," you may ask? Simply put, it has to do with how you feel about the text. Are you amazed by how true the ideas seem to be, how wise Dillard sounds? Or are you annoyed by Dillard's let-me-tell-you-how-to-live approach and disturbed by the impractical ideas she so easily prescribes? Do you find Dillard's voice and style thrilling and engaging or merely confusing? No matter which of the personal response options you select, your initial reaction to the text will help shape your views about it.

Making an Academic Connection: Looking Outward

First year writing courses are designed to teach a range of writing—from the personal to the academic—so that you can learn to express advanced ideas, arguments, concepts, or theories in any discipline. While the example I have been discussing pertains mainly to college writing, the method of analysis and approach to critical thinking I have demonstrated here will serve you well in a variety of disciplines. Since critical thinking and analysis are key elements of the reading and writing you will do in college, it is important to understand how they form a part of academic writing. No matter how intimidating the term "academic writing" may seem (it is, after all, associated with advanced writing and becoming an expert in a field of study), embrace it not as a temporary college requirement but as a habit of mind.

To some, academic writing often implies impersonal writing, writing that is detached, distant, and lacking in personal meaning or relevance. However, this is often not true of the academic writing you will do in a composition class. Here your presence as a writer—your thoughts, experiences, ideas, and therefore who you are—is of much significance to the writing you produce. In fact, it would not be farfetched to say that in a writing class academic writing often begins with personal writing. Let me explain. If critical thinking begins with a personal view of the text, academic writing helps you broaden that view by going beyond the personal to a more universal point of view. In other words, academic writing often has its roots in one's private opinion or perspective about another writer's ideas but ultimately goes beyond this opinion to the expression of larger, more abstract ideas. Your personal vision—your core beliefs and general approach to life— will help you arrive at these "larger ideas" or universal propositions that any reader can understand and be enlightened by, if not agree with. In short, academic writing is largely about taking a critical, analytical

stance toward a subject in order to arrive at some compelling conclusions.

Let us now think about how you might apply your critical thinking skills to move from a personal reaction to a more formal academic response to Annie Dillard's essay. The second stage of critical thinking involves textual analysis and requires you to do the following:

- Summarize the writer's ideas the best you can in a brief paragraph. This provides the basis for extended analysis since it contains the central ideas of the piece, the building blocks, so to speak.
- Evaluate the most important ideas of the essay by considering their merits or flaws, their worthiness or lack of worthiness. Do not merely agree or disagree with the ideas but explore and explain why you believe they are socially, politically, philosophically, or historically important and relevant, or why you need to question, challenge, or reject them.
- Identify gaps or discrepancies in the writer's argument. Does she contradict herself? If so, explain how this contradiction forces you to think more deeply about her ideas. Or if you are confused, explain what is confusing and why.
- Examine the strategies the writer uses to express her ideas. Look particularly at her style, voice, use of figurative language, and the way she structures her essay and organizes her ideas. Do these strategies strengthen or weaken her argument? How?
- Include a second text—an essay, a poem, lyrics of a song—whose ideas enhance your reading and analysis of the primary text. This text may help provide evidence by supporting a point you're making, and further your argument.
- Extend the writer's ideas, develop your own perspective, and propose new ways of thinking about the subject at hand.

Crafting the Essay

Once you have taken notes and developed a thorough understanding of the text, you are on your way to writing a good essay. If you were asked to write an exploratory essay, a personal response to Dillard's essay would probably suffice. However, an academic writing assignment requires you to be more critical. As counter-intuitive as it may sound, beginning your essay with a personal anecdote often helps to establish your relationship to the text and draw the reader into your writing. It also helps to ease you into the more complex task of textual analysis. Once you begin to analyze Dillard's ideas, go back to the list of important ideas and quotations you created as you read the essay. After a brief summary, engage with the quotations that are most important, that get to the heart of Dillard's ideas, and explore their meaning. Textual engagement, a seemingly slippery concept, simply means that you respond directly to some of Dillard's ideas, examine the value of Dillard's assertions, and explain why they are worthwhile or why they should be rejected. This should help you to transition into analysis and evaluation. Also, this part of your essay will most clearly reflect your critical thinking abilities as you are expected not only to represent Dillard's ideas but also to weigh their significance. Your observations about the various points she makes, analysis of conflicting viewpoints or contradictions, and your understanding of her general thesis should now be synthesized into a rich new idea about how we should live our lives. Conclude by explaining this fresh point of view in clear, compelling language and by rearticulating your main argument.

Modeling Good Writing

When I teach a writing class, I often show students samples of

really good writing that I've collected over the years. I do this for two reasons: first, to show students how another freshman writer understood and responded to an assignment that they are currently working on; and second, to encourage them to succeed as well. I explain that although they may be intimidated by strong, sophisticated writing and feel pressured to perform similarly, it is always helpful to see what it takes to get an A. It also helps to follow a writer's imagination, to learn how the mind works when confronted with a task involving critical thinking. The following sample is a response to the Annie Dillard essay. Figure 1 includes the entire student essay and my comments are inserted into the text to guide your reading.

Though this student has not included a personal narrative in his essay, his own world-view is clear throughout. His personal point of view, while not expressed in first person statements, is evident from the very beginning. So we could say that a personal response to the text need not always be expressed in experiential or narrative form but may be present as reflection, as it is here. The point is that the writer has traveled through the rough terrain of critical thinking by starting out with his own ruminations on the subject, then by critically analyzing and responding to Dillard's text, and finally by developing a strong point of view of his own about our responsibility as human beings. As readers we are engaged by clear, compelling writing and riveted by critical thinking that produces a movement of ideas that give the essay depth and meaning. The challenge Dillard set forth in her essay has been met and the baton passed along to us.

Building our Lives: The Blueprint Lies Within

We all may ask ourselves many questions, some serious, some less important, in our lifetime. But at some point along the way, we all will take a step back and look at the way we are living our lives, and wonder if we are living them correctly. Unfortunately, there is no solid blueprint for the way to live our lives. Each person is different, feeling different emotions and reacting to different stimuli than the person next to them. Many people search for the true answer on how to live our lives, as if there are secret instructions out there waiting to be found. But the truth is we as a species are given a gift not many other creatures can claim to have: the ability to choose to live as we want, not as we were necessarily designed to. Even so, people look outside of themselves for the answers on how to live, which begs me to ask the question: what is wrong with just living as we are now, built from scratch through our choices and memories?

Comment: Even as the writer starts with a general introduction, he makes a claim here that is related to Dillard's essay.

Comment: The student asks what seems like a rhetorical question but it is one he will answer in the rest of his essay. It is also a question that forces the reader to think about a key term from the text—"choices."

Annie Dillard's essay entitled "Living Like Weasels" is an exploration into the way human beings might live, clearly stating that "We could live any way we want" (Dillard 211). Dillard's encounter with an ordinary weasel helped her receive insight into the difference between the way human beings live their lives and the way wild animals go about theirs. As a nature writer, Dillard shows us that we can learn a lot about the true way to live by observing nature's other creations. While we think and debate and calculate each and every move, these creatures just simply act. The thing that keeps human beings from living the purest life possible, like an animal such as the weasel, is the same thing that separates us from all wild animals: our minds. Human beings are creatures of caution, creatures of undeniable fear, never fully living our lives because we are too caught up with avoiding risks. A weasel, on the

Comment: Student summarizes Dillard's essay by explaining the ideas of the essay in fresh words.

other hand, is a creature of action and instinct, a creature which lives its life the way it was created to, not questioning his motives, simply striking when the time to strike is right. As Dillard states, "the weasel lives in necessity and we live in choice, hating necessity and dying at the last ignobly in its talons" (Dillard 210).

It is important to note and appreciate the uniqueness of the ideas Dillard presents in this essay because in some ways they are very true. For instance, it is true that humans live lives of caution, with a certain fear that has been built up continually through the years. We are forced to agree with Dillard's idea that we as humans "might learn something of mindlessness, something of the purity of living in the physical senses and the dignity of living without bias or motive" (Dillard 210). To live freely we need to live our lives with less hesitation, instead of intentionally choosing to not live to the fullest in fear of the consequences of our actions. However, Dillard suggests that we should forsake our ability of thought and choice all together. The human mind is the tool that has allowed a creature with no natural weapons to become the unquestioned dominant species on this plant ~~planet~~, and though it curbs the spontaneity of our lives, it is not something to be simply thrown away for a chance to live completely "free of bias or motive" (Dillard 210). We are a moral, conscious species, complete with emotions and a firm conscience, and it is the power of our minds that allows us to exist as we do now: with the ability to both think and feel at the same time. It grants us the ability to choose and have choice, to be guided not only by feelings and emotions but also by morals and an understanding of consequence. As such, a human being with the ability to live like a weasel has given up the very thing that makes him human.

Comment: Up until this point the student has introduced Dillard's essay and summarized some of its ideas. In the section that follows, he continues to think critically about Dillard's ideas and argument.

Comment: This is a strong statement that captures the student's appreciation of Dillard's suggestion to live freely but also the ability to recognize why most people cannot live this way. This is a good example of critical thinking.

Comment: Again, the student acknowledges the importance of conscious thought.

Comment: While the student does not include a personal experience in the essay, this section gives us a sense of his personal view of life. Also note how he introduces the term "morals" here to point out the significance of the consequences of our actions. The point is that not only do we need to act but we also need to be aware of the result of our actions.

Comment: Student rejects Dillard's ideas but only after explaining why it is important to reject them.

Here, the first true flaw of Dillard's essay comes to light. While it is possible to understand and even respect Dillard's observations, it should be noted that without thought and choice she would have never been able to construct these notions in the first place. Dillard protests, "I tell you I've been in that weasel's brain for sixty seconds, and he was in mine" (Dillard 210). One cannot cast oneself into the mind of another creature without the intricacy of human thought, and one would not be able to choose to live as said creature does without the power of human choice. In essence, Dillard would not have had the ability to judge the life of another creature if she were to live like a weasel. Weasels do not make judgments; they simply act and react on the basis of instinct. The "mindlessness" that Dillard speaks of would prevent her from having the option to choose her own reactions. Whereas the conscious- thinking Dillard has the ability to see this creature and take the time to stop and examine its life, the "mindless" Dillard would only have the limited options to attack or run away. This is the major fault in the logic of Dillard's essay, as it would be impossible for her to choose to examine and compare the lives of humans and weasels without the capacity for choice.

Comment: Student dismantles Dillard's entire premise by telling us how the very act of writing the essay negates her argument. He has not only interpreted the essay but figured out how its premise is logically flawed.

Dillard also examines a weasel's short memory in a positive light and seems to believe that a happier life could be achieved if only we were simple-minded enough to live our lives with absolutely no regret. She claims, "I suspect that for me the way is like the weasel's: open to time and death painlessly, noticing everything, remembering nothing, choosing the given with a fierce and pointed will" (Dillard 210). In theory, this does sound like a positive value. To be able to live freely without a hint of remembrance as to the results of our choices would be an

Comment: Once again the student demonstrates why the logic of Dillard's argument falls short when applied to her own writing.

interesting life, one may even say a care-free life. But at the same time, would we not be denying our responsibility as humans to learn from the mistakes of the past as to not replicate them in the future? Human beings' ability to remember is almost as important as our ability to choose, because remembering things from the past is the only way we can truly learn from them. History is taught throughout our educational system for a very good reason: so that the generations of the future do not make the mistakes of the past. A human being who chooses to live like a weasel gives up something that once made him very human: the ability to learn from his mistakes to further better himself.

Ultimately, without the ability to choose or recall the past, mankind would be able to more readily take risks without regard for consequences. Dillard views the weasel's reaction to necessity as an unwavering willingness to take such carefree risks and chances. She states that "it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you" (Dillard 211). Would it then be productive for us to make a wrong choice and be forced to live in it forever, when we as a people have the power to change, to remedy wrongs we've made in our lives? What Dillard appears to be recommending is that humans not take many risks, but who is to say that the ability to avoid or escape risks is necessarily a flaw with mankind?

If we had been like the weasel, never wanting, never needing, always "choosing the given with a fierce and pointed will" (Dillard 210), our world would be a completely different place. The United States of America might not exist at this very moment if we had just taken what was given to us, and unwaveringly accepted a life as a colony of Great Britain. But as Cole clearly puts it, "A risk that you assume by actually

Comment: This question represents excellent critical thinking. The student acknowledges that theoretically "remembering nothing' may have some merits but then ponders on the larger socio-political problem it presents.

Comment: The student brings two ideas together very smoothly here.

Comment: The writer sums up his argument while once again reminding us of the problem with Dillard's ideas.

Comment: This is another thoughtful question that makes the reader think along with the writer.

doing something seems far more risky than a risk you take by not doing something, even though the risk of doing nothing may be greater" (Cole 145). As a unified body of people, we were able to go against that which was expected of us, evaluate the risk in doing so, and move forward with our revolution. The American people used the power of choice, and risk assessment, to make a permanent change in their lives; they used the remembrance of Britain's unjust deeds to fuel their passion for victory. We as a people chose. We remembered. We distinguished between right and wrong. These are things that a weasel can never do, because a weasel does not have a say in its own life, it only has its instincts and nothing more.

Humans are so unique in the fact that they can dictate the course of their own lives, but many people still choose to search around for the true way to live. What they do not realize is that they have to look no further than themselves. Our power, our weapon, is our ability to have thought and choice, to remember, and to make our own decisions based on our concepts of right and wrong, good and bad. These are the only tools we will ever need to construct the perfect life for ourselves from the ground up. And though it may seem like a nice notion to live a life free of regret, it is our responsibility as creatures and the appointed caretakers of this planet to utilize what was given to us and live our lives as we were meant to, not the life of any other wild animal.

Comment: The student makes a historical reference here that serves as strong evidence for his own argument.

Comment: This final paragraph sums up the writer's perspective in a thoughtful and mature way. It moves away from Dillard's argument and establishes the notion of human responsibility, an idea highly worth thinking about.

Exercises

Discussion

1. Write about your experiences with critical thinking assignments. What seemed to be the most difficult? What approaches did you try to overcome the difficulty?
2. Respond to the list of strategies on how to conduct textual analysis. How well do these strategies work for you? Add your own tips to the list.
3. Evaluate the student essay by noting aspects of critical thinking that are evident to you. How would you grade this essay? What other qualities (or problems) do you notice?

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28. How To Read Like a Writer

MIKE BUNN

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

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

There was a Red Coat stationed on each of the theater's four floors, and we all passed the time by sitting quietly in the back, reading books with tiny flashlights. It's not easy trying to read in the dim light of a theatre—flashlight or no flashlight—and it's even tougher with shrieks and shouts and gunshots coming from the stage. I had to focus intently on each and every word, often rereading a single sentence several times. Sometimes I got distracted and had to re-read entire paragraphs. As I struggled to read in this environment, I began to realize that the way I was reading—one word at a time—was exactly the same way that the author had written the text. I realized writing is a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence process. The intense concentration required to read in the theater helped me recognize some of the interesting

ways that authors string words into phrases into paragraphs into entire books.

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

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

What Does It Mean to Read Like a Writer?

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

You are reading to learn about writing.

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

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

made instead, and what effect those different choices would have on readers.

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

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

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

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

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

> It wasn't until I claimed the sentence as my area of desire, interest, and expertise—until I wanted to be a writer writing better—that I had to look underneath my initial readings . . . I started asking, how—how did the writer get me to feel, how did the writer say something so that it remains in my memory when many other things too easily fall out, how

> did the writer communicate his/her intentions about genre, about irony? (119–20)

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

How Is RLW Different from "Normal" Reading?

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

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

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

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

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

Why Learn to Read Like a Writer?

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

That's what this essay is for.

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

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

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

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

What Are Some Questions to Ask Before You Start Reading?

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

One of the things that several students mentioned to do first,

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

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

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing?
- Do you know who the intended audience is for this piece of writing?

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

"to provoke analysis and criticisms into the style, structure, and purpose of the writing itself."

In What Genre Is This Written?

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

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

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

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

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

As you read both kinds of texts you can locate the choices the author made and imagine the different decisions that he/she might have made.

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

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

Knowing ahead of time what kind of writing assignments you will be asked to complete can really help you to read like a writer. It's probably impossible (and definitely too time consuming) to identify all of the choices the author made and all techniques an author used, so it's important to prioritize while reading. Knowing what you'll be writing yourself can help you prioritize. It may be the case that your instructor has assigned the text you're reading to serve as model for the kind of writing you'll be doing later. Jessie, a former student, writes, "In college writing classes, we knew we were reading for a purpose—to influence or inspire our own work.

The reading that I have done in college writing courses has always been really specific to a certain type of writing, and it allows me to focus and experiment on that specific style in depth and without distraction."

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

What Are Questions to Ask As You Are Reading?

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

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

- What is the author's purpose for this piece of writing?
- Who is the intended audience?

Think about these two questions again as you read. It may be that you couldn't really answer them before, or that your ideas will change while reading. Knowing why the piece was written and who it's for can help explain why the author might have made certain choices or used particular techniques in the writing, and you can assess those choices and techniques based in part on how effective they are in fulfilling that purpose and/or reaching the intended audience.

Beyond these initial two questions, there is an almost endless list of questions you might ask regarding writing choices and techniques. Here are some of the questions that one former student, Clare, asks herself:

> When reading I tend to be asking myself a million questions. If I were writing this, where would I go with the story? If the author goes in a different direction (as they so often do) from what I am thinking, I will ask myself, why did they do this? What are they telling me?

Clare tries to figure out why the author might have made a move in the writing that she hadn't anticipated, but even more importantly, she asks herself what she would do if she were the author. Reading the text becomes an opportunity for Clare to think about her own role as an author.

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

- How effective is the language the author uses? Is it too formal? Too informal? Perfectly appropriate?

Depending on the subject matter and the intended audience, it may make sense to be more or less formal in terms of language. As you

begin reading, you can ask yourself whether the word choice and tone/ language of the writing seem appropriate.

- What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her claims? Does he/she use statistics? Quotes from famous people? Personal anecdotes or personal stories? Does he/she cite books or articles?
- How appropriate or effective is this evidence? Would a different type of evidence, or some combination of evidence, be more effective?

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

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

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

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

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

What Should You Be Writing As You Are Reading?

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

- What is the technique the author is using here?

- Is this technique effective?
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages if I tried this same technique in my writing?

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

What Does RLW Look Like in Action?

Let's go back to the opening paragraph of this essay and spend some time reading like writers as a way to get more comfortable with the process:

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

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

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing? I hope the purpose is clear by now; if it isn't, I'm doing a pretty

lousy job of explaining how and why you might read like a writer.

- Do you know who the intended audience is? Again, I hope that you know this one by now.
- What about the genre? Is this an essay? An article? What would you call it?
- You know that it's published and not student writing. How does this influence your expectations for what you will read?
- Are you going to be asked to write something like this yourself? Probably not in your college writing class, but you can still use RLW to learn about writerly techniques that you might want to use in whatever you do end up writing.

Now ask yourself questions as you read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the effect of using the word "antiquated" to describe the fire- safety laws? It certainly projects a negative impression; if the laws are described as antiquated it means I view them as old-fashioned or obsolete. This is a fairly uncommon word, so it stands out, drawing attention to my choice in using it. The word also sounds quite formal. Am I formal in the rest of this sentence?

I use the word "performance" when I just as easily could have written "show." For that matter, I could have written "old" instead of "antiquated." You can proceed like this throughout the sentence, thinking about alternative choices I could have made and what the effect would be. Instead of "staff members" I could have written "employees" or just "workers." Notice the difference if the sentence had been written:

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

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

As you can see from discussing just this one paragraph, you could ask questions about the text forever. Luckily, you don't have to. As you continue reading like a writer, you'll learn to notice techniques that seem new and pay less attention to the ones you've thought

about before. The more you practice the quicker the process becomes until you're reading like a writer almost automatically.

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

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

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

Are you ready to start reading?

Exercises

Discussion

1. How is "Reading Like a Writer" similar to and/or different from the way(s) you read for other classes?

2. What kinds of choices do you make as a writer that readers might identify in your written work?
3. Is there anything you notice in this essay that you might like to try in your own writing? What is that technique or strategy? When do you plan to try using it?
4. What are some of the different ways that you can learn about the context of a text before you begin reading it?

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This essay is a chapter in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Volume 2, a peer-reviewed open textbook series for the writing classroom: https://writingspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/How-to-Read.pdf

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29. Formulating a Thesis

ANDREA SCOTT

You need a good thesis statement for your essay but are having trouble getting started. You may have heard that your thesis needs to be specific and arguable, but still wonder what this really means.

Let's look at some examples. Imagine you're writing about John Hughes's film *Sixteen Candles* (1984).

You take a first pass at writing a thesis:

> *Sixteen Candles* is a romantic comedy about high school cliques.

Is this a strong thesis statement? Not yet, but it's a good start. You've focused on a topic–high school cliques–which is a smart move because you've settled on one of many possible angles. But the claim is weak because it's not yet arguable. Intelligent people would generally agree with this statement—so there's no real "news" for your reader. You want your thesis to say something surprising and debatable. If your thesis doesn't go beyond summarizing your source, it's not arguable.

The key words in the thesis statement are "romantic comedy" and "high school cliques." One way to sharpen the claim is to *start asking questions*.

For example, how does the film represent high school cliques in a surprising or complex way? How does the film reinforce stereotypes about high school groups and how does it undermine them? Or why does the film challenge our expectations about romantic comedies by focusing on high school cliques? If you can answer one of those questions (or others of your own), you'll have a strong thesis.

Tip : Asking "how" or "why" questions will help you refine your thesis, making it more arguable and interesting to your readers.

Take 2. You revise the thesis. Is it strong now?

> *Sixteen Candles* is a romantic comedy criticizing the divisiveness created by high school cliques.

You're getting closer. You're starting to take a stance by arguing that the film identifies "divisiveness" as a problem and *criticizes* it, but your readers will want to know how this plays out and why it's important. Right now, the thesis still sounds bland – not risky enough to be genuinely contentious.

Tip: Keep raising questions that test your ideas. And ask yourself the "so what" question. Why is your thesis interesting or important?

Take 3. Let's try again. How about this version?

> Although the film *Sixteen Candles* appears to reinforce stereotypes about high school cliques, it undermines them in important ways, questioning its viewers' assumptions about what's normal.

Bingo! This thesis statement is pretty strong. It challenges an obvious interpretation of the movie (that it just reinforces stereotypes), offering a new and more complex reading in its place. We also have a sense of why this argument is important. The film's

larger goal, we learn, is to question what we think we understand about normalcy.

What's a Strong Thesis?

As we've just seen, a strong thesis statement crystallizes your paper's argument and, most importantly, *argues a debatable point*.

This means two things. It goes beyond merely summarizing or describing to stake out an interpretation or position that's not obvious, and others could challenge for good reasons. It's also arguable in the literal sense that it can be *argued*, or supported through a thoughtful analysis of your sources. If your argument lacks evidence, readers will think your thesis statement is an opinion or belief as opposed to an argument.

Exercises for Drafting an Arguable Thesis

A good thesis will be *focused* on your object of study (as opposed to making a big claim about the world) and will introduce the *key words* guiding your analysis.

To get started, you might experiment with some of these "mad libs." They're thinking exercises that will help propel you toward an arguable thesis.

> By examining _____ [topic/approach], we can see _____[thesis—the claim that's surprising], which is important because _____.[1]

Example:

> "By examining *Sixteen Candles* through the lens of Georg Simmel's writings on fashion, we can see that the protagonist's interest in fashion as an expression of her conflicted desire to be seen as both unique and accepted by the group. This is important because the film offers its viewers a glimpse into the ambivalent yearnings of middle class youth in the 1980s.

. . .

> Although readers might assume _____ [the commonplace idea you're challenging], I argue that _____ [your surprising claim].

Example:

> Although viewers might assume the romantic comedy *Sixteen Candles* is merely entertaining, I believe its message is political. The film uses the romance between Samantha, a middle-class sophomore, and Jake, an affluent senior, to reinforce the fantasy that anyone can become wealthy and successful with enough cunning and persistence.

Still Having Trouble? Let's Back Up...

It helps to understand why readers value the arguable thesis. What larger purpose does it serve? Your readers will bring a set of expectations to your essay. The better you can anticipate the expectations of your readers, the better you'll be able to persuade them to entertain seeing things your way.

Academic readers (and readers more generally) read to learn something new. They want to see the writer challenge commonplaces—either everyday assumptions about your object of

study or truisms in the scholarly literature. In other words, academic readers want to be surprised so that their thinking shifts or at least becomes more complex by the time they finish reading your essay. Good essays problematize what we think we know and offer an alternative explanation in its place. They leave their reader with a fresh perspective on a problem.

We all bring important past experiences and beliefs to our interpretations of texts, objects, and problems. You can harness these observational powers to engage critically with what you are studying. The key is to be alert to what strikes you as strange, problematic, paradoxical, or puzzling about your object of study. If you can articulate this and a claim in response, you're well on your way to formulating an arguable thesis in your introduction.

How do I set up a "problem" and an arguable thesis in response?

All good writing has a purpose or motive for existing. Your thesis is your surprising response to this problem or motive. This is why it seldom makes sense to start a writing project by articulating the thesis. The first step is to articulate the question or problem your paper addresses.

Here are some possible ways to introduce a conceptual problem in your paper's introduction.

1. Challenge a commonplace interpretation (or your own first impressions).

How are readers likely to interpret this source or issue? What might intelligent readers think at first glance? (Or, if you've been given secondary sources or have been asked to conduct research to locate secondary sources, what do other writers or scholars assume is true or important about your primary source or issue?)

What does this commonplace interpretation leave out, overlook, or under-emphasize?

2. Help your reader see the complexity of your topic.

Identify and describe for your reader a paradox, puzzle, or contradiction in your primary source(s).

What larger questions does this paradox or contradiction raise for you and your readers?

3. If your assignment asks you to do research, piggyback off another scholar's reserach.

Summarize for your reader another scholar's argument about your topic, primary source, or case study and tell your reader why this claim is interesting.

Now explain how you will extend this scholar's argument to explore an issue or case study that the scholar doesn't address fully.

4. If your assignment asks you to do research, identify a gap in another scholar's or a group of scholars' research.

Summarize for your reader another scholar's argument about your topic, primary source, or case study and tell your reader why this claim is interesting. Or, summarize how scholars in the field tend to approach your topic.

Next, explain what important aspect this scholarly representation misses or distorts. Introduce your particular approach to your topic and its value.

5. If your assignment asks you to do research, bring in a new lens for investigating your case study or problem.

Summarize for your reader how a scholar or group of scholars has approached your topic.

Introduce a theoretical source (possibly from another discipline) and explain how it helps you address this issue from a new and productive angle.

Tip: your introductory paragraph will probably look like this:

PROBLEM and why it's significant

↓

THESIS

Testing Your Thesis

You can test your thesis statement's arguability by asking the following questions:

- **Does my thesis only or mostly summarize my source?**

If so, try some of the exercises above to articulate your paper's conceptual problem or question.

- **Is my thesis arguable –can it be supported by evidence in my source, and is it surprising and contentious?**

If not, return to your sources and practice the exercises above.

- I**s my thesis about my primary source or case study, or is it about the world?**

If it's about the world, revise it so that it focuses on your primary source or case study. Remember you need solid evidence to support your thesis.

"Formulating a Thesis" was written by Andrea Scott, Princeton University

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[1] Adapted from Erik Simpson's "Five Ways of Looking at a Thesis" at http://www.math.grinnell.edu/~simpsone/Teaching/fiveways.html

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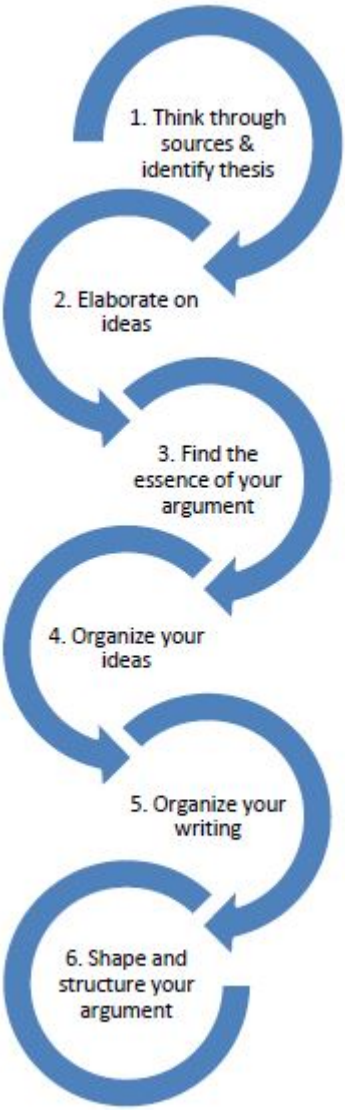
30. Synthesis Notes: Working With Sources to Create a First Draft

ERIKA SZYMANSKI

Synthesis Notes: Working With Sources To Create a First Draft



Synthesis notes are a strategy for taking and using reading notes that bring together—synthesize—what we read with our thoughts

about our topic in a way that lets us integrate our notes seamlessly into the process of writing a first draft. Six steps will take us from reading sources to a first draft.

When we read, it is easy to take notes that don't help us build our own arguments when we move from note-taking to writing. In high school, most of us learned to take notes that summarize readings. Summarizing works well when the purpose of our notes is to help us memorize information quickly for a test. When we read in preparation for writing a research-supported argument, however, summarizing is inefficient because our notes don't reflect how our sources fit into our argument. We have to return to our sources and try to recall why and how we saw them contribute to our thinking.

Thinking through your sources

Step 1: As you read, keep in mind your purpose. Why are you reading this source? About what will you be writing? Write down your thoughts on how the text fits in with what you are currently thinking about your topic; if you did not begin your research with ideas, start thinking and building as you read. Try to make complete sentences. Often, you may summarize or paraphrase a bit of what the text is saying as you refer to it in the context of your own thinking, but do not just summarize what the text says. Capture what you think as you read: your reactions, how it is helpful, how it is relevant. Incorporate any quotes you find especially helpful, but rather than simply copying the quote, write about and around the quote.

Repeat step 1 for each source you think you may use to build your argument.

Identifying your thesis: Whether or not you began with firm ideas about your topic, your reading – and, more precisely, your thinking as you read – will be the source of new ideas. Your thesis, then, will emerge during your reading as the product of how all of your

reading and thinking comes together to create a position you can support, with your sources and with your own well-informed argumentation. Even if you began your research holding a clear position on your topic, give your thesis permission to change as you read. Not doing so limits your capacity to learn and grow through your reading and, moreover, risks leaving you unable to support your thesis with your sources.

When you feel as though you have read and thought enough to develop a position on your topic that your sources can support, and that you can stand behind, take note of that position as your thesis. Know, though, that your thesis may still grow and change as you continue to read, think, and draft if you find your sources leading you to support a different position.

Elaborating on your ideas

Step 2: When you are ready to begin writing, refer back to your synthesis notes. Look at the first point and write a short paragraph about that thought or observation. If your synthesis notes are in complete sentences, you may cut and paste those sentences into your new paragraphs or revise and build from them to reflect how your thinking has changed and grown. Then move to the next note and, again, write a short paragraph about that observation. These sections of writing do not need to be connected; that will come later. Do not worry about writing a coherent paper; just focus on one idea or observation at a time.

If you get stuck – if you cannot figure out how a particular note fits into your argument or if it no longer fits—skip that note and move to the next one. You can return to these unused notes later when you may find that you now have something to say about them or that they simply are not part of your argument.

Attribution, Citation, References

You may find it helpful to color-code your synthesis notes to

remind yourself of what material you have and have not used. Remember, too, to include in-text citations to your original source material as you write (lsee guidelines on when citation is necessary).

When you reach the end of your notes, you should have a list of short paragraphs constituting much of your argument.

Finding the essence of your argument

Step 3: Read back through your short paragraphs and, in a separate document or on a separate sheet of paper, summarize each paragraph in a single phrase or sentence. If you cannot summarize a paragraph with a single phrase, try to revise the paragraph so that it focuses on just one idea. Give each paragraph and its corresponding summary phrase a number so that you can match the paragraph to its summary phrase.

Organizing your ideas

Step 4: Now we will organize the writing we did in step 2. Looking only at the list of summary phrases, rearrange them until they can be read as a logical, coherent paragraph from top to bottom. This paragraph should summarize your argument. If you find that a phrase fails to fit, set it aside. If you find a gap where you need an additional sentence to provide a logical connection between two of your phrases, write in that sentence.

Organizing your writing

Step 5: Return to your short paragraphs and rearrange them so

that they match the order of the summary phrases that you have just organized. If you set aside any phrases, set aside their corresponding paragraphs—you may not end up using those paragraphs. If you had to write any new phrases, add those phrases in their place in-between paragraphs; you can expand these phrases into full paragraphs in the next step.

Shaping and structuring your argument

Step 6: Now, take these organized paragraphs and bring them together into a coherent argument. When you read your organized paragraphs, the ideas from each paragraph should flow logically into the next. Add transitions to make those connections explicit. Revise your paragraphs to make the logic of your argument more clear. Delete sentences that are no longer relevant in their new context or add sentences if you need to more fully explain an idea. Expand any added phrases into more complete connecting paragraphs.

At this stage, you may need to refer back to your source material to flesh out any gaps in your argument, or you may find that you need to consult new source material for the same purpose, but your draft should make clear what additional information you need and where it goes. You will also want to add an introduction and conclusion summarizing and drawing out the main points of your argument. Nevertheless, you have produced a first draft from your reading notes without ever going through the painful steps of wondering where and how to begin writing.

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PART VII
RHETORIC

31. Why Study Rhetoric? or, What Freestyle Rap Teaches Us about Writing

KYLE D. STEDMAN

The website *eHow* has a page on "How to Freestyle Rap" ("Difficulty: Moderately Challenging"), and I'm trying to figure out what I think about it. On one hand, it seems like it would be against the ethos of an authentic rapper to use a page like this to brush up on freestyle skills. After all, the page is hosted on a corporate website owned by Demand Media, Inc., the same people behind, among other things, a golf site.

But on the other hand, the advice seems solid. The *eHow* page encourages me to follow an easy, seven-step model:

1. "Learn the basics."
2. "Just start flowing."
3. "Write down some good rhymes ahead of time."
4. "Work on your wordplay."
5. "Practice at home in your spare time."
6. "Have a rap battle."
7. "Rap what you know." ("How to Freestyle Rap")

The page treats freestyling as an art that can be practiced effectively by anyone, as long as the rapper is willing to research, take risks, spend time developing the craft, practice with a community and for an audience, and stay true to him/herself—i.e., to keep it real.

And here's the thing: I think rhetoric is the same way. That is, it's an art that can be practiced effectively by anyone, as long as the rhetor (the person who is communicating rhetorically) is willing to research, take risks, spend time developing the craft, practice with

a community and for an audience, and stay true to him/herself. You don't hear me though.

***

That's right: rhetoric is an art. But not necessarily art the way we think of it. The ancient Greeks called rhetoric a *techne*, a word they used to mean "a craft or ability to do something, a creative skill; this can be physical or mental, positive or negative, like that of metalworking or trickery" (Papillion 149).

Other examples of *techne*? Ship-building, for one. [1] You'd better not muddle your way through the art of building a ship, or you'll ruddy well sink.

Rhetoric developed as an oral art, the art of knowing how to give an effective speech—say, in a court, in a law-making session, or at a funeral speech. And if you muddled your way through a speech, not convincing anyone, not moving anyone, looking like a general schmuck in a toga, you'd ruddy well sink there, too.

***

So rhetoric is an art. But of what? The shortest answer: it's an art of communication, whether written, spoken, painted, streamed, or whatever.

But how do you judge when communication has *worked*, when it's effective? In other words, how do you know when someone has used rhetorical skills well?

That's easy: when an *audience* says it's effective. So:

- An anchor on a conservative news show makes a jab at President Obama. Conservative watchers thought the jab was well-deserved and well-timed; it was rhetorically effective for them. Liberal watchers thought it was a cheap shot; it wasn't rhetorically effective for them.
- A student writes an essay arguing that advertisements are so pervasive in the U.S. that he can't even go to the bathroom without seeing Coke's logo. His roommate reads it and doesn't think advertising is a big deal; he's not convinced, so it's not a rhetorically effective essay for him. But his teacher reads it and

thinks it's cleverly argued and bitingly true. It works for her; it's rhetorically effective for her.

- Eminem ends a rap battle to raucous applause from the people in the room, but the old grandmother in the back of the club thinks it was all a lot of noise. To her, Eminem's rapping wasn't rhetorically effective.

So rhetoric can't be judged completely objectively. It wouldn't make sense to say that someone's rhetoric was "right" or "wrong" (though it can be "better" or "worse" for specific audiences). It all comes down to the audience.

Also, notice that all of those examples describe situations where the rhetor is being persuasive in one way or another. That's a common definition of rhetoric—that it's the art of *persuasion*. And persuasion is important—we're constantly trying to convince people, either subtly or overtly, to understand our points of view, and people are constantly trying to convince *us* of *their* points of view.

But I like to think of rhetoric as being about more than just persuasion, which starts to sound all bossy and manipulative when I think of that way. Instead, I think rhetoric is the art of making a connection with an audience. It's a series of techniques to help me share the way I see things with someone else. And depending on who I'm sharing with, I'll use different techniques. I wouldn't communicate my views to my wife in the same way that I would to the U.S. president, or to Jay-Z.

***

The best rappers are surprising. You lean over laughing at wordplay that you didn't expect. You smile, get into the groove, listen more carefully, and later you remember how much you enjoyed it. The communication was effective.

***

I read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* in my senior year of high school, but I didn't really get it. The author kept talking

about *rhetoric*, and even after I looked up the definition, it didn't make any sense to me.

Looking back, I think that's ironic: the beating, blood-pumping heart of rhetoric is a consideration of audience. Speaking or writing or composing something that *works the way you want it to* for the audience you want it to work for.

But I don't think senior-year me was the intended audience of *Zen*. If I had been, the author was pretty lousy at being rhetorical, because he didn't explain well enough what *rhetoric* even means. The concepts he wanted his audience to be convinced of after reading his book didn't leave me convinced and riveted; instead, I was glassy-eyed and dreaming about angsty 90s rock.

He was thoroughly un-rhetorical in his discussion of rhetoric.

I read the book now and I'm moved and touched. He shared his views effectively with me. Without the text changing at all, I became his audience. I get it now.

So he was being rhetorical after all. It's both.

***

Why study rhetoric? It's the same as if you asked, "Why study freestyle rap?" Both are a set of skills and techniques that often come naturally, but which people can learn to do better by studying the methods that have proven effective in the past.

"Why study painting?" Because by studying how other people paint, you learn new techniques that make you a more effective painter.

"Why study business?" Because by studying how other people do business, you learn new techniques that make you a more effective businessperson.

Why study ship-building, or basket-weaving, or trickery, or anything else that you might be able to muddle through but which you'd be better at with some training and practice? Isn't it obvious?

It's the same with rhetoric, but in realm of communication. Why not learn some techniques that will increase the chance that your audience will think/feel/believe the way you want them to

after hearing/reading/experiencing whatever it is that you're throwing at them?

And that's only thinking about you in the composer's role. What about when you're in the receiving end, hearing/reading/experiencing things that have been carefully crafted so that you'll buy into them? A scary of list of rhetorically effective people: politicians, advertisers, super-villains. (You want rhetoric? Just listen to the slimy words of the Emperor in *Return of the Jedi* or the words Voldemort beams into everyone's brain in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part Two*.) Studying rhetoric has the uncanny effect of opening your eyes to when people are trying to be all rhetorical on you, wielding their communication skills like an evil weapon.

***

My friend to me, the other day: "Ugh. Carrie just wrote something inappropriate on her fiancée's Facebook wall again."

Me: "What'd she say?"

My friend: "I don't even remember. It was something all gushy and uncomfortable. I skimmed back a bit and saw she's been doing that a lot. Doesn't she know that she can write messages that go just to him and not the rest of us? She doesn't have to post that stuff on his wall!"

As I thought about this conversation, I realized that Carrie (not her real name) was in some ways being a rhetorical failure. Yes, her fiancée (one person), who was certainly the primary intended recipient of her message, probably found the wall post very rhetorically effective. That is, he surely felt the gushy emotions that she meant for him to feel. Her message worked. How rhetorical!

But because a Facebook wall is to some extent public, there are others who will read her post too (hundreds of people). What is the intended message for them? If we trust and like Carrie (and if she's lucky), then we may think, "Oh, it's sweet when people are public about their love for each other!" If we're kind of sick of Carrie, we might think, "She just plain doesn't get that we don't care about her digital smooches and hugs." And if we're mad at her, we might think,

"She's publicly declaring her love to him because *she wants us to feel bad that we don't have the kind of true love that she has*!"
In short, the message to most of us is either A) that's nice, B) oh, gross, or C) that hussy.

Why study rhetoric? Because so many people so often seem to have no no no idea about how to communicate well.

***

We're still beating around the bush when it comes to what rhetorical skills actually look like. Up to this point, you could say, "You keep talking about all these different collections of skills, but besides freestyling, I barely have any idea how to go about *being* effective at this stuff." Fine—pass the mic.

Mic passed. Among lots of other things, some of the skills practiced by rhetors (and composition students) include:

- Basics that effective communicators keep in mind (like discovering the best time and place to communicate, clarifying what the communication is about, and learning about your audience)
- Techniques for deciding the best kinds of ideas and evidence to use for a given audience (like freewriting, open-minded research, and other forms of what we call "invention")
- Techniques for deciding on the best way to organize material for a given audience (like models for organizing information into a business report, or a classical six-part speech, or a thesis-driven research essay)
- Suggestions for how to shape your style in ways that will be both understandable and exciting for your audience (like using rhetorical figures to liven up your sentences or varying sentence length and type)
- Considerations on the best way to get your communication to your audience (like a speech, an essay, a video, a recording, a painting, a sticky note, a letter made from words cut out of a magazine)

Yes, I keep writing the word *audience* over and over. That's because it's the core of any rhetorical endeavor. Remember? All those bullets can be summed up in one sentence: thinking rhetorically means thinking about your audience.

And that means communicating in a way that doesn't make you look stupid, mean, or confusing.

And that means you *should* communicate in a way that makes you look smart, nice, and clear.

It sounds obvious, right? I think so too. But then, why are people so bad at it?

***

The failures of a failed rhetor are those of a failed freestyle rapper, too. He gets up to start a rap battle and seems impressive at first (i.e. he has a strong ethos—a word we use a lot when analyzing communication from a rhetorical angle), but then things go badly when he gets the mic.

He starts out blundering around, looking like he's never done this before. (He should have followed *eHow*'s advice to "Write down some good rhymes ahead of time.")

In desperation, he lashes out at the other guy with attacks that seem like low blows, even for a rap battle. The audience groans; he broke an unspoken rule about how mean to be. Rhetorical failure.

He can tell that he's losing the audience, so he changes his tactics and starts blending together all kinds of words that rhyme. But he fails at this too, since nothing he says makes any sense.

Eventually, he's booed off the stage.

Why study rhetoric? So you can succeed in rap battles. I thought that was obvious.

[1] *Thanks to Dr. Debra Jacobs for pointing out this to me.*

This chapter originally appeared in *Writing Commons*: https://writingcommons.org/article/why-we-study-rhetoric/

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32. Rhetorical Analysis

ELIZABETH BROWNING

For many people, particularly those in the media, the term **"rhetoric**" has a largely negative connotation. A political commentator, for example, may say that a politician is using "empty rhetoric" or that what that politician says is "just a bunch of rhetoric." What the commentator means is that the politician's words are lacking substance, that the purpose of those words is more about manipulation rather than meaningfulness. However, this flawed definition, though quite common these days, does not offer the entire picture or full understanding of a concept that is more about clearly expressing substance and meaning rather than avoiding them.

This chapter will clarify what rhetorical analysis means and will help you identify the basic elements of rhetorical analysis through explanation and example.

1. **What is rhetorical analysis?**
2. **What is rhetorical situation?**
3. **What are the basic elements of rhetorical analysis?**
    - **3.1 The appeal to ethos.**
    - **3.2 The appeal the pathos.**
    - **3.3 The appeal to logos.**
    - **3.4 The appeal to kairos.**
4. **Striking a balance?**

1. What is rhetorical analysis?

Simply defined, **rhetoric** is the art or method of communicating effectively to an audience, usually with the intention to persuade; thus, **rhetorical analysis** means analyzing how effectively a writer or speaker communicates her message or argument to the audience.

The ancient Greeks, namely Aristotle, developed rhetoric into an art form, which explains why much of the terminology that we use for rhetoric comes from Greek. The three major parts of effective communication, also called the **Rhetorical Triangle**, are **ethos**, **patho**s, and **logos**, and they provide the foundation for a solid argument. As a reader and a listener, you must be able to recognize how writers and speakers depend upon these three rhetorical elements in their efforts to communicate. As a communicator yourself, you will benefit from the ability to see how others rely upon ethos, pathos, and logos so that you can apply what you learn from your observations to your own speaking and writing.

Rhetorical analysis can evaluate and analyze any type of communicator, whether that be a speaker, an artist, an advertiser, or a writer, but to simplify the language in this chapter, the term "writer" will represent the role of the communicator.

2. What is a rhetorical situation?

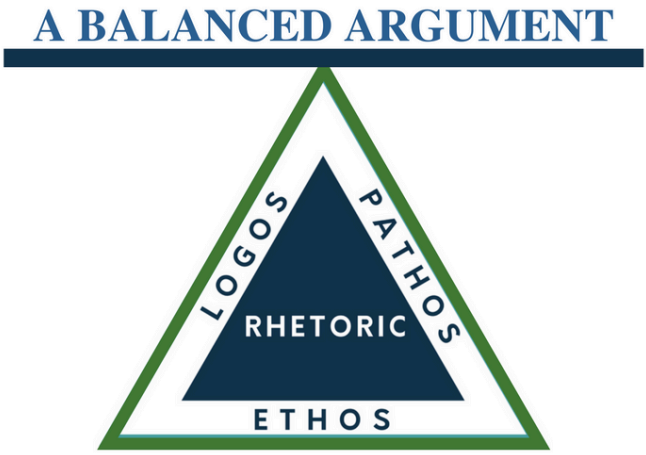
Essentially, understanding a **rhetorical situation** means understanding the context of that situation. A rhetorical situation comprises a handful of key elements, which should be identified before attempting to analyze and evaluate the use of rhetorical appeals. These elements consist of **the communicator** in the situation (such as the writer), **the issue at hand** (the topic or problem being addressed), **the purpose** for addressing the issue, **the**

medium of delivery (e.g.–speech, written text, a commercial), and **the audience** being addressed.

Answering the following questions will help you identify a rhetorical situation:

- **Who is the communicator or writer?**
- **What is the issue that the writer is addressing?**
  - What is the main argument that the writer is making?
- **What is the writer's purpose for addressing this issue?**
  - To provoke, to attack, or to defend?
  - To push toward or dissuade from certain action?
  - To praise or to blame?
  - To teach, to delight, or to persuade?
- **What is the form in which the writer conveys it?**
  - What is the structure of the communication; how is it arranged?
  - What oral or literary genre is it?
  - What figures of speech (schemes and tropes) are used?
  - What kind of style and tone is used and for what purpose?
  - Does the form complement the content?
  - What effect could the form have, and does this aid or hinder the author's intention?
- **Who is the audience?**
  - Who is the intended audience?
  - What values does the audience hold that the author or speaker appeals to?
  - Who have been or might be secondary audiences?
  - If this is a work of fiction, what is the nature of the audience within the fiction?

Figure 2.1 A Balanced Argument



3. What are the basic elements of rhetorical analysis?

3.1 The appeal to ethos

Literally translated, ethos means "character." In this case, it refers to the character of the writer or speaker, or more specifically, his credibility. The writer needs to establish credibility so that the audience will trust him and, thus, be more willing to engage with the

argument. If a writer fails to establish a sufficient **ethical appeal**, then the audience will not take the writer's argument seriously.

For example, if someone writes an article that is published in an academic journal, in a reputable newspaper or magazine, or on a credible website, those places of publication already imply a certain level of credibility. If the article is about a scientific issue and the writer is a scientist or has certain academic or professional credentials that relate to the article's subject, that also will lend credibility to the writer. Finally, if that writer shows that he is knowledgeable about the subject by providing clear explanations of points and by presenting information in an honest and straightforward way that also helps to establish a writer's credibility.

When evaluating a writer's **ethical appeal**, ask the following questions:

Does the writer come across as reliable?

- Viewpoint is logically consistent throughout the text
- Does not use hyperbolic (exaggerated) language
- Has an even, objective tone (not malicious but also not sycophantic)
- Does not come across as subversive or manipulative

Does the writer come across as authoritative and knowledgeable?

- Explains concepts and ideas thoroughly
- Addresses any counter-arguments and successfully rebuts them
- Uses a sufficient number of relevant sources
- Shows an understanding of sources used

What kind of credentials or experience does the writer have?

- Look at byline or biographical info
- Identify any personal or professional experience mentioned in the text
- Where has this writer's text been published?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Ethos:

In a perfect world, everyone would tell the truth, and we could depend upon the credibility of speakers and authors. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. You would expect that news reporters would be objective and tell news stories based upon the facts; however, Janet Cooke, Stephen Glass, Jayson Blair, and Brian Williams all lost their jobs for plagiarizing or fabricating part of their news stories. Janet Cooke's Pulitzer Prize was revoked after it was discovered that she made up "Jimmy," an eight-year old heroin addict (Prince, 2010). Brian Williams was fired as anchor of the *NBC Nightly News* for exaggerating his role in the Iraq War.

Figure 2.2, Brian Williams at the 2011 Time 100 Gala

Others have become infamous for claiming academic degrees that they didn't earn as in the case of Marilee Jones. At the time of discovery, she was Dean of Admissions at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After 28 years of employment, it was determined that she never graduated from college (Lewin, 2007). However, on her **website** (http://www.marileejones.com/blog/) she is still promoting herself as "a sought after speaker, consultant

and author" and "one of the nation's most experienced College Admissions Deans."

Beyond lying about their own credentials, authors may employ a number of tricks or fallacies to lure you to their point of view. Some of the more common techniques are described in the chapter on argument. When you recognize these fallacies, you should question the credibility of the speaker and the legitimacy of the argument. If you use these when making your own arguments, be aware that they may undermine or even destroy your credibility.

Exercise 1: Analyzing Ethos

Choose an article from the links provided below. Preview your chosen text, and then read through it, paying special attention to how the writer tries to establish an ethical appeal. Once you have finished reading, use the bullet points above to guide you in analyzing how effective the writer's appeal to ethos is.

"Why cancer is not a war, fight, or battle" by Xeni Jordan (https://tinyurl.com/y7m7bnnm)

"Relax and Let Your Kids Indulge in TV" by Lisa Pryor (https://tinyurl.com/y88epytu)

"Why are we OK with disability drag in Hollywood?" by

Danny Woodburn and Jay Ruderman (https://tinyurl.com/y964525k)

3.2 The appeal to pathos

Literally translated, **pathos** means "suffering." In this case, it refers to emotion, or more specifically, the writer's appeal to the audience's emotions. When a writer establishes an effective **pathetic appeal**, she makes the audience care about what she is saying. If the audience does not care about the message, then they will not engage with the argument being made.

For example, consider this: A writer is crafting a speech for a politician who is running for office, and in it, the writer raises a point about Social Security benefits. In order to make this point more appealing to the audience so that they will feel more emotionally connected to what the politician says, the writer inserts a story about Mary, an 80-year-old widow who relies on her Social Security benefits to supplement her income. While visiting Mary the other day, sitting at her kitchen table and eating a piece of her delicious homemade apple pie, the writer recounts how the politician held Mary's delicate hand and promised that her benefits would be safe if he were elected. Ideally, the writer wants the audience to feel sympathy or compassion for Mary because then they will feel more open to considering the politician's views on Social Security (and maybe even other issues).

When evaluating a writer's **pathetic appeal**, ask the following questions:

Does the writer try to engage or connect with the audience by making the subject matter relatable in some way?

- Does the writer have an interesting writing style?

- Does the writer use humor at any point?
- Does the writer use **narration**, such as storytelling or anecdotes, to add interest or to help humanize a certain issue within the text?
- Does the writer use **descriptive** or attention-grabbing details?
- Are there hypothetical examples that help the audience to imagine themselves in certain scenarios?
- Does the writer use any other examples in the text that might emotionally appeal to the audience?
- Are there any visual appeals to pathos, such as photographs or illustrations?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Pathos:

Up to a certain point, an **appeal to pathos** can be a legitimate part of an argument. For example, a writer or speaker may begin with an anecdote showing the effect of a law on an individual. This anecdote is a way to gain an audience's attention for an argument in which evidence and reason are used to present a case as to why the law should or should not be repealed or amended. In such a context, engaging the emotions, values, or beliefs of the audience is a legitimate and effective tool that makes the argument stronger.

An appropriate appeal to **pathos** is different from trying to unfairly play upon the audience's feelings and emotions through fallacious, misleading, or excessively emotional appeals. Such a **manipulative** use of pathos may alienate the audience or cause them to "tune out." An example would be the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) **commercials** (https://youtu.be/6eXfvRcllV8, transcript **here**) featuring the song "In the Arms of an Angel" and footage of abused animals. Even Sarah McLachlan, the singer and spokesperson featured in the commercials, admits that she changes the channel because they are too depressing (Brekke).

Even if an appeal to pathos is not manipulative, such an appeal should complement rather than replace reason and evidence-based argument. In addition to making use of pathos, the author must

establish her credibility (**ethos**) and must supply reasons and evidence (**logos**) in support of her position. An author who essentially replaces logos and ethos with pathos alone does not present a strong argument.

Exercise 2: Analyzing Pathos

In the movie *Braveheart*, the Scottish military leader, William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson, gives a speech to his troops just before they get ready to go into battle against the English army of King Edward I.

See clip **here** (https://youtu.be/h2vW-rr9ibE, transcript**here**). See clip with closed captioning **here**.

Step 1: When you watch the movie clip, try to gauge the general emotional atmosphere. Do the men seem calm or nervous? Confident or skeptical? Are they eager to go into battle, or are they ready to retreat? Assessing the situation from the start will make it easier to answer more specific, probing rhetorical questions after watching it.

Step 2: Consider these questions:

- What issues does Wallace address?
- Who is his audience?
- How does the audience view the issues at hand?

Step 3: Next, analyze Wallace's use of pathos in his speech.

- How does he try to connect with his audience emotionally? Because this is a speech, and he's appealing to the audience in person, consider his overall look as well as what he says.

- How would you describe his manner or attitude?
- Does he use any humor, and if so, to what effect?
- How would you describe his tone?
- Identify some examples of language that show an appeal to pathos: words, phrases, imagery, collective pronouns (we, us, our).
- How do all of these factors help him establish a pathetic appeal?

Step 4: Once you've identified the various ways that Wallace tries to establish his appeal to pathos, the final step is to evaluate the effectiveness of that appeal.

- Do you think he has successfully established a pathetic appeal? Why or why not?
- What does he do well in establishing pathos?
- What could he improve, or what could he do differently to make his pathetic appeal even stronger?

3.3 The appeal to logos

Literally translated, **logos** means "word." In this case, it refers to information, or more specifically, the writer's appeal to logic and reason. A successful **logical appeal** provides clearly organized information as well as evidence to support the overall argument. If one fails to establish a logical appeal, then the argument will lack both sense and substance.

For example, refer to the previous example of the politician's speech writer to understand the importance of having a solid logical appeal. What if the writer had *only* included the story about 80-year-old Mary without providing any statistics, data, or concrete plans for how the politician proposed to protect Social Security benefits? Without any factual evidence for the proposed plan, the audience would not have been as likely to accept his proposal, and rightly so.

When evaluating a writer's **logical appeal**, ask the following questions:

Does the writer organize his information clearly?

- Ideas are connected by transition words and phrases
    - Choose the link for **examples of common transitions**(https://tinyurl.com/oftaj5g).
- Ideas have a clear and purposeful order

Does the writer provide evidence to back his claims?

- Specific examples
- Relevant source material

Does the writer use sources and data to back his claims rather than base the argument purely on emotion or opinion?

- Does the writer use concrete facts and figures, statistics, dates/times, specific names/titles, graphs/charts/tables?
- Are the sources that the writer uses credible?
- Where do the sources come from? (Who wrote/published them?)
- When were the sources published?
- Are the sources well-known, respected, and/or peer-reviewed (if applicable) publications?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Logos:

Pay particular attention to numbers, statistics, findings, and quotes used to support an argument. Be critical of the source and do your own investigation of the facts. Remember: What initially looks like a fact may not actually be one. Maybe you've heard or read that half of all marriages in America will end in divorce. It is so often discussed that we assume it must be true. Careful research will show that the original marriage study was flawed, and divorce rates in America have steadily declined since 1985 (Peck, 1993). If there is no scientific evidence, why do we continue to believe it? Part of the reason might be that it supports the common worry of the dissolution of the American family.

Fallacies that misuse appeals to logos or attempt to manipulate the logic of an argument are discussed in the chapter on argument.

Exercise 3: Analyzing Logos

The debate about whether college athletes, namely male football and basketball players, should be paid salaries instead of awarded scholarships is one that regularly comes up when these players are in the throes of their respective athletic seasons, whether that's football bowl games or March Madness. While proponents on each side of this issue have solid reasons, you are going to look at an article that is *against* the idea of college athletes being paid.

Take note: Your aim in this rhetorical exercise is *not* to figure out where you stand on this issue; rather, your aim is to evaluate how effectively the writer establishes a logical appeal to support his position, whether you agree with him or not.

See the article **here**(https://tinyurl.com/y6c9v89t).

Step 1: Before reading the article, take a minute to preview the text.

Step 2: Once you have a general idea of the article, read through it and pay attention to how the author organizes information and uses evidence, annotating or marking these instances when you see them.

Step 3: After reviewing your annotations, evaluate the organization of the article as well as the amount and types of evidence that you have identified by answering the following questions:

- Does the information progress logically throughout the article?
    - Does the writer use transitions to link ideas?
    - Do ideas in the article have a clear sense of order, or do they appear scattered and unfocused?
- Was the amount of evidence in the article proportionate to the size of the article?
    - Was there too little of it, was there just enough, or was there an overload of evidence?
- Were the examples of evidence relevant to the writer's argument?
- Were the examples clearly explained?
- Were sources cited or clearly referenced?
- Were the sources credible? How could you tell?

3.4 The Appeal to Kairos

Literally translated, **Kairos** means the "supreme moment." In this case, it refers to appropriate timing, meaning *when* the writer presents certain parts of her argument as well as the overall timing of the subject matter itself. While not technically part of the Rhetorical Triangle, it is still an important principle for constructing an effective argument. If the writer fails to establish a strong **Kairotic appeal**, then the audience may become polarized, hostile, or may simply just lose interest.

If appropriate timing is not taken into consideration and a writer introduces a sensitive or important point too early or too late in a text, the impact of that point could be lost on the audience. For example, if the writer's audience is strongly opposed to her view, and she begins the argument with a forceful thesis of why she is right and the opposition is wrong, how do you think that audience might respond?

In this instance, the writer may have just lost the ability to make any further appeals to her audience in two ways: first, by polarizing them, and second, by possibly elevating what was at first merely strong opposition to what would now be hostile opposition. A polarized or hostile audience will not be inclined to listen to the writer's argument with an open mind or even to listen at all. On the other hand, the writer could have established a stronger appeal to Kairos by building up to that forceful thesis, maybe by providing some neutral points such as background information or by addressing some of the opposition's views, rather than leading with why she is right and the audience is wrong.

Additionally, if a writer covers a topic or puts forth an argument about a subject that is currently a non-issue or has no relevance for the audience, then the audience will fail to engage because whatever the writer's message happens to be, it won't matter to anyone. For example, if a writer were to put forth the argument that women in the United States should have the right to vote, no one

would care; that is a non-issue because women in the United States already have that right.

When evaluating a writer's **Kairotic appeal**, ask the following questions:

- Where does the writer establish her thesis of the argument in the text? Is it near the beginning, the middle, or the end? Is this placement of the thesis effective? Why or why not?
- Where in the text does the writer provide her strongest points of evidence? Does that location provide the most impact for those points?
- Is the issue that the writer raises relevant at this time, or is it something no one really cares about anymore or needs to know about anymore?

Exercise 4: Analyzing Kairos

In this exercise, you will analyze a visual representation of the appeal to Kairos. On the 26th of February 2015, a photo of a dress was posted to Twitter along with a question as to whether people thought it was one combination of colors versus another. Internet chaos ensued on social media because while some people saw the dress as black and blue, others saw it as white and gold. As the color debate surrounding the dress raged on, an ad agency in South Africa saw an opportunity to raise awareness about a far more serious subject: domestic abuse.

Step 1: Read this **article**(https://tinyurl.com/yctl8o5g)from CNN about how and why the photo of the

dress went viral so that you will be better informed for the next step in this exercise:

Step 2: Watch the **video** (https://youtu.be/SLv0ZRPssTI, transcript **here**)from CNN that explains how, in partnership with The Salvation Army, the South African marketing agency created an ad that went viral.

Step 3: After watching the video, answer the following questions:

- Once the photo of the dress went viral, approximately how long after did the Salvation Army's ad appear? Look at the dates on both the article and the video to get an idea of a time frame.
- How does the ad take advantage of the publicity surrounding the dress?
- Would the ad's overall effectiveness change if it had come out later than it did?
- How late would have been too late to make an impact? Why?

4. Striking a Balance:

Figure 2.3 An Unbalanced Argument

The foundations of rhetoric are interconnected in such a way that a writer needs to establish *all* of the rhetorical appeals to put forth an effective argument. If a writer lacks a pathetic appeal and only tries to establish a logical appeal, the audience will be unable to connect emotionally with the writer and, therefore, will care less about the overall argument. Likewise, if a writer lacks a logical appeal and tries to rely solely on subjective or emotionally driven examples, then the audience will not take the writer seriously because an argument based purely on opinion and emotion cannot hold up without facts and evidence to support it. If a writer lacks either the pathetic or logical appeal, not to mention the kairotic appeal, then the writer's ethical appeal will suffer. All of the appeals must

be sufficiently established for a writer to communicate effectively with his audience.

For a visual example, **watch** (https://tinyurl.com/yct5zryn, transcript **here**) violinist Joshua Bell show how the rhetorical situation determines the effectiveness of all types of communication, even music.

Exercise 5: Rhetorical Analysis

Step 1: Choose one of the articles linked below.

Step 2: Preview your chosen text, and then read and annotate it.

Step 3: Next, using the information and steps outlined in this chapter, identify the rhetorical situation in the text based off of the following components: the communicator, the issue at hand, the purpose, the medium of delivery, and the intended audience.

Step 4: Then, identify and analyze how the writer tries to establish the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, logos, and Kairos throughout that text.

Step 5: Finally, evaluate how effectively you think the writer establishes the rhetorical appeals, and defend your evaluation by noting specific examples that you've annotated.

BBC News, "**Taylor Swift Sexual Assault Case: Why is it significant?**" (https://tinyurl.com/ybopmmdu)

NPR, "**Does Cash Aid Help the Poor–Or Encourage Laziness?**" (https://tinyurl.com/y8ho2fhw)

The Washington Post, Op-Ed, "**Michael Vick doesn't**

belong in the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame"
(https://tinyurl.com/yavxcmjl)

Key Takeaways

Understanding the Rhetorical Situation:

- Identify who the communicator is.
- Identify the issue at hand.
- Identify the communicator's purpose.
- Identify the medium or method of communication.
- Identify who the audience is.

Identifying the Rhetorical Appeals:

- Ethos = the writer's credibility
- Pathos = the writer's emotional appeal to the audience
- Logos = the writer's logical appeal to the audience
- Kairos = appropriate and relevant timing of subject matter
- In sum, effective communication is based on an understanding of the rhetorical situation and on a balance of the rhetorical appeals.

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Figure 2.2, "Brian Williams at the 2011 Time 100 Gala," David Shankbone, Wikimedia, CC-BY 3.0.

Figure 2.3 "An Unbalanced Argument," Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

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33. Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps toward Rhetorical Analysis

LAURA BOLIN CARROLL

First Impressions

Imagine the first day of class in first year composition at your university. The moment your professor walked in the room, you likely began analyzing her and making assumptions about what kind of teacher she will be. You might have noticed what kind of bag she is carrying—a tattered leather satchel? a hot pink polka-dotted backpack? a burgundy brief case? You probably also noticed what she is wearing—trendy slacks and an untucked striped shirt? a skirted suit? jeans and a tee shirt?

It is likely that the above observations were only a few of the observations you made as your professor walked in the room. You might have also noticed her shoes, her jewelry, whether she wears a wedding ring, how her hair is styled, whether she stands tall or slumps, how quickly she walks, or maybe even if her nails are done. If you don't tend to notice any of these things about your professors, you certainly do about the people around you—your roommate, others in your residence hall, students you are assigned to work with in groups, or a prospective date. For most of us, many of the people we encounter in a given day are subject to this kind of quick analysis.

Now as you performed this kind of analysis, you likely didn't walk through each of these questions one by one, write out the answer, and add up the responses to see what kind of person you are

interacting with. Instead, you quickly took in the information and made an informed, and likely somewhat accurate, decision about that person. Over the years, as you have interacted with others, you have built a mental database that you can draw on to make conclusions about what a person's looks tell you about their personality. You have become able to analyze quickly what people are saying about themselves through the way they choose to dress, accessorize, or wear their hair.

We have, of course, heard that you "can't judge a book by its cover," but, in fact, we do it all the time. Daily we find ourselves in situations where we are forced to make snap judgments. Each day we meet different people, encounter unfamiliar situations, and see media that asks us to do, think, buy, and act in all sorts of ways. In fact, our saturation in media and its images is one of the reasons why learning to do rhetorical analysis is so important. The more we know about how to analyze situations and draw informed conclusions, the better we can become about making savvy judgments about the people, situations and media we encounter.

Implications of Rhetorical Analysis

Media is one of the most important places where this kind of analysis needs to happen. Rhetoric—the way we use language and images to persuade—is what makes media work. Think of all the media you see and hear every day: Twitter, television shows, web pages, billboards, text messages, podcasts. Even as you read this chapter, more ways to get those messages to you quickly and in a persuasive manner are being developed. Media is constantly asking you to buy something, act in some way, believe something to be true, or interact with others in a specific manner. Understanding rhetorical messages is essential to help us to become informed consumers, but it also helps evaluate the ethics of messages, how they affect us personally, and how they affect society.

Take, for example, a commercial for men's deodorant that tells you that you'll be irresistible to women if you use their product. This campaign doesn't just ask you to buy the product, though. It also asks you to trust the company's credibility, or ethos, and to believe the messages they send about how men and women interact, about sexuality, and about what constitutes a healthy body. You have to decide whether or not you will choose to buy the product and how you will choose to respond to the messages that the commercial sends.

Or, in another situation, a Facebook group asks you to support health care reform. The rhetoric in this group uses people's stories of their struggles to obtain affordable health care. These stories, which are often heart-wrenching, use emotion to persuade you—also called pathos. You are asked to believe that health care reform is necessary and urgent, and you are asked to act on these beliefs by calling your congresspersons and asking them to support the reforms as well.

Because media rhetoric surrounds us, it is important to understand how rhetoric works. If we refuse to stop and think about how and why it persuades us, we can become mindless consumers who buy into arguments about what makes us value ourselves and what makes us happy. For example, research has shown that only 2% of women consider themselves beautiful ("Campaign"), which has been linked to the way that the fashion industry defines beauty. We are also told by the media that buying more stuff can make us happy, but historical surveys show that US happiness peaked in the 1950s, when people saw as many advertisements in their lifetime as the average American sees in one year (Leonard).

Our worlds are full of these kinds of social influences. As we interact with other people and with media, we are continually creating and interpreting rhetoric. In the same way that you decide how to process, analyze or ignore these messages, you create them. You probably think about what your clothing will communicate as you go to a job interview or get ready for a date. You are also using rhetoric when you try to persuade your parents to send you money

or your friends to see the movie that interests you. When you post to your blog or tweet you are using rhetoric. In fact, according to rhetorician Kenneth Burke, rhetoric is everywhere: "wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion.' Food eaten and digested is not rhetoric. But in the meaning of food there is much rhetoric, the meaning being persuasive enough for the idea of food to be used, like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical device of statesmen" (71–72). In other words, most of our actions are persuasive in nature. What we choose to wear (tennis shoes vs. flip flops), where we shop (Whole Foods Market vs. Wal-Mart), what we eat (organic vs. fast food), or even the way we send information (snail mail vs. text message) can work to persuade others.

Chances are you have grown up learning to interpret and analyze these types of rhetoric. They become so commonplace that we don't realize how often and how quickly we are able to perform this kind of rhetorical analysis. When your teacher walked in on the first day of class, you probably didn't think to yourself, "I think I'll do some rhetorical analysis on her clothing and draw some conclusions about what kind of personality she might have and whether I think I'll like her." And, yet, you probably were able to come up with some conclusions based on the evidence you had.

However, when this same teacher hands you an advertisement, photograph or article and asks you to write a rhetorical analysis of it, you might have been baffled or felt a little overwhelmed. The good news is that many of the analytical processes that you already use to interpret the rhetoric around you are the same ones that you'll use for these assignments.

The Rhetorical Situation, Or Discerning Context

One of the first places to start is context. Rhetorical messages always occur in a specific situation or context. The president's speech might respond to a specific global event, like an economic summit; that's part of the context. You choose your clothing depending on where you are going or what you are doing; that's context. A television commercial comes on during specific programs and at specific points of the day; that's context. A billboard is placed in a specific part of the community; that's context, too.

In an article called "The Rhetorical Situation," Lloyd Bitzer argues that there are three parts to understanding the context of a rhetorical moment: exigence, audience and constraints. Exigence is the circumstance or condition that invites a response; "imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (Bitzer 304). In other words, rhetorical discourse is usually responding to some kind of problem. You can begin to understand a piece's exigence by asking, "What is this rhetoric responding to?" "What might have happened to make the rhetor (the person who creates the rhetoric) respond in this way?"

The exigence can be extremely complex, like the need for a new Supreme Court justice, or it can be much simpler, like receiving an email that asks you where you and your friends should go for your road trip this weekend. Understanding the exigence is important because it helps you begin to discover the purpose of the rhetoric. It helps you understand what the discourse is trying to accomplish.

Another part of the rhetorical context is audience, those who are the (intended or unintended) recipients of the rhetorical message. The audience should be able to respond to the exigence. In other words, the audience should be able to help address the problem. You might be very frustrated with your campus's requirement that all first-year students purchase a meal plan for on-campus dining.

You might even send an email to a good friend back home voicing that frustration. However, if you want to address the exigence of the meal plans, the most appropriate audience would be the person/office on campus that oversees meal plans. Your friend back home cannot solve the problem (though she may be able to offer sympathy or give you some good suggestions), but the person who can change the meal plan requirements is probably on campus. Rhetors make all sorts of choices based on their audience. Audience can determine the type of language used, the formality of the discourse, the medium or delivery of the rhetoric, and even the types of reasons used the make the rhetor's argument. Understanding the audience helps you begin to see and understand the rhetorical moves that the rhetor makes.

The last piece of the rhetorical situation is the constraints. The constraints of the rhetorical situation are those things that have the power to "constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer 306). Constraints have a lot to do with how the rhetoric is presented. Constraints can be "beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives" (Bitzer 306). Constraints limit the way the discourse is delivered or communicated. Constraints may be something as simple as your instructor limiting your proposal to one thousand words, or they may be far more complex like the kinds of language you need to use to persuade a certain community.

So how do you apply this to a piece of rhetoric? Let's say you are flipping through a magazine, and you come across an advertisement that has a large headline that reads "Why Some People Say 'D'OH' When You Say 'Homer'" ("Why"). This ad is an Ad Council public service announcement (PSA) to promote arts education and is sponsored by Americans for the Arts and NAMM, the trade association of the international music products industry.

Since you want to understand more about what this ad means and what it wants you to believe or do, you begin to think about the rhetorical situation. You first might ask, "what is the ad responding to? What problem does it hope to address?" That's the exigence. In

this case, the exigence is the cutting of arts funding and children's lack of exposure to the arts. According to the Ad Council's website, "the average kid is provided insufficient time to learn and experience the arts. This PSA campaign was created to increase involvement in championing arts education both in and out of school" ("Arts"). The PSA is responding directly to the fact that kids are not getting enough arts education.

Then you might begin to think about to whom the Ad Council targeted the ad. Unless you're a parent, you are probably not the primary audience. If you continued reading the text of the ad, you'd notice that there is information to persuade parents that the arts are helpful to their children and to let them know how to help their children become more involved with the arts. The ad tells parents that "the experience will for sure do more than entertain them. It'll build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And that's reason enough to make a parent say, 'D'oh!,' For Ten Simple Ways to instill art in your kids' lives visit AmericansForTheArts.org" ("Why"). Throughout the text of the ad, parents are told both what to believe about arts education and how to act in response to the belief.

There also might be a secondary audience for this ad—people who are not the main audience of the ad but might also be able to respond to the exigence. For example, philanthropists who could raise money for arts education or legislators who might pass laws for arts funding or to require arts education in public schools could also be intended audiences for this ad.

Finally, you might want to think about the constraints or the limitations on the ad. Sometimes these are harder to get at, but we can guess a few things. One constraint might be the cost of the ad. Different magazines charge differently for ad space as well as placement within the magazine, so the Ad Council could have been constrained by how much money they wanted to spend to circulate the ad. The ad is also only one page long, so there might have been a limitation on the amount of space for the ad. Finally, on the Ad Council's webpage, they list the requirements for organizations

seeking the funding and support of the Ad Council. There are twelve criteria, but here are a few:

> 1. The sponsor organization must be a private non-profit 501(c)3 organization, private foundation, government agency or coalition of such groups.
> 2. The issue must address the Ad Council's focus on Health & Safety, Education, or Community. Applications which benefit children are viewed with favor—as part of the Ad Council's Commitment to Children.
> 3. The issue must offer a solution through an individual action.
> 4. The effort must be national in scope, so that the message has relevance to media audiences in communities throughout the nation. ("Become")

Each of these criteria helps to understand the limitations on both who can participate as rhetor and what can be said.

The exigence, audience and constraints are only one way to understand the context of a piece of rhetoric, and, of course, there are other ways to get at context. Some rhetoricians look at subject, purpose, audience and occasion. Others might look at the "rhetorical triangle" of writer, reader, and purpose.

An analysis using the rhetorical triangle would ask similar questions about audience as one using the rhetorical situation, but it would also ask questions about the writer and the purpose of the document. Asking questions about the writer helps the reader determine whether she or he is credible and knowledgeable. For example, the Ad Council has been creating public service announcements since 1942 ("Loose Lips Sink Ships," anyone?) and is a non-profit agency. They also document their credibility by showing the impact of their campaigns in several ways: "Destruction of our forests by wildfires has been reduced from 22 million acres to less than 8.4 million acres per year, since our Forest Fire Prevention campaign began" and "6,000 Children were paired with a mentor in just the first 18 months of our mentoring campaign" ("About").

Based on this information, we can assume that the Ad Council is a credible rhetor, and whether or not we agree with the rhetoric they produce, we can probably assume it contains reliable information. Asking questions about the next part of the rhetorical triangle, the purpose of a piece of rhetoric, helps you understand what the rhetor is trying to achieve through the discourse. We can discern the purpose by asking questions like "what does the rhetor want me to believe after seeing this message?" or "what does the rhetor want me to do?" In some ways, the purpose takes the exigence to the next step. If the exigence frames the problem, the purpose frames the response to that problem.

The rhetorical situation and rhetorical triangle are two ways to begin to understand how the rhetoric functions within the context you find it. The key idea is to understand that no rhetorical performance takes place in a vacuum. One of the first steps to understanding a piece of rhetoric is to look at the context in which it takes place. Whatever terminology you (or your instructor) choose, it is a good idea to start by locating your analysis within a rhetorical situation.

The Heart of the Matter—The Argument

The rhetorical situation is just the beginning of your analysis, though. What you really want to understand is the argument—what the rhetor wants you to believe or do and how he or she goes about that persuasion. Effective argumentation has been talked about for centuries. In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle was teaching the men of Athens how to persuade different kinds of audiences in different kinds of rhetorical situations. Aristotle articulated three "artistic appeals" that a rhetor could draw on to make a case—logos, pathos, and ethos.

Logos is commonly defined as argument from reason, and it usually appeals to an audience's intellectual side. As audiences we

want to know the "facts of the matter," and logos helps present these—statistics, data, and logical statements. For example, on our Homer ad for the arts, the text tells parents that the arts will "build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science" ("Why"). You might notice that there aren't numbers or charts here, but giving this information appeals to the audience's intellectual side.

That audience can see a continuation of the argument on the Ad Council's webpage, and again much of the argument appeals to logos and draws on extensive research that shows that the arts do these things:

- Allow kids to express themselves creatively and bolster their self-confidence.
- Teach kids to be more tolerant and open.
- Improve kids' overall academic performance.
- Show that kids actively engaged in arts education are likely to have higher SAT scores than those with little to no arts involvement.
- Develop skills needed by the 21st century workforce: critical thinking, creative problem solving, effective communication, teamwork and more.
- Keep students engaged in school and less likely to drop out. ("Arts")

Each bullet above is meant to intellectually persuade parents that they need to be more intentional in providing arts education for their children.

Few of us are persuaded only with our mind, though. Even if we intellectually agree with something, it is difficult to get us to act unless we are also persuaded in our heart. This kind of appeal to emotion is called pathos. Pathetic appeals (as rhetoric that draws

on pathos is called) used alone without logos and ethos can come across as emotionally manipulative or overly sentimental, but are very powerful when used in conjunction with the other two appeals.

Emotional appeals can come in many forms—an anecdote or narrative, an image such as a photograph, or even humor. For example, on their web campaign, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) uses an image of a baby chick and of Ronald McDonald wielding a knife to draw attention to their Chicken McCruely UnHappy Meal. These images are meant to evoke an emotional response in the viewer and, along with a logos appeal with the statistics about how cruelly chickens are treated, persuade the viewer to boycott McDonalds.

Pathos can also be a very effective appeal if the rhetor has to persuade the audience in a very short amount of time, which is why it is used heavily in print advertisements, billboards, or television commercials. An investment company will fill a 30-second commercial with images of families and couples enjoying each other, seeming happy, and surrounded by wealth to persuade you to do business with them. The 30-second time spot does not allow them to give the 15-year growth of each of their funds, and pathetic appeals will often hold our interest much longer than intellectual appeals.

The ad promoting the importance of art uses humor to appeal to the audience's emotional side. By comparing the epic poet Homer to Homer Simpson and his classic "d'oh!" the ad uses humor to draw people into their argument about the arts. The humor continues as they ask parents if their kids know the difference between the Homers, "The only Homer some kids know is the one who can't write his own last name" ("Why"). The ad also appeals to emotion through its language use (diction), describing Homer as "one very ancient dude," and describing The Odyssey as "the sequel" to The Iliad. In this case, the humor of the ad, which occurs in the first few lines, is meant to draw the reader in and help them become interested in the argument before the ad gets to the logos, which is in the last few lines of the ad.

The humor also makes the organization seem real and approachable, contributing to the ethos. The humor might lead you to think that Americans for the Arts is not a stuffy bunch of suits, but an organization you can relate to or one that has a realistic understanding of the world. Ethos refers to the credibility of the rhetor—which can be a person or an organization. A rhetor can develop credibility in many ways. The tone of the writing and whether that tone is appropriate for the context helps build a writer's ethos, as does the accuracy of the information or the visual presentation of the rhetoric.

In the Homer ad, the ethos is built in several ways. The simple, humorous and engaging language, such as "Greek Gods. Achilles Heel. Trojan Horse. All of these icons are brought to us by one very ancient dude—Homer. In The Iliad and its sequel, The Odyssey, he presented Greek mythology in everyday language" ("Why") draws the audience in and helps the tone of the ad seem very approachable. Also, the knowledge of Greek mythology and the information about how the arts help children—which also contribute to the logos appeal—make the ad seem credible and authoritative. However, the fact that the ad does not use too many statistics or overly technical language also contributes to the ethos of the ad because often sounding too intellectual can come across as pompous or stuffy.

Aristotle's artistic appeals are not the only way to understand the argument of rhetoric. You might choose to look at the claim or the unstated assumptions of a piece; someone else might consider the visual appeal of the rhetoric, like the font, page layout, types of paper, or images; another person might focus on the language use and the specific word choice and sentence structure of a piece. Logos, pathos, and ethos can provide a nice framework for analysis, but there are numerous ways to understand how a piece of rhetoric persuades (or fails to persuade).

Looking at the context and components of a piece of rhetoric often isn't enough, though, because it is important to draw conclusions about the rhetoric—does it successfully respond to the

exigence? Is it an ethical approach? Is it persuasive? These kinds of questions let you begin to create your own claims, your own rhetoric, as you take a stand on what other people say, do, or write.

Beginning to Analyze

Once you have established the context for the rhetoric you are analyzing, you can begin to think about how well it fits into that context. You've probably been in a situation where you arrived way underdressed for an occasion. You thought that the dinner was just a casual get together with friends; it turned out to be a far more formal affair, and you felt very out of place. There are also times when discourse fails to respond to the situation well—it doesn't fit. On the other hand, successful discourses often respond very well to the context. They address the problem, consider the audience's needs, provide accurate information, and have a compelling claim. One of the reasons you work to determine the rhetorical situation for a piece of discourse is to consider whether it works within that context. You can begin this process by asking questions like:

- Does the rhetoric address the problem it claims to address?
- Is the rhetoric targeted at an audience who has the power tomake change?
- Are the appeals appropriate to the audience?
- Does the rhetor give enough information to make an informeddecision?
- Does the rhetoric attempt to manipulate in any way (by givingincomplete/inaccurate information or abusing the audience's emotions)?
- What other sub-claims do you have to accept to understand the rhetor's main claim? (For example, in order to accept the Ad Council's claim that the arts boost math and science scores, you first have to value the boosting of those scores.)

- What possible negative effects might come from this rhetoric?

Rhetorical analysis asks how discourse functions in the setting in which it is found. In the same way that a commercial for denture cream seems very out of place when aired during a reality television show aimed at teenagers, rhetoric that does not respond well to its context often fails to persuade. In order to perform analysis, you must understand the context and then you must carefully study the ways that the discourse does and does not respond appropriately to that context.

The bottom line is that the same basic principles apply when you look at any piece of rhetoric (your instructor's clothing, an advertisement, the president's speech): you need to consider the context and the argument. As you begin to analyze rhetoric, there are lots of different types of rhetoric you might encounter in a college classroom, such as

- Political cartoon
- Wikipedia entry
- Scholarly article
- Bar Graph
- Op-Ed piece in the newspaper
- Speech
- YouTube video
- Book chapter
- Photograph
- PowerPoint Presentation

All of the above types of discourse try to persuade you. They may ask you to accept a certain kind of knowledge as valid, they may ask you to believe a certain way, or they may ask you to act. It is important to understand what a piece of rhetoric is asking of you, how it tries to persuade you, and whether that persuasion fits within the context you encounter it in. Rhetorical analysis helps you answer those questions.

Implications of Rhetorical Analysis, Or Why Do This Stuff Anyway?

So you might be wondering if you know how to do this analysis already—you can tell what kind of person someone is by their clothing, or what a commercial wants you to buy without carefully listening to it—why do you need to know how to do more formal analysis? How does this matter outside a college classroom?

Well, first of all, much of the reading and learning in college requires some level of rhetorical analysis: as you read a textbook chapter to prepare for a quiz, it is helpful to be able to distill the main points quickly; when you read a journal article for a research paper, it is necessary to understand the scholar's thesis; when you watch a video in class, it is useful to be able to understand how the creator is trying to persuade you. But college is not the only place where an understanding of how rhetoric works is important. You will find yourself in many situations—from boardrooms to your children's classrooms or churches to city council meetings where you need to understand the heart of the arguments being presented.

One final example: in November 2000, Campbell's Soup Company launched a campaign to show that many of their soups were low in calories and showed pre-pubescent girls refusing to eat because they were "watching their weight." A very small organization called Dads and Daughters, a group that fights advertising that targets girls with negative body images, contacted Campbell's explaining the problems they saw in an ad that encouraged young girls to be self-conscious about their weight, and asked Campbell's to pull the ad. A few days later, Campbell's Vice President for Marketing and Corporate Communications called. One of the dads says, "the Vice President acknowledged he had received their letter, reviewed the ad again, saw their point, and was pulling the ad," responding to a "couple of guys writing a letter" ("Media"). Individuals who

understand rhetorical analysis and act to make change can have a tremendous influence on their world.

Exercises

Discussion

1. What are examples of rhetoric that you see or hear on a daily basis?
2. What are some ways that you create rhetoric? What kinds of messages are you trying to communicate?
3. What is an example of a rhetorical situation that you have found yourself in? Discuss exigence, audience, and constraints.

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34. Understanding Visual Rhetoric

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Overview

Visuals can dramatically impact our understanding of a rhetorical situation. In a writing class, students do not always think that they will need to be attentive to visuals, but visual information can be a critical component to understanding and analyzing the rhetorical impacts of a multimodal text. This chapter gives examples of what visual rhetoric looks like in everyday situations, unpacking how seemingly mundane images like a food picture on social media or a menu at a restaurant, can have a persuasive impact on the viewer. The chapter then offers students some terms to use when describing visuals in a variety of situations.

Introduction

It's Friday night and you're hungry. So, you corral some friends and you all decide that you'd like to go out to eat somewhere new. You hop online to explore your options, and, in the process, you find a wealth of information from menus and visitor reviews to hours and locations. But there's one factor that has an especially strong influence on your choice: the pictures of the food.

Figure 1. A cheeseburger is held in a close-up shot. Photo by Jenae Cohn.

Figure 2. A hamburger and fries meal at Shake Shack in Palo Alto, California. Photo by Jenae Cohn.

You check out a review page for a hamburger joint and find yourself drooling over a close-up shot of a juicy burger with a slice of cheese oozing over the edge (see figure 1). You click to the next shot and see a cascade of golden french fries on a tray with an ombre-tinted iced tea and lemonade (see figure 2). You click one more time and find yet another delectable shot: a frosty milkshake with a mountain of whipped cream on top. You're feeling increasingly convinced that this restaurant is where you'll suggest that you and your friends go out to eat.

You decide to click through to see one more picture, expecting to see yet another culinary delight (see figure 3). But this next photo surprises you: it's a picture of someone's tray of food, but it's dimly lit and a little hard to tell what's there. The hamburger looks squished and flat, the meat greasy and paltry. The french fries curled up next to the burger look a bit dried out. There's a mysterious puddle of sauce in a bowl next to the plate burger, and it's not totally clear what's in it. The meal suddenly doesn't look so appetizing after all.

Figure 3. A poorly lit, squished hamburger and fries. Photo by Jenae Cohn.

You find yourself confused. All of these pictures are supposedly of food at the same restaurant, but the pictures look so different from each other. Knowing that the images may not accurately reflect the reality of the restaurant experience, you feel angry and misled: how can you possibly know which photos capture the "real" experience at the restaurant? Why trust any photos of restaurant food at all?

The fact of the matter is that you can't know *exactly* what your restauranting experience will be like when you walk in the door of a new place. But the images clearly had a persuasive impact on you as a decision-maker: the contrast between the appetizing images and the unappetizing photos made you question the quality and consistency of the restaurant's food, a contrast that made you wonder whether the restaurant would be the kind of place where you'd like to visit.

The point here is those photos of the food you found at the restaurant impacted your decision-making, which makes them a perfect example of visual rhetoric in action. Visual rhetoric refers to any communicative moment where visuals (photographs, illustrations, cartoons, maps, diagrams, etc.) contribute to making

meaning and displaying information. You're in a writing class right now (which is probably why you're reading this essay and wondering what hamburgers have to do with anything), and you may think of writing mostly as words on the page. However, as more writers publish and distribute their work online, the more readers expect to find that information may be communicated in multiple modes, from text to visuals and audio. As writing and rhetoric scholar Carolyn Handa puts it,

> rhetoric's association with the written word is arbitrary, a by-product of print culture rather than the epistemological limits of rhetoric itself. We use rhetoric to help us think more clearly, write more elegantly, design more logically. Rhetoric works both to scaffold our ideas for clearer understanding and to structure our critical examinations of both visual and verbal objects. (2)

What Handa means by "the epistemological limits of rhetoric itself" (and yes, that is a mouthful!) is that, when we think of making meaning, building arguments, and reaching our target audiences, we are not limited to words as a tool. In fact, if we limit ourselves to words in our arguments, we may not successfully reach our audiences at all. Some audiences need visuals to think through an idea, and using graphs and diagrams can express some ideas *more* clearly than text can. So, we have to take visuals into account as part of understanding communication.

You may be thinking that this all sounds good, but what about images that are just pretty for the sake of being pretty? Well, those exist too, but we call those "art." A picture of a hamburger framed in an art museum does not exist to market hamburgers (though it might make you hungry!). However, a picture of a hamburger on an Instagram feed for a particular restaurant exists as a way to encourage visitors to come and dine at the restaurant. As composition scholar and teacher Kristen Welch describes it: "visual rhetoric is a focus on the practical, relevant, and functional as opposed to an aesthetic analysis or use of visual elements for

beauty" (256). It is important to recognize when a visual exists to help us appreciate beauty (and we may even appreciate the beauty of a picture of a hamburger on an Instagram feed), but the context in which we see visuals matters an awful lot in terms of how we analyze and understand their impacts on us as viewers.

Our example of finding food photos from a restaurant online exemplifies just how accessible visual rhetoric really is in our everyday lives. Clearly, the lighting, composition, and angle of the image clearly makes a big difference in our reaction to the image and potentially our willingness to take action and respond to the image (either by going to the restaurant or not). After reading through the opening story, you may have thought of lots of other ways that you encounter other pictures of food online. On social media, for example, a lot of users post images of food they've cooked or eaten as a way to share eating experiences. Because of how consumer interests are driven by the platforms they use to access information, visuals are more important than ever for people to make decisions or become attracted to visiting particular spaces. But visual rhetoric is not just about persuading someone to like something or not. Visual rhetoric can also be used to help people understand a concept, break down an idea, or access important pieces of information.

We'll explore a few more examples of what visual rhetoric can look like in a few other situations where the visuals may not just be persuasive, but they may offer necessary guidance or instruction for the viewer. After that, this chapter will offer you some advice on how you might analyze visuals in your future writing classes so that you, too, can interpret the visuals you encounter in rhetorical situations.

Why Do Visuals Matter?

Let's think back to the restaurant example one more time. You've

picked a restaurant for your Friday night dinner and now you're with your friends and are seated at the dining table. A waiter hands you a menu and guess what? You're seeing yet another example of visual rhetoric in action. This particular menu comes from a real restaurant, called Oren's Hummus, which has locations around the San Francisco Bay Area in California (see figure 4).

Figure 4. An image of a menu for Oren's Hummus with three columns containing various menu items. Menu image courtesy of Mistie Cohen.

This restaurant menu doesn't have pictures on it, but it makes visual choices that may impact which food items you decide to order. For example, separating certain food items under headers, like "Hummus Bowls" and "Grilled Entrees" gives you some quick visual information about what items you can expect to find in those sections. Even more noticeably, the section titled "Dips & Sides" is separated from the other menu items by a green box. While the words "Dips & Sides" may have helped us understand that the items in that section would be smaller-sized than the menu items outside the green box, the use of the green box is a rhetorical tool; it makes it really obvious to the restaurant goer that if they order an item from the Dips & Sides section, it's going to be smaller than the items that are not inside the green box.

Think about this particular restaurant's context even more: the restaurant advertises its "hummus," a Mediterranean dip made out of garbanzo beans, in its name, but for many visitors, they may not have experienced eating hummus in the way that this restaurant serves it. For many diners, they may have experienced hummus as a dip or side rather than as a main course. However, because "Hummus Bowls" appear on the menu separately from the Dips & Sides, it's clear that the hummus bowls can actually be eaten as a main dish rather than as a side dish. This is a new situation, a subversion of expectations, for many restaurant-goers, so the menu has to do some visual work to help the visitor understand what to expect from the food they order.

Do you see how many words it took me to explain how the Dips & Sides section differs from the other menu sections? If you were a hungry diner, would you want to take the time to listen to all of that or read that long explanation? Probably not. That's why the document design on the menu is so important: it aligns our expectations quickly, simply, and clearly. Document design is yet another example of visual rhetoric in action, as it persuades us to make particular choices (in this case, about what we order). To learn more about components of document design in particular, you may want to look to another essay in the *Writing Spaces* series, called

"Beyond Black on White: Document Design and Formatting in the Writing Classroom" by Michael J. Klein and Kristi L. Shackleford. They make the important case that, "Good document design integrates the words on the page with appropriate imagery to fully illustrate your meaning," a sentiment that reflects exactly what we saw happen with the menu (333).

The menu also includes some symbols to indicate which menu items may adhere to particular dietary needs, a piece of visual information that may be critical to those with allergies or sensitivities. Next to the descriptions of particular menu items, the letters "gf" and "v" indicate which items on the menu are "gluten free" (items that don't contain binding proteins found in wheat and other grains) or "vegan" (items that don't contain animal products, like meat or dairy); a key for these restrictions is in the bottom right-hand corner of the menu for visitors to reference if they are seeking out those indications.

Some menus will indicate these dietary restrictions using visual symbols instead; for example, other menus may include a green leaf icon next to particular items to indicate that the menu item is vegetarian or a brown-colored "G" inside a circle often indicates that the menu item is gluten-free. While you, as a reader, may have some critiques of how clearly the Oren's Hummus menu makes these dietary restrictions clear, the point is that the visual indicators are there to guide visitors in critical ways.

You may also notice that, on the menu, the two biggest visual items are the restaurant's logo and slogan ("Rip, Scoop, Eat!") and the inclusion of "Gluten Free Pita" on its menu. These largest items show the restaurant's priorities: by making its slogan and name large, the menu reminds you of its branding, while also offering you an instruction for enjoying its signature dishes: to rip a piece of pita, scoop the pita into dip, and eat it! Making the words "Gluten Free Pita" among the largest on the menu also suggests that the restaurant aims to reach a diversity of diners, even those who may be sensitive to or avoiding eating wheat-based products. The restaurant's priorities are clear: to educate unfamiliar hummus-

eaters with the process and experience of eating hummus while also convincing diners that, regardless of their dietary restrictions, there will likely be something at the restaurant that the diner will enjoy.

The point of all this analysis of the Oren's Hummus menu is that choices in document text, color, image, and spacing matter in order to help you make choices, big and small. As you can see, visuals play a tremendous role in a) how we make decisions, b) how we receive instructions, and c) how we understand information. But let's get a little bit more fine-grained: what elements of visual design exactly can help make certain ideas clearer than others? How do we name and define the persuasive elements of a visual? Let's look to some elements of visual design to answer those questions.

Elements of Visual Design: Line, Color, Shape, Size, Space, Value, Texture

The elements of visual design are one way to help us understand more clearly why a visual has a particular kind of effect on its viewer. The elements of visual design may not necessarily help us understand purpose or intent, but they can help us break down different component parts of images so that we can start to puzzle out what an image might do for us as viewers and readers. We, naturally, should understand these elements in their particular contexts, and the impacts of these elements will likely differ depending on where and how we're viewing a particular image. With that said, beginning to name what we notice is one important step to gathering more information about images so that we can articulate their meaning more clearly.

Here are six elements of visual design you may want to consider in order to understand how an image is communicating a particular idea.

Line

Lines are visual markers that are often used to divide different sections of an image or document into multiple parts. Lines can create order in something disorderly, offering the eyes a sense of where to go or how to differentiate between different elements. Many artists and graphic designers often rely on grids of lines to help them determine where to place particular elements in a picture or a graphic to ensure that the viewer can understand where to focus their attention or where to differentiate one piece of information from another (see figure 5).

Figure 5. The edge of an orange fence casts a shadow on the sidewalk. Image is titled "lines" by Charlotte Kinzie (www.flickr.com/photos/ckinzie/252835206) and is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about line in the following ways:

- What role is the line playing in helping me understand what to emphasize? What to deemphasize?
- What role is the line playing in connecting one part of the image with the other? What relationships between the parts of the image are at play?
- What kind of pattern do I see in this image or diagram? How does the pattern help shape my understanding of the image, graph, or shape?

Color

Color can help evoke emotions in the viewer while also helping the viewer distinguish what's important or what should be emphasized. In fact, many designers use resources like color wheels to help them determine what kinds of color combinations complement each other and what kinds of color combinations offer contrast (see figure 6). It is generally agreed upon that particular colors evoke different emotions than others; for example, colors like orange and red tend to convey warmth or passion while colors like blue and purple tend to convey coolness or calm.

However, some colors have deep cultural associations. For example, in China, the color red tends to signify good luck, joy, and happiness; that's why gifts given at Chinese New Year's tend to be in red envelopes and also why wedding dresses in China are often red-colored. In Western cultures, on the other hand, red can more often signify danger or caution. In the United States, we may think of red as the color for a stop sign, for example.

Lots of resources online exist to help designers keep particular cultural associations with color in mind, especially in sensitive situations! For example, while wearing black to a funeral in the United States would be conventional and respectful, it would actually be considered quite odd to wear black to a funeral in

Cambodia, where the color white is much more often worn for events of mourning.

You may not be able to account for all of the different situations where colors may signify different things to different viewers, but as a reader and composer, you will want to be attentive to how and where color is used, even if the possibilities for interpretation may vary.

Figure 6. An abstract pattern of rectangles in a variety of muted earth tones, ranging from oranges to greens, blues, and browns. Image is titled "color swatches" by Nancy Muller (www.flickr.com/photos/kissabug/2469838932) and is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about color in the following ways:

- What is color (or the lack of color if the visual is black-and-white) emphasizing here? What is de-emphasized?
- Given my understanding of color, what emotions does the color evoke for me? What do the colors in the image remind me of?

- How might this visual change if the color scheme was inverted? How would the impact on the viewer be altered?

Shape

All visuals contain elements that take on different *shapes* (see figure 7). We probably learned about shapes at some point when we were children, especially if we played with toy blocks. Have you ever seen toy blocks in the shapes of squares, triangles, and circles? If so, congratulations, you've had exposure to the three basic shape types that exist in the world!

Many other shapes build off of these three fundamental shape types. For example, in the natural world, we may easily recognize shapes like clouds, trees, and water droplets. Similarly, certain man-made objects take on particular meanings through their shapes alone. For example, lightbulbs are shapes that typically symbolize new or "bright" ideas, while the shape of a rocket or airplane often signifies innovation or the accomplishment of a goal.

Shapes that come from the real world—like the clouds and trees or the light bulbs and rocket ships—tend to be culturally situated in the same way that colors can have different cultural associations. Yet as readers of visuals, we can analyze the roles that shapes play based on our own understanding of the audience's needs and purposes when accessing the visual.

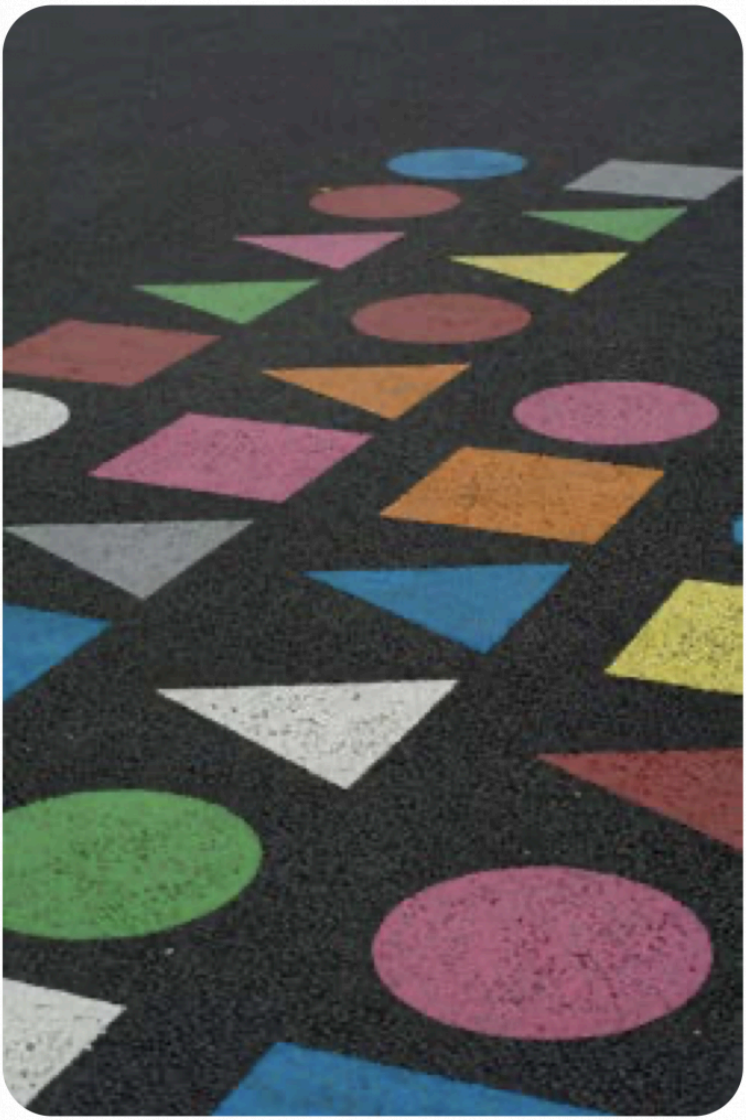

Figure 7. A pattern of circles, squares, and triangles in bright colors contrasted on an asphalt surface. Image is titled "DSC_1384" by Michael Poitrenaud (www. flickr.com/photos/michel_poitrenaud/10595502904) and is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about shapes in the following ways:

- What does this shape typically signify? Where have I seen this kind of shape before?
- Given my understanding of this shape, what emotions does the shape evoke for me?
- What might the shape be drawing attention to?

Size

In visuals, different elements may be large while other elements may be small. Typically, the elements that are larger sizes than other elements are of greater importance than the elements that are smaller sizes. But larger things are not always more valuable; the other elements in the visual may visually draw attention to smaller-sized items so that we don't lose sight of the smaller parts of the visual entirely. Large images next to small images may also be used to help us compare two parts so that we can see how they are related to each other (see figure 8).

Figure 8. A row of three giraffes, ranging from a small giraffe to a larger one, line up outside of a doorway. Image is titled "Giraffes" by Smallbrainfield (www. flickr.com/photos/smallbrainfield/3378461407) and is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about size in the following ways:

- Which elements in the visual are larger than the other elements?
- How do the sizes of different elements in the visual impact your understanding of what's in the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing the different sizes in the visual? Do any of the sizes of the elements surprise you? Why or why not?

Space

In between or around the elements in a particular visual, there is always some empty space. Some designers call this "white space" or "neutral space." Space is critical to help distinguish between the different elements in a visual. Without space, particular elements in the visual may be hard to distinguish or may have the effect that the visual is "busy" and, therefore, hard to read and understand.

Even in a document that is mostly text, space signifies meaning. For example, when you split paragraphs into their individual units, the space before and after the paragraph indicates that one thought is about to begin while another thought ends. Similarly, in other kinds of visuals, space might help a certain element stand out from other parts or it might help you understand where one part of the image begins and another part ends (see figure 9).

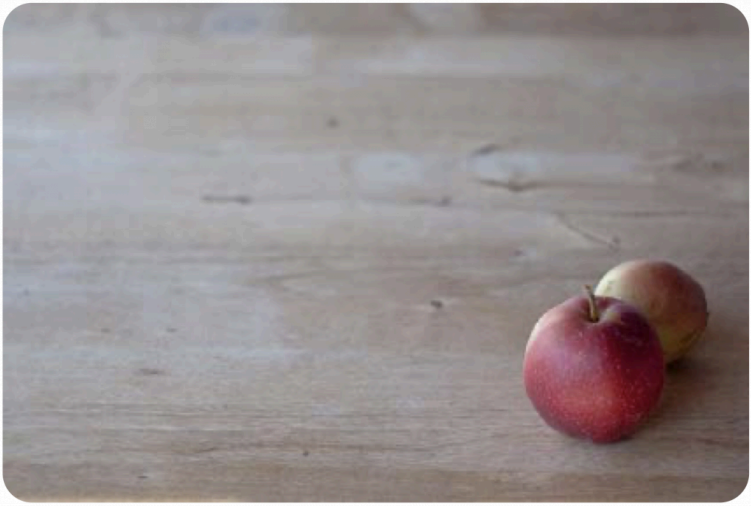

Figure 9. Two red apples are clustered in one corner of a wooden table, drawing attention to the fruit in an open space. Image is titled "apples" by Paul Bausch (www.flickr.com/photos/pb/6129499766/) and is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about space in the following ways:

- How much "white space" or "neutral space" is there in the visual? Is this space evenly distributed or are the spaces uneven?
- What effect does the space in this visual have? How does the space break up or distinguish different elements of the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing the space in the visual?

Value

Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a particular element in a visual. For example, think of a visual that may use different shades of the color blue; the elements that are darker blue than the lighter blue elements convey that the darker blue elements have greater *value* than the lighter blue elements. Just as something that is larger in size may signify greater importance than something that is smaller in size, something that is darker in color tends to signify greater value than something that is lighter in color.

Value is a comparative function by default; a dark color by itself may not mean anything unless a lighter color is present by comparison. Similarly, a "dark" visual may not necessarily have greater value than a "light" visual; however, if there are both dark and light elements in a particular visual, those shades signify differing levels of importance or attention in the visual itself. Sometimes, the dark elements may be meant to obscure information and make the lighter elements more visible. At other times, darker shades of a particular color may draw more attention to them than lighter shades of a color (see figure 10).

Figure 10. Light illuminates a dirt pathway in a forest; the trees around the pathway are shaded. Image is titled "West Highland Way" by tomsflickrfotos2 (flickr. com/photos/tomsflickrfotos2/453754005/) and is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about value in the following ways:

- How do different values create importance? Depth? What is emphasized?
- What effect does value in this visual have? How does value break up or distinguish different elements of the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing different values of visual depth in this visual?

Texture

We may think of texture primarily from a tactile perspective initially. When we touch different objects, we tend to notice texture right

away: silk tend to be smooth to the touch while burlap tends to be rough and bumpy. But we can look at a picture and detect different surfaces just by the look of it too, and the conveyance of those textures may also impact our orientation and understanding of what the image conveys. For example, a visual that includes lots of tiny dots may convey a bumpy texture while a visual that includes lots of wavy lines and wavy images may convey a smoother or more "watery" texture. Textures might be used to evoke particular sensations in the viewer, but they may also be used to distinguish one visual element from another (see figure 11).

Figure 11. A craggy-textured rock is on the rippled sandy shore of a beach. Image is titled "Beach on the Chang Jiang (Yangtze)" by Eul Mulot (https://www.flickr. com/photos/mulot/3315444069) and is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about texture in the following ways:

- What kinds of textures do I see in this visual? Are textures

clearly implied or does the visual just include one kind of texture?
- What effect does texture (or the lack of texture) have on understanding what I should focus on in this image? How does texture break up or distinguish different elements of the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing different textures in this visual?

Concluding Thoughts

Once we start noticing the role that visuals play all around us, we gain a greater awareness of the range of strategies that communicators use to get our attention. This chapter is just a start in helping you to recognize some examples of visual rhetoric and the roles that visuals can play to help make meaning and persuade others. There is a lot more to learn about designing and making your own visuals. But just as reading will help you become a better writer, viewing and training your eye to recognize what's happening in images will help you to become a better designer.

As you look ahead to thinking capaciously about the strategies you might use to employ images and other media in your writing, bear in mind that not all of your readers will have equal access to all of the communicative strategies you're employing. For visuals in particular, you may have readers who are visually impaired or blind and may not be able to understand or recognize the role that your images are playing in your text. However, as a writer, there are some strategies you can use to help your reader appreciate your use of visuals even if they are not able to see images in the same way that you can. Captions (as you saw included in this chapter) and alternative text (for Web-based images) are ways that you, as a writer, can describe what's happening in a picture so that even if a reader cannot see the image, they can get a sense of what the

picture might look like and what effect the picture is having on the document itself.

A picture is often worth a thousand words because it implies so much and can give us a lot of information quickly. Seeing may not always be believing, but visual rhetoric can be a pretty powerful way to help people understand an idea differently than they may have otherwise.

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Teacher Resources for Understanding Visual Rhetoric by Jenae Cohn

Overview and Teaching Strategies

This essay is intended as an overview of what visual rhetoric is and how it functions alongside other rhetorical strategies that students may encounter in their composition courses. This essay could work well in a unit introducing students to definitions of "rhetoric" so that students can continue to complicate their understanding of rhetoric beyond alphabetic text. This chapter may also be useful to introduce a unit on multimodal composition, especially when students are starting to look at examples of model multimodal texts and understanding the role that visuals may play in those texts. Students may have varying degrees of abilities to describe or name the effects that visuals may have on an audience, and this reading is intended to help students articulate the rhetorical work that visuals do while also giving them some vocabulary to name the basic elements of a visual. This chapter focuses primarily on the analysis of visuals rather than on the composition of visuals, so bear in mind that this chapter does not include tool suggestions or any "how-to" tips on creating visuals. This chapter also does not cover best practices on attributing images appropriately (via Creative Commons licensing, for example) though a conversation around visual rhetoric for multimodal composing should orient students to these best practices so that students understand how to use and incorporate images legally and ethically into their work.

In this chapter, I bring in examples that are accessible to a diverse student populace. That said, it may be worth engaging in class conversation about the ways in which certain visuals may have different effects on different audiences, as particular pieces of iconography or certain photographs may be understood differently

by audiences with various cultural backgrounds or experiences. When selecting images for students to choose or analyze, bringing in historical or cultural context is useful since that information may shape students' abilities to understand the rhetorical purpose and situation for particular visuals.

Here I offer several in-class activities that I regularly use in line with the conversations offered in the textbook chapter to supplement what the chapter introduces.

Questions

1. In the first section of this essay, you experienced the story of choosing a restaurant to dine out at with your friends. In this story, the different kinds of pictures shaped the decision made. When have you made a decision based on pictures or visuals? How did the pictures or visuals affect your decision exactly?
2. In the discussion of the menu from Oren's Hummus, it's clear that the organization and design of the information may impact how a diner might decide what to eat. If you had the opportunity to re-design the menu at Oren's, what decisions would you make? Why would you make those decisions?
3. There are six elements of visual design named in this chapter. Which of these elements were new to you? Which were ones you had encountered before? Individually or in a small group, take a look

at either a picture of a poster from the Works Progress Administration (www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/wpapos/) OR find a photograph from the Associated Press images database (www.apimages.com/) and see if you and your group members can identify the elements of design in one or two of the historical posters or photographs. Use the guiding questions in the "Elements of Visual Design" section of the chapter to help guide your understanding of the images.

Activities

The following are four class activities that can help support students in their development of understanding and interpreting visual rhetoric.

Three Keywords.

Pick an image, photograph, or data visualization for the

whole class to look at together. You may want to pick something that is related to a topic that the class has been discussing or perhaps something that could act as a source for an upcoming research assignment that the students will conduct. Project or share the visual in a shared space and ask each student to come up with three keywords that they would use to describe the image. Students may submit their three keywords to a polling platform (like PollEverywhere, Google Forms, or a quiz feature in a learning management system) so that all of the results are anonymized and collected in one place. When every student has submitted their three keywords, display or share the results to the class. Use the keywords as conversation points to discuss the different impacts the visuals had on different users. How did the keywords overlap? Where did they differ? How might the keywords that students identified align with how they might analyze and contextualize the impact of the visual? Another discussion point may be to consider how their keywords might have changed if they encountered the visual in a different context or situation.

Extreme Makeover: Document Edition

Ask each student to identify an essay, multimodal project, or class assignment. It can be something that they produced for your class or for a different class. After they've picked the project they've made, ask them to analyze the design choices for the document. What size fonts did they choose? What kinds of pictures did they include, if any? What were some other choices in terms of the document and visual design that they made? Ask them to name the audience and purpose for the document too so that they recognize and name the full context for creating the document. Then, ask them to consider who else might have had a stake in the document they produced. Is there a different audience that they can imagine being invested in that piece of work? Once the students have each named an alternative or a secondary audience for the document, ask them to take a few minutes to do an extreme "makeover" on the document, considering how they would change the layout, organization, design, and inclusion of visuals to accommodate the new audience's needs. An alternative for them would be to consider how they would redesign the document for publication in a particular platform or news site aggregate, like Buzzfeed or The Huffington Post. These platforms might also change the way they're orienting the text as well, but for the purposes of this exercise, you may want to encourage students to think primarily about the

visuals. After they've done a version of their "extreme makeover," engage in a conversation about the makeover process. What elements of the design did they decide to change? How did their understanding of audience and purpose impact their visual choices?

Comparing Data Visualizations

Pick a few data visualizations (i.e. infographics) from sites like Information is Beautiful (https://informationisbeautiful.net/) or FlowingData (https:// flowingdata.com/) (both of which have large databases of data visualizations and infographics available). Put students into small groups and ask them to analyze what they notice in the data visualizations. What kind of information is being communicated? What is the purpose of using the infographic? How would the understanding of the information differ if it was displayed in text rather than in visuals? How does seeing the visual alter their understanding of the content? A follow-up activity may be to invite them to visualize an aspect of their own writing projects (or research projects) using one of the techniques in the example data visualizations that they explored.

Caption Contest: Creating Effective Captions and Alt-Text for Image

Asking students to write captions for images can be a really interesting moment for students to interrogate and unpack their assumptions about particular images and what they're privileging as viewers and authors of multimodal or image-rich projects. A conversation about captions can also be a good opportunity to help students understand accessibility and ways to make images readable for a variety of audiences. To start this class activity, you will want to define two different kinds of image captions that exist for visuals published on the Web: captions and alt text. The caption is the text that displays below an image (much like what you would see in a printed textbook and in this particular textbook chapter for that matter). Alt text, on the other hand, is a short, written description of an image Web authors use to describe an image in a sentence for someone using screen reader software. For a reader using screen reader software, the alt text and the caption are both read to offer clarity on what the visual includes. For this class activity, project an image or photograph in a shared space and ask everyone in the class to write both a caption and alt text for the image. You may find it useful to show a few examples of captions and alt text to help clarify the activity. Alternatively, you could have students start

with writing captions (since students may have more exposure to reading captions than alt text) and then move to alt text. After students have written their captions, ask them to share with a partner, comparing how their captions are similar or different. Each pair should then take a few minutes to decide which caption they would use for the photo or image if they were publishing the image themselves, justifying their choice as a pair. The results can then be shared with the class where the instructor can lead a longer class conversation about the impacts of captions and the challenges in writing captions to capture the impacts of visuals on the audience.

This essay is a chapter in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Volume 3, a peer-reviewed open textbook series for the writing classroom: https://writingspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/cohn-understanding-visual-rhetoric-1.pdf

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PART VIII

REFLECTIVE WRITING

35. Reflection Essay

KRISTEN GAY

At first glance, academic and reflection can sound like contradictory concepts. Writing an academic reflection essay often involves striking a balance between a traditional, academic paper and a reflective essay. In order to find this balance, consider the terms that encompass the title of the assignment

The term "academic" suggests that the writer will be expected to observe conventions for academic writing, such as using a professional tone and crafting a thesis statement. On the other hand, the term "reflection" implies that the writer should critically reflect on their work, project, or writing process, depending on the assignment, and draw conclusions based on these observations.

In general, an academic reflection essay is a combination of these two ideas: writers should observe conventions for academic writing while critically reflecting on their experience or project. Note that the term "critically" suggests that the writing should not merely tell the reader what happened, what you did, or what you learned. Critical reflection takes the writing one step further and entails making an evaluative claim about the experience or project under discussion. Beyond telling readers what happened, critical reflection tends to discuss why it matters and how it contributed to the effectiveness of the project.

Striking the proper balance between critical reflection and academic essay is always determined by the demands of the particular writing situation, so writers should first consider their purpose for writing, their audience, and the project guidelines. While the subject matter of academic reflections is not always "academic," the writer will usually still be expected to adapt their arguments and points to academic conventions for thesis statements, evidence, organization, style, and formatting.

Several strategies for crafting an academic reflection essay are

outlined below based on three important areas: focus, evidence, and organization.

Focus

A thesis statement for an academic reflection essay is often an evaluative claim about your experiences with a process or assignment. Several strategies to consider for a thesis statement in an academic reflection essay include:

- Being Critical: It is important to ensure that the evaluative claim does not simply state the obvious, such as that you completed the assignment, or that you did or did not like it. Instead, make a critical claim about whether or not the project was effective in fulfilling its purpose, or whether the project raised new questions for you to consider and somehow changed your perspective on your topic.
- Placement: For some academic reflection essays, the thesis may not come in the introduction but at the end of the paper, once the writer has fully explained their experiences with the project. Think about where the placement of your thesis will be most effective based on your ideas and how your claim relates to them.

Consider the following example of a thesis statement in an academic reflection essay:

By changing my medium from a picture to a pop song, my message that domestic violence disproportionately affects women was more effectively communicated to an audience of my classmates because they found the message to be more memorable when it was accompanied by music.

This thesis makes a critical evaluative claim (that the change of

medium was effective) about the project, and is thus a strong thesis for an academic reflection paper.

Evidence

Evidence for academic reflection essays may include outside sources, but writers are also asked to support their claims by including observations from their own experience. Writers might effectively support their claims by considering the following strategies:

- Incorporating examples: What examples might help support the claims that you make? How might you expand on your points using these examples, and how might you develop this evidence in relation to your thesis?
- Personal anecdotes or observations: How might you choose relevant personal anecdotes/observations to illustrate your points and support your thesis?
- Logical explanations: How might you explain the logic behind a specific point you are making in order to make it more credible to readers?

Consider the following example for incorporating evidence in an academic reflection essay:

> Claim: Changing the medium for my project from a picture to a pop song appealed to my audience of fellow classmates.
>
> Evidence: When I performed my pop song remediation for my classmates, they paid attention to me and said that the message, once transformed into song lyrics, was very catchy and memorable. By the end of the presentation, some of them were even singing along.

In this example, the claim (that the change of medium was effective

in appealing to the new audience of fellow classmates) is supported because the writer reveals their observation of the audience's reaction. (For more about using examples and anecdotes as examples, see "Nontraditional Types of Evidence.")

Organization

For academic reflection essays, the organizational structure may differ from traditional academic or narrative essays because you are reflecting on your own experiences or observations. Consider the following organizational structures for academic reflection essays:

- Chronological Progression: The progression of points will reflect the order of events/insights as they occurred temporally in the project.

  Sample Chronological Organization for a Remediation Reflection:

  Paragraph 1: Beginning of the project
  Paragraph 2: Progression of the remediation process
  Paragraph 3: Progression of the remediation process
  Paragraph 4: Progression of the remediation process
  Paragraph 5: Progression of the remediation process
  Paragraph 6: Conclusion—Was the project effective. How and why? How did the process end?

- By Main Idea/Theme: The progression of points will centralize on main ideas or themes of the project.

Sample Organization By Main Idea/Theme for a Remediation Reflection:

Paragraph 1: Introduction
Paragraph 2: Discuss the message being translated
Paragraph 3: Discuss the change of medium
Paragraph 4: Discuss the change of audience
Paragraph 5: Was the change effective? Explain.
Paragraph 6: Conclusion

Remember that while these strategies are intended to help you approach an academic reflection paper with confidence, they are not meant to be prescriptive. Academic reflection essays are often unique to the writer because they ask the writer to consider their observations or reactions to an experience or project. You have distinctive ideas and observations to discuss, so it is likely that your paper will reflect this distinctiveness. With this in mind, consider how to most effectively compose your paper based on your specific project guidelines, instructor suggestions, and your experiences with the project.

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36. Reflective Writing and the Revision Process: What Were You Thinking?

SANDRA L. GILES

"Reflection" and "reflective writing" are umbrella terms that refer to any activity that asks you to think about your own thinking. As composition scholars Kathleen Blake Yancey and Jane Bowman Smith explain, reflection records a "student's process of thinking about what she or he is doing while in the process of that doing" (170). In a writing class, you may be asked to think about your writing processes in general or in relation to a particular essay, to think about your intentions regarding rhetorical elements such as audience and purpose, or to think about your choices regarding development strategies such as comparison-contrast, exemplification, or definition. You may be asked to describe your decisions regarding language features such as word choice, sentence rhythm, and so on. You may be asked to evaluate or assess your piece of writing or your development as a writer in general. Your instructor may also ask you to perform these kinds of activities at various points in your process of working on a project, or at the end of the semester.

A Writer's Experience

The first time I had to perform reflective writing myself was in the summer of 2002. And it did feel like a performance, at first. I was a doctoral student in Wendy Bishop's Life Writing class at Florida

State University, and it was the first class I had ever taken where we English majors actually practiced what we preached; which is to say, we actually put ourselves through the various elements of process writing. Bishop led us through invention exercises, revision exercises, language activities, and yes, reflective writings. For each essay, we had to write what she called a "process note" in which we explained our processes of working on the essay, as well as our thought processes in developing the ideas. We also discussed what we might want to do with (or to) the essay in the future, beyond the class. At the end of the semester, we composed a self-evaluative cover letter for our portfolio in which we discussed each of our essays from the semester and recorded our learning and insights about writing and about the genre of nonfiction.

My first process note for the class was a misguided attempt at good-student-gives-the-teacher-what-she-wants. Our assignment had been to attend an event in town and write about it. I had seen an email announcement about a medium visiting from England who would perform a "reading" at the Unity Church in town. So I went and took notes. And wrote two consecutive drafts. After peer workshop, a third. And then I had to write the process note, the likes of which I had never done before. It felt awkward, senseless. Worse than writing a scholarship application or some other mundane writing task. Like a waste of time, and like it wasn't real writing at all. But it was required.

So, hoop-jumper that I was, I wrote the following: "This will eventually be part of a longer piece that will explore the Foundation for Spiritual Knowledge in Tallahassee, Florida, which is a group of local people in training to be mediums and spirituals healers. These two goals are intertwined." Yeah, right. Nice and fancy. Did I really intend to write a book-length study on those folks? I thought my professor would like the idea, though, so I put it in my note. Plus, my peer reviewers had asked for a longer, deeper piece. That statement would show I was being responsive to their feedback, even though I didn't agree with it. The peer reviewers had also

wanted me to put myself into the essay more, to do more with first-person point of view rather than just writing a reporter-style observation piece. I still disagree with them, but what I should have done in the original process note was go into why: my own search for spirituality and belief could not be handled in a brief essay. I wanted the piece to be about the medium herself, and mediumship in general, and the public's reaction, and why a group of snarky teenagers thought they could be disruptive the whole time and come off as superior. I did a better job later—more honest and thoughtful and revealing about my intentions for the piece—in the self-evaluation for the portfolio. That's because, as the semester progressed and I continued to have to write those darned process notes, I dropped the attitude. In a conference about my writing, Bishop responded to my note by asking questions focused entirely on helping me refine my intentions for the piece, and I realized my task wasn't to please or try to dazzle her. I stopped worrying about how awkward the reflection was, stopped worrying about how to please the teacher, and started actually reflecting and thinking. New habits and ways of thinking formed. And unexpectedly, all the hard decisions about revising for the next draft began to come more easily.

And something else clicked, too. Two and a half years previously, I had been teaching composition at a small two-year college. Composition scholar Peggy O'Neill taught a workshop for us English teachers on an assignment she called the "Letter to the Reader." That was my introduction to reflective writing as a teacher, though I hadn't done any of it myself at that point. I thought, "Okay, the composition scholars say we should get our students to do this." So I did, but it did not work very well with my students at the time. Here's why: I didn't come to understand what it could do for a writer, or how it would do it, until I had been through it myself.

After Bishop's class, I became a convert. I began studying reflection, officially called metacognition, and began developing ways of using it in writing classes of all kinds, from composition to creative

nonfiction to fiction writing. It works. Reflection helps you to develop your intentions (purpose), figure out your relation to your audience, uncover possible problems with your individual writing processes, set goals for revision, make decisions about language and style, and the list goes on. In a nutshell, it helps you develop more insight into and control over composing and revising processes. And according to scholars such as Chris M. Anson, developing this control is a feature that distinguishes stronger from weaker writers and active from passive learners (69–73).

My Letter to the Reader Assignment

Over recent years, I've developed my own version of the Letter to the Reader, based on O'Neill's workshop and Bishop's class assignments. For each essay, during a revising workshop, my students first draft their letters to the reader and then later, polish them to be turned in with the final draft. Letters are composed based on the following instructions:

> This will be a sort of cover letter for your essay. It should be on a separate sheet of paper, typed, stapled to the top of the final draft. Date the letter and address it to "Dear Reader." Then do the following in nicely developed, fat paragraphs:
>
> 1. Tell the reader what you intend for the essay to do for its readers. Describe its purpose(s) and the effect(s) you want it to have on the readers. Say who you think the readers are.
>
> • Describe your process of working on the essay. How did you narrow the assigned topic? What kind of planning did you do? What steps did you go through, what changes did you make along the way, what decisions did you face, and how did you make the decisions?

• How did comments from your peers, in peer workshop, help you? How did any class activities on style, editing, etc., help you?

2. Remember to sign the letter. After you've drafted it, think about whether your letter and essay match up. Does the essay really do what your letter promises? If not, then use the draft of your letter as a revising tool to make a few more adjustments to your essay. Then, when the essay is polished and ready to hand in, polish the letter as well and hand them in together.

Following is a sample letter that shows how the act of answering these prompts can help you uncover issues in your essays that need to be addressed in further revision. This letter is a mock-up based on problems I've seen over the years. We discuss it thoroughly in my writing classes:

Dear Reader,

This essay is about how I feel about the changes in the financial aid rules. I talk about how they say you're not eligible even if your parents aren't supporting you anymore. I also talk a little bit about the HOPE scholarship. But my real purpose is to show how the high cost of books makes it impossible to afford college if you can't get on financial aid. My readers will be all college students. As a result, it should make students want to make a change. My main strategy in this essay is to describe how the rules have affected me personally.

I chose this topic because this whole situation has really bugged me. I did freewriting to get my feelings out on paper, but I don't think that was effective because it seemed jumbled and didn't flow. So I started over with an outline and went on from there. I'm still not sure how to start the introduction off because I want to hook the reader's interest but I don't know how to do that. I try to include many

different arguments to appeal to different types of students to make the whole argument seem worthwhile on many levels.

I did not include comments from students because I want everyone to think for themselves and form their own opinion. That's my main strategy. I don't want the paper to be too long and bore the reader. I was told in peer workshop to include information from other students at other colleges with these same financial aid problems. But I didn't do that because I don't know anybody at another school. I didn't want to include any false information.

Thanks,

(signature)

Notice how the letter shows us, as readers of the letter, some problems in the essay without actually having to read the essay. From this (imaginary) student's point of view, the act of drafting this letter should show her the problems, too. In her first sentence, she announces her overall topic. Next she identifies a particular problem: the way "they" define whether an applicant is dependent on or independent of parents. So far, pretty good, except her use of the vague pronoun "they" makes me hope she hasn't been that vague in the essay itself. Part of taking on a topic is learning enough about it to be specific. Specific is effective; vague is not. Her next comment about the HOPE scholarship makes me wonder if she's narrowed her topic enough. When she said "financial aid," I assumed federal, but HOPE is particular to the state of Georgia and has its own set of very particular rules, set by its own committee in Atlanta. Can she effectively cover both federal financial aid, such as the Pell Grant for example, as well as HOPE, in the same essay, when the rules governing them are different? Maybe. We'll see. I wish the letter would address more specifically how she sorts that out in the essay. Then she says that her "real purpose" is to talk about the cost of books. Is that really her main purpose? Either she doesn't have a good handle on what she wants her essay to do or she's just

throwing language around to sound good in the letter. Not good, either way.

When she says she wants the readers to be all college students, she has identified her target audience, which is good. Then this: "As a result, it should make students want to make a change." Now, doesn't that sound more in line with a statement of purpose? Here the writer makes clear, for the first time, that she wants to write a persuasive piece on the topic. But then she says that her "main strategy" is to discuss only her own personal experience. That's not a strong enough strategy, by itself, to be persuasive.

In the second section, where she discusses process, she seems to have gotten discouraged when she thought that freewriting hadn't worked because it resulted in something "jumbled." But she missed the point that freewriting works to generate ideas, which often won't come out nicely organized. It's completely fine, and normal, to use freewriting to generate ideas and then organize them with perhaps an outline as a second step. As a teacher, when I read comments like this in a letter, I write a note to the student explaining that "jumbled" is normal, perfectly fine, and nothing to worry about. I'm glad when I read that sort of comment so I can reassure the student. If not for the letter, I probably wouldn't have known of her unfounded concern. It creates a teaching moment.

Our imaginary student then says, "I'm still not sure how to start the introduction off because I want to hook the reader's interest but don't know how to do that." This statement shows that she's thinking along the right lines—of capturing the reader's interest. But she hasn't quite figured out how to do that in this essay, probably because she doesn't have a clear handle on her purpose. I'd advise her to address that problem and to better develop her overall strategy, and then she would be in a better position to make a plan for the introduction. Again, a teaching moment. When she concludes the second paragraph of the letter saying that she wants to include "many different arguments" for "different types of students," it seems even more evident that she's not clear on

purpose or strategy; therefore, she's just written a vague sentence she probably thought sounded good for the letter.

She begins her third paragraph with further proof of the problems. If her piece is to be persuasive, then she should not want readers to "think for themselves and form their own opinion." She most certainly should have included comments from other students, as her peer responders advised. It wouldn't be difficult to interview some fellow students at her own school. And as for finding out what students at other schools think about the issue, a quick search on the Internet would turn up newspaper or newsletter articles, as well as blogs and other relevant sources. Just because the official assignment may not have been to write a "research" paper doesn't mean you can't research. Some of your best material will come that way. And in this particular type of paper, your personal experience by itself, without support, will not likely persuade the reader. Now, I do appreciate when she says she doesn't want to include any "false information." A lot of students come to college with the idea that in English class, if you don't know any information to use, then you can just make it up so it sounds good. But that's not ethical, and it's not persuasive, and just a few minutes on the Internet will solve the problem.

This student, having drafted the above letter, should go back and analyze. Do the essay and letter match up? Does the essay do what the letter promises? And here, does the letter uncover lack of clear thinking about purpose and strategy? Yes, it does, so she should now go back and address these issues in her essay. Without having done this type of reflective exercise, she likely would have thought her essay was just fine, and she would have been unpleasantly surprised to get the grade back with my (the teacher's) extensive commentary and critique. She never would have predicted what I would say because she wouldn't have had a process for thinking through these issues—and might not have known how to begin thinking this way. Drafting the letter should help her develop more insight into and control over the revising process so she can make more effective decisions as she revises.

How It Works

Intentions—a sense of audience and purpose and of what the writer wants the essay to do—are essential to a good piece of communicative writing. Anson makes the point that when an instructor asks a student to verbalize his or her intentions, it is much more likely that the student will have intentions (qtd. in Yancey and Smith 174). We saw this process in mid-struggle with our imaginary student's work (above), and we'll see it handled more effectively in real student examples (below). As many composition scholars explain, reflective and self-assessing activities help writers set goals for their writing. For instance, Rebecca Moore Howard states that "writers who can assess their own prose can successfully revise that prose" (36). This position is further illustrated by Xiaoguang Cheng and Margaret S. Steffenson, who conducted and then reported a study clearly demonstrating a direct positive effect of reflection on student revising processes in "Metadiscourse: A Technique for Improving Student Writing." Yancey and Smith argue that self-assessment and reflection are essential to the learning process because they are a "method for assigning both responsibility and authority to a learner" (170). Students then become independent learners who can take what they learn about writing into the future beyond a particular class rather than remaining dependent on teachers or peer evaluators (171). Anson echoes this idea, saying that reflection helps a writer grow beyond simply succeeding in a particular writing project: "Once they begin thinking about writing productively, they stand a much better chance of developing expertise and working more successfully in future writing situations" (73).

Examples from Real Students

Let's see some examples from actual students now, although for the sake of space we'll look at excerpts. The first few illustrate how reflective writing helps you develop your intentions. For an assignment to write a profile essay, Joshua Dawson described his purpose and audience: "This essay is about my grandmother and how she overcame the hardships of life. [. . .] The purpose of this essay is to show how a woman can be tough and can take anything life throws at her. I hope the essay reaches students who have a single parent and those who don't know what a single parent goes through." Joshua showed a clear idea of what he wanted his essay to do. For a cultural differences paper, Haley Moore wrote about her mission trip to Peru: "I tried to show how, in America, we have everything from clean water to freedom of religion and other parts of the world do not. Also, I would like for my essay to inspire people to give donations or help in any way they can for the countries that live in poverty." Haley's final draft actually did not address the issue of donations and focused instead on the importance of mission work, a good revision decision that kept the essay more focused.

In a Composition II class, Chelsie Mathis wrote an argumentative essay on a set of controversial photos published in newspapers in the 1970s which showed a woman falling to her death during a fire escape collapse. Chelsie said,

> The main purpose of this essay is to argue whether the [newspaper] editors used correct judgment when deciding to publish such photos. The effect that I want my paper to have on the readers is to really make people think about others' feelings and to make people realize that poor judgment can have a big effect. [. . .] I intend for my readers to possibly be high school students going into the field of journalism or photojournalism.

Chelsie demonstrated clear thinking about purpose and about who

she wanted her essay to influence. Another Comp II student, Daniel White, wrote, "This essay is a cognitive approach of how I feel YouTube is helping our society achieve its dreams and desires of becoming stars." I had no idea what he meant by "cognitive approach," but I knew he was taking a psychology class at the same time. I appreciated that he was trying to integrate his learning from that class into ours, trying to learn to use that vocabulary. I was sure that with more practice, he would get the hang of it. I didn't know whether he was getting much writing practice at all in psychology, so I was happy to let him practice it in my class. His reflection showed learning in process.

My students often resist writing about their composing processes, but it's good for them to see and analyze how they did what they did, and it also helps me know what they were thinking when they made composing decisions. Josh Autry, in regards to his essay on scuba diving in the Florida Keys at the wreck of the Spiegel Grove, said, "Mapping was my preferred method of outlining. It helped me organize my thoughts, go into detail, and pick the topics that I thought would be the most interesting to the readers." He also noted, "I choose [sic] to write a paragraph about everything that can happen to a diver that is not prepared but after reviewing it I was afraid that it would scare an interested diver away. I chose to take that paragraph out and put a few warnings in the conclusion so the aspiring diver would not be clueless." This was a good decision that did improve the final draft. His earlier draft had gotten derailed by a long discussion of the dangers of scuba diving in general. But he came to this realization and decided to correct it without my help—except that I had led the class through reflective revising activities. D'Amber Walker wrote, "At first my organization was off because I didn't know if I should start off with a personal experience which included telling a story or start with a statistic." Apparently, a former teacher had told her not to include personal experiences in her essays. I reminded her that in our workshop on introductions, we had discussed how a personal story can be a very effective hook to grab the reader's attention. So once again, a teaching moment.

When Jonathan Kelly said, "I probably could have given more depth to this paper by interviewing a peer or something but I really felt unsure of how to go about doing so," I was able to scold him gently. If he really didn't know how to ask fellow students their opinions, all he had to do was ask me. But his statement shows an accurate assessment of how the paper could have been better. When Nigel Ellington titled his essay "If Everything Was Easy, Nothing Would Be Worth Anything," he explained, "I like this [title] because it's catchy and doesn't give too much away and it hooks you." He integrated what he learned in a workshop on titles. Doing this one little bit of reflective thinking cemented that learning and gave him a chance to use it in his actual paper.

How It Helps Me (the Instructor) Help You

Writing teachers often play two roles in relation to their students. I am my students' instructor, but I am also a fellow writer. As a writer, I have learned that revision can be overwhelming. It's tempting just to fiddle with words and commas if I don't know what else to do. Reflection is a mechanism, a set of procedures, to help me step back from a draft to gain enough distance to ask myself, "Is this really what I want the essay (or story or poem or article) to do? Is this really what I want it to say? Is this the best way to get it to say that?" To revise is to re-vision or re-see, to re-think these issues, but you have to create a critical distance to be able to imagine your piece done another way. Reflection helps you create that distance. It also helps your instructor better guide your work and respond to it.

The semester after my experience in Bishop's Life Writing Class, I took a Fiction Writing Workshop taught by Mark Winegardner, author of *The Godfather Returns* and *The Godfather's Revenge*, as well as numerous other novels and short stories. Winegardner had us create what he called the "process memo." As he indicated in an interview, he uses the memo mainly as a tool to help the workshop

instructor know how to respond to the writer's story. If a writer indicates in the memo that he knows something is still a problem with the story, then the instructor can curtail lengthy discussion of that issue's existence during the workshop and instead prompt peers to provide suggestions. The instructor can give some pointed advice, or possibly reassurance, based on the writer's concerns that, without being psychic, the instructor would not otherwise have known about. Composition scholar Jeffrey Sommers notes that reflective pieces show teachers what your intentions for your writing actually are, which lets us respond to your writing accurately, rather than responding to what we think your intentions might be ("Enlisting" 101–2). He also points out that we can know how to reduce your anxiety about your writing appropriately ("Behind" 77). Thus, without a reflective memo, your teacher might pass right over the very issue you have been worried about.

The Habit of Self-Reflective Writing

One of the most important functions of reflective writing in the long run is to establish in you, the writer, a habit of self-reflective thinking. The first few reflective pieces you write may feel awkward and silly and possibly painful. You might play the teacher-pleasing game. But that's really not what we want (see Smith 129). Teachers don't want you to say certain things, we want you to think in certain ways. Once you get the hang of it and start to see the benefits in your writing, you'll notice that you've formed a habit of thinking reflectively almost invisibly. And not only will it help you in writing classes, but in any future writing projects for biology class, say, or even further in the future, in writing that you may do on the job, such as incident reports or annual reports for a business. You'll become a better writer. You'll become a better thinker. You'll become a better learner. And learning is what you'll be doing for the rest of your life. I recently painted my kitchen. It was a painful

experience. I had a four-day weekend and thought I could clean, prep, and paint the kitchen, breakfast nook, and hallway to the garage in just four days, not to mention painting the trim and doors white. I pushed myself to the limit of endurance. And when I finished the wall color (not even touching the trim), I didn't like it. The experience was devastating. A very similar thing had happened three years before when I painted my home office a color I now call "baby poop." My home office is still "baby poop" because I got so frustrated I just gave up. Now, the kitchen was even worse. It was such a light green it looked like liver failure and didn't go with the tile on the floor. Plus, it showed brush marks and other flaws. What the heck?

But unlike three years ago, when I had given up, I decided to apply reflective practices to the situation. I decided to see it as time for revision-type thinking. Why had I wanted green to begin with? (Because I didn't want blue in a kitchen. I've really been craving that hot dark lime color that's popular now. So yes, I still want it to be green.) Why hadn't I chosen a darker green? (Because I have the darker, hotter color into the room with accessories. The lighter green has a more neutral effect that I shouldn't get sick of after six months. Perhaps I'll get used to it, especially when I get around to painting the trim white.) What caused the brush strokes? (I asked an expert. Two factors: using satin finish rather than eggshell, and using a cheap paintbrush for cut-in-areas.) How can they be fixed? (Most of the brush strokes are just in the cut-in areas and so they can be redone quickly with a better quality brush. That is, if I decide to keep this light green color.) Is the fact that the trim is still cream-colored rather than white part of the problem? (Oh, yes. Fix that first and the other problems might diminish.) What can I learn about timing for my next paint project? (That the cleaning and prep work take much longer than you think, and that you will need two coats, plus drying time. And so what if you didn't finish it in four days? Relax! Allow more time next time.) Am I really worried about what my mother will say? (No, because I'm the one who has to look at it every day.) So the solution? Step one is to paint the trim first and

then re-evaluate. Using a method of reflection to think back over my "draft" gives me a method for proceeding with "revision." At the risk of sounding like a pop song, when you stop to think it through, you'll know what to do.

Revision isn't just in writing. These methods can be applied any time you are working on a project—of any kind—or have to make decisions about something. Establishing the habit of reflective thinking will have far-reaching benefits in your education, your career, and your life. It's an essential key to success for the life-long learner.

Discussion

1. Define what metacognitive or reflective writing is. What are some of the prompts or "topics" for reflective writing?
2. Have you ever been asked to do this type of writing? If so, briefly discuss your experience.
3. Why does reflective writing help a student learn and develop as a better writer? How does it work?
4. Draft a Letter to the Reader for an essay you are working on right now. Analyze the letter to see what strengths or problems it uncovers regarding your essay.

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37. Rhetorical Appeals: A Checklist for Writers

Questions for Reflection

ANGELA EWARD-MANGIONE

Why use rhetorical appeals in persuasive writing? Using rhetorical appeals in persuasive writing increases a writer's chances of achieving his or her purpose. Any rhetorical purpose must be connected to an audience, and rhetorical appeals have been proven to successfully reach and persuade audiences.

Logos

Strategies for Use: structure of argument, definitions, relevant examples, facts and figures, causal statements, statistics, an opposing view

Reflective Questions:

- Are the main points of my essay sequenced logically?
- Does my writing define key terms with which the audience may not be familiar?
- Does my writing provide credible, documented facts to support any unstated assumptions? To learn more about unstated assumptions, see "Logos."
- Does my writing include at least one causal statement? Read more about causal statements in "Logos."

- Does my writing provide examples to illustrate its main points?
- Does my writing cite relevant, current, and credible statistics?

- Does this piece address at least one opposing view?

Pathos

Strategies for Use: anecdotes or other narratives, images or other forms of media, direct quotations, empathy, humor

Reflective Questions:

- Does my persuasive writing include an appropriate anecdote or narrative that evokes a commonly held emotion? To learn more about writing narratives in essays, read "Employing Narrative in an Essay."
- Does my persuasive writing engage non-textual media, such as images, to evoke emotions in the audience? Is the use of such non-textual media appropriate for my genre and purpose? Review "Pathos" to learn more about using non-textual media in persuasive writing.
- Does my writing include at least one quote from an individual who has been influenced by the issue my writing addresses?
- Does my writing demonstrate empathy for the opposing view's concerns?
- Does my persuasive writing use humor if it is appropriate for the genre and purpose?

Ethos

Strategies for Use: references to related work or life experience; references to certificates, awards, or degrees earned related to the topic; references to the character of the writer; use of credible and current sources; references to symbols that represent authority

Reflective Questions:

- Does my writing include references to my related work or life experience if appropriate for the genre, and do the references avoid the first-person point of view, unless the genre calls for it (e.g., a cover letter for a job and/or assignments in which the first-person point of view may combined with the third-person point of view). To learn more about how to avoid using the first-person point of view, read "Avoid First-Person Point of View."
- Does my persuasive writing refer to certificates, awards, or degrees earned that relate to the topic? If so, are these references appropriate for the genre and, if necessary, do they avoid the first-person point of view?
- Does my persuasive writing rely on documented, credible, current evidence to support its claims, thereby reflecting my good character as a writer?
- Do the experts cited in my writing have credentials, awards, and/or degrees that relate to the topic?
- Have I used an appropriate tone, voice, and persona in this piece? To learn more about these terms and their use in writing, see "Consider Your Voice, Tone, and Persona."
- Have I proofread my persuasive writing several times, and have I asked two or more people to proofread it as well? To learn about specific proofreading strategies, read "Proofreading."

Kairos

Strategies for Use: the use of deadlines or goals; a call to action, including the call to "act now"; references to "current crises" or impending doom

Reflective Questions:

- Does my writing explain the immediate significance of the topic?

- Does my persuasive writing invite the reader to set a goal related to the topic?
- Does my persuasive writing incite and/or invite action, especially immediate action? Read "How to Write a Compelling Conclusion," particularly the section titled "The Call to Action" to learn more about this technique.
- Does my writing refer to current crises regarding the topic through credible, current, and relevant sources? Review Kairos for an example of this method.
- Does this piece convey the potential short- and/or long-term consequences of not adopting my evidence-based argument?

After checking your persuasive writing for these rhetorical appeals, ensure that your writing does not rely on any fallacious forms of these appeals as well. Review "Fallacious Logos," "Fallacious Pathos," "Fallacious Ethos," and "Fallacious Appeals to Kairos" to learn more.

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PART IX

RESEARCH & WRITING WITH SOURCES

38. Finding and Using Outside Sources

KATELYN BURTON

Many college courses require students to locate and use secondary sources in a research paper. Educators assign research papers because they require you to find your own sources, confront conflicting evidence, and blend diverse information and ideas—all skills required in any professional leadership role. Some research papers also allow students to pursue their own topic of interest. In this section, we will answer the following questions:

1. **What are the different types of sources?**
2. **What makes a source scholarly or academic?**
3. **How can I create a research strategy?**
4. **Where can I find credible sources for my paper?**

1. What are the different types of sources?

Why is it that even the most informative *Wikipedia* articles are still often considered illegitimate? What are good sources to use instead? Above all, follow your professor's guidelines for choosing sources. He or she may have requirements for a certain number of articles, books, or websites you should include in your paper. Be sure to familiarize yourself with your professor's requirements.

The table below summarizes types of secondary sources in four tiers. All sources have their legitimate uses, but the top-tier ones are considered the most credible for academic work.

Figure 6.1 Source Type Table

Tier	Type	Content	Uses	How to find them
1	Peer-reviewed academic publications	Rigorous research and analysis	Provide strong evidence for claims and references to other high-quality sources	Academic article databases from the library's website
2	Reports, articles, and books from credible non-academic sources	Well researched and even-handed descriptions of an event or state of the world	Initial research on events or trends not yet analyzed in the academic literature; may reference important Tier 1 sources	Websites of relevant government/ nonprofit agencies or academic article databases from the library's website
3	Short pieces from newspapers or credible websites	Simple reporting of events, research findings, or policy changes	Often point to useful Tier 2 or Tier 1 sources, may provide a factoid or two not found anywhere else	Strategic *Google* searches or article databases including newspapers and magazines
4	Agenda-driven or uncertain pieces	Mostly opinion, varying in thoughtfulness and credibility	May represent a particular position within a debate; more often provide keywords and clues about higher quality sources	Non-specific *Google* searches

Tier 1: Peer-reviewed academic publications

Sources from the mainstream academic literature include books and scholarly articles. Academic books generally fall into three categories: (1) textbooks written with students in mind, (2) academic books which give an extended report on a large research project,

and (3) edited volumes in which each chapter is authored by different people.

Scholarly articles appear in academic journals, which are published multiple times a year to share the latest research findings with scholars in the field. They're usually sponsored by an academic society. To be published, these articles and books had to earn favorable anonymous evaluations by qualified scholars. Who are the experts writing, reviewing, and editing these scholarly publications? Your professors. We describe this process below. Learning how to read and use these sources is a fundamental part of being a college student.

Tier 2: Reports, articles, and books from credible non-academic sources

Some events and trends are too recent to appear in Tier 1 sources. Also, Tier 1 sources tend to be highly specific, and sometimes you need a more general perspective on a topic. Thus, Tier 2 sources can provide quality information that is more accessible to non-academics. There are three main categories.

First, official reports from government agencies or major international institutions like the World Bank or the United Nations; these institutions generally have research departments staffed with qualified experts who seek to provide rigorous, even-handed information to decision-makers.

Second, feature articles from major newspapers and magazines like *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *London Times*, or *The Economist* are based on original reporting by experienced journalists (not press releases) and are typically 1500+ words in length.

Third, there are some great books from non-academic presses that cite their sources; they're often written by journalists. All three of these sources are generally well researched descriptions of an event or state of the world, undertaken by credentialed experts who generally seek to be even-handed. It is still up to you to judge their credibility. Your instructors, librarians, or writing center

consultants can advise you on which sources in this category have the most credibility.

Tier 3. Short pieces from periodicals or credible websites

A step below the well-developed reports and feature articles that make up Tier 2 are the short tidbits that one finds in newspapers and magazines or credible websites. How short is a short news article? Usually, they're just a couple paragraphs or less, and they're often reporting on just one thing: an event, an interesting research finding, or a policy change. They don't take extensive research and analysis to write, and many just summarize a press release written and distributed by an organization or business. They may describe corporate mergers, newly discovered diet-health links, or important school-funding legislation.

You may want to cite Tier 3 sources in your paper if they provide an important factoid or two that isn't provided by a higher-tier piece, but if the Tier 3 article describes a particular study or academic expert, your best bet is to find the journal article or book it is reporting on and use that Tier 1 source instead. Sometimes you can find the original journal article by putting the author's name into a library database.

What counts as a credible website in this tier? You may need some guidance from instructors or librarians, but you can learn a lot by examining the person or organization providing the information (look for an "About" link on the website). For example, if the organization is clearly agenda-driven or not up-front about its aims and/or funding sources, then it definitely isn't a source you want to cite as a neutral authority. Also look for signs of expertise. A tidbit about a medical research finding written by someone with a science background carries more weight than the same topic written by a policy analyst. These sources are sometimes uncertain, which is all the more reason to follow the trail to a Tier 1 or Tier 2 source whenever possible. The better the source, the more supported your paper will be.

Tip

It doesn't matter how well supported or well written your paper is if you don't cite your sources! A citing mistake or a failure to cite could lead to a failing grade on the paper or in the class.

Tier 4. Agenda-driven or pieces from unknown sources

This tier is essentially everything else. These types of sources—especially *Wikipedia*—can be helpful in identifying interesting topics, positions within a debate, keywords to search, and, sometimes, higher-tier sources on the topic. They often play a critically important role in the early part of the research process, but they generally aren't (and shouldn't be) cited in the final paper.

Exercise 1

Based on what you already know or what you can find from Tier 4 sources like *Wikipedia*, start a list of the people, organizations, sources, and keywords that seem most relevant to your topic. You may need this background information when you start searching for more scholarly sources later on.

Tip

Try to locate a mixture of different source types for your assignments. Some of your sources can be more popular, like Tier 3 websites or encyclopedia articles, but you should also try to find at least a few Tier 1 or Tier 2 articles from journals or reputable magazines/ newspapers.

Key Takeaways

- There are several different categories of academic and popular sources. Scholarly sources are usually required in academic papers.
- It's important to understand your professor's requirements and look for sources that fill those requirements. Also, try to find a variety of different source types to help you fully understand your topic.

2. What makes a source scholarly or academic?

Most of the Tier 1 sources available are academic articles, also called

scholarly articles, scholarly papers, journal articles, academic papers, or peer-reviewed articles. They all mean the same thing: a paper published in an academic journal after being scrutinized anonymously and judged to be sound by other experts in the subfield. Academic articles are essentially reports that scholars write to their peers—present and future—about what they've done in their research, what they've found, and why they think it's important. Scholarly journals and books from academic presses use a **peer-review** process to decide which articles merit publication. The whole process, outlined below, can easily take a year or more!

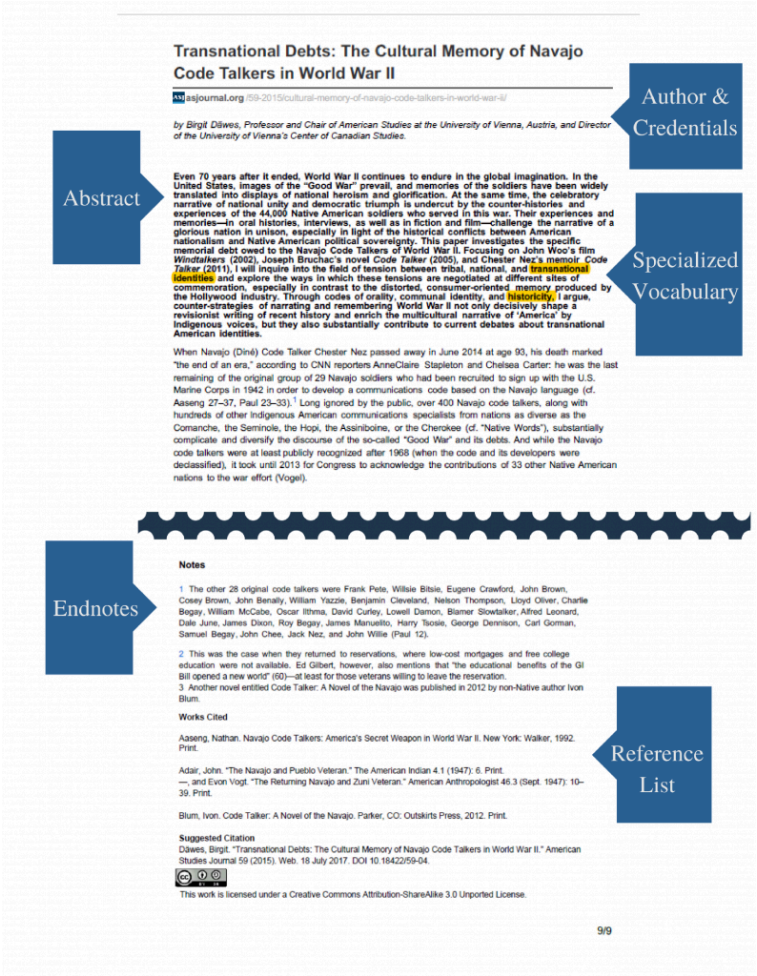
Figure 6.2 Understanding the Academic Peer Review Process

Understanding
THE ACADEMIC PEER REVIEW PROCESS
1. AUTHOR SENDS MANUSCRIPT TO JOURNAL EDITOR
2. EDITOR READS MANUSCRIPT
3. EDITOR THEN...
ACCEPTS MANUSCRIPT
OR
REJECTS MANUSCRIPT
4. EDITOR RECRUITS OTHER EXPERTS (PEERS)
5. PEERS REVIEW MANUSCRIPT
DOES IT NEED REVISION?
7. AUTHOR MAKES REVISIONS BASED ON COMMENTS
6. EDITOR SENDS PEERS' COMMENTS TO AUTHOR
8. EDITOR THEN...

When you are trying to determine if a source is scholarly, look for the following characteristics:

- **Structure**: The full text article often begins with an abstract or summary containing the main points of the article. It may also be broken down into sections like "Methods," "Results," and "Discussion."
- **Authors**: Authors' names are listed with credentials/degrees and places of employment, which are often universities or research institutions.The authors are experts in the field.
- **Audienc**e: The article uses advanced vocabulary or specialized language intended for other scholars in the field, not for the average reader.
- **Length**: Scholarly articles are often, but not always, longer than the popular articles found in general interest magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, etc. Articles are longer because it takes more content to explore topics in depth.
- **Bibliography or Reference List**: Scholarly articles include footnotes, endnotes or parenthetical in-text notes referring to items in a bibliography or reference list. Bibliographies are important to find the original source of an idea or quotation.

Figure 6.3 Example Scholarly Source



Transnational Debts: The Cultural Memory of Navajo Code Talkers in World War II

asjournal.org /59-2015/cultural-memory-of-navajo-code-talkers-in-world-war-ii/

Author & Credentials

by Birgit Däwes, Professor and Chair of American Studies at the University of Vienna, Austria, and Director of the University of Vienna's Center of Canadian Studies.

Abstract

Even 70 years after it ended, World War II continues to endure in the global imagination. In the United States, images of the "Good War" prevail, and memories of the soldiers have been widely translated into displays of national heroism and glorification. At the same time, the celebratory narrative of national unity and democratic triumph is undercut by the counter-histories and experiences of the 44,000 Native American soldiers who served in this war. Their experiences and memories—in oral histories, interviews, as well as in fiction and film—challenge the narrative of a glorious nation in unison, especially in light of the historical conflicts between American nationalism and Native American political sovereignty. This paper investigates the specific memorial debt owed to the Navajo Code Talkers of World War II. Focusing on John Woo's film *Windtalkers* (2002), Joseph Bruchac's novel *Code Talker* (2005), and Chester Nez's memoir *Code Talker* (2011), I will inquire into the field of tension between tribal, national, and transnational identities and explore the ways in which these tensions are negotiated at different sites of commemoration, especially in contrast to the distorted, consumer-oriented memory produced by the Hollywood industry. Through codes of orality, communal identity, and historicity, I argue, counter-strategies of narrating and remembering World War II not only decisively shape a revisionist writing of recent history and enrich the multicultural narrative of 'America' by Indigenous voices, but they also substantially contribute to current debates about transnational American identities.

Specialized Vocabulary

When Navajo (Diné) Code Talker Chester Nez passed away in June 2014 at age 93, his death marked "the end of an era," according to CNN reporters AnneClaire Stapleton and Chelsea Carter: he was the last remaining of the original group of 29 Navajo soldiers who had been recruited to sign up with the U.S. Marine Corps in 1942 in order to develop a communications code based on the Navajo language (cf. Aaseng 27–37, Paul 23–33).[1] Long ignored by the public, over 400 Navajo code talkers, along with hundreds of other Indigenous American communications specialists from nations as diverse as the Comanche, the Seminole, the Hopi, the Assiniboine, or the Cherokee (cf. "Native Words"), substantially complicate and diversify the discourse of the so-called "Good War" and its debts. And while the Navajo code talkers were at least publicly recognized after 1968 (when the code and its developers were declassified), it took until 2013 for Congress to acknowledge the contributions of 33 other Native American nations to the war effort (Vogel).

Endnotes

Notes

1 The other 28 original code talkers were Frank Pete, Willsie Bitsie, Eugene Crawford, John Brown, Cosey Brown, John Benally, William Yazzie, Benjamin Cleveland, Nelson Thompson, Lloyd Oliver, Charlie Begay, William McCabe, Oscar Ithma, David Curley, Lowell Damon, Blamer Slowtalker, Alfred Leonard, Dale June, James Dixon, Roy Begay, James Manuelito, Harry Tsosie, George Dennison, Carl Gorman, Samuel Begay, John Chee, Jack Nez, and John Willie (Paul 12).

2 This was the case when they returned to reservations, where low-cost mortgages and free college education were not available. Ed Gilbert, however, also mentions that "the educational benefits of the GI Bill opened a new world" (60)—at least for those veterans willing to leave the reservation.

3 Another novel entitled Code Talker: A Novel of the Navajo was published in 2012 by non-Native author Ivon Blum.

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Writing at Work

Finding high-quality, credible research doesn't stop after college. Citing excellent sources in professional presentations and publications will impress your boss, strengthen your arguments, and improve your credibility.

Key Takeaways

- Academic sources follow a rigorous process called peer-review. Significant time and effort goes into ensuring that scholarly journal articles are high-quality and credible.
- Skim a source and look for elements like a defined structure, author credentials, advanced language, and a bibliography. If these elements are included, the source is likely academic or scholarly.

3. How can I create a research strategy?

Now that you know what to look for, how should you go about

finding academic sources? Having a plan in place before you start searching will lead you to the best sources.

Research Questions

Many students want to start searching using a broad topic or even their specific thesis statement. If you start with too broad of a topic, your search results list will overwhelm you. Imagine having to sort through thousands of sources to try to find ones to use in your paper. That's what happens when your topic is too broad; your information will also be too broad. Starting with your thesis statement usually means you have already formed an opinion about the topic. What happens if the research doesn't agree with your thesis? Instead of closing yourself off to one side of the story, it's better to develop a **research question** that you would like the research to help you answer about your topic.

Steps for Developing a Research Question

The steps for developing a research question, listed below, help you organize your thoughts.

Step 1: Pick a topic (or consider the one assigned to you).

Step 2: Write a narrower/smaller topic that is related to the first.

Step 3: List some potential questions that could logically be asked in relation to the narrow topic.

Step 4: Pick the question in which you are most interested.

Step 5: Modify that question as needed so that it is more focused.

Here's an example:

Figure 6.4 Developing a Research Question

Keywords & Search Terms

Starting with a research question helps you figure out precisely what you're looking for. Next, you'll need the most effective set of **search terms** – starting from main concepts and then identifying related terms. These **keywords** will become your search terms, and you'll use them in library databases to find sources.

Identify the keywords in your research question by selecting nouns important to the meaning of your question and leaving out words that don't help the search, such as adjectives, adverbs,

prepositions and, usually, verbs. Nouns that you would use to tag your research question so you could find it later are likely to be its main concepts.

Example: *How are birds affected by wind turbines?*

The keywords are birds and wind turbines. Avoid terms like *affect* and *effect* as search terms, even when you're looking for studies that report effects or effectiveness. These terms are common and contain many synonyms, so including them as search terms can limit your results.

Example: W*hat lesson plans are available for teaching fractions?*

The keywords are lesson plans and fractions. Stick to what's necessary. For instance, don't include: children—nothing in the research question suggests the lesson plans are for children; teaching—teaching isn't necessary because lesson plans imply teaching; available—available is not necessary.

Keywords can improve your searching in all different kinds of databases and search engines. Try using keywords instead of entire sentences when you search *Google* and see how your search results improve.

For each keyword, list alternative terms, including synonyms, singular and plural forms of the words, and words that have other associations with the main concept. Sometimes synonyms, plurals, and singulars aren't enough. Also consider associations with other words and concepts. For instance, it might help, when looking for information on the common cold, to include the term virus—because a type of virus causes the common cold.

Here's an example of keywords & synonyms for our previous research question arranged in a graphic organizer called a Word Cloud:

Figure 6.5 What's Your Research Question?

Once you have keywords and alternate terms, you are prepared to start searching for sources in library search engines called **databases**.

Exercise 2

Using the example shown above, create a Word Cloud for

your research question. Think of at least five keywords and alternate terms you might use for searching .

Key Takeaways

- It's a good idea to begin the research process with a question you'd like to answer, instead of a broad topic or a thesis statement.
- Creating a research strategy and finding keywords and alternate terms for your topic can help you locate sources more effectively.
- Creating a Word Cloud to organize your thoughts makes searching for sources faster and easier.

4. Where can I find credible sources for my paper?

The college library subscribes to **databases** (search engines) for credible, academic sources. Some are general purpose databases that include the most prominent journals in many disciplines, and some are specific to a particular discipline. Cameron's Library website (https://www.cameron.edu/office-of-teaching-and-learning/library) includes a database list of all our search engines,

organized alphabetically (https://www.cameron.edu/office-of-teaching-and-learning/library/search-the-collection/databases-a-z) and by subject area (https://www.cameron.edu/office-of-teaching-and-learning/library/search-the-collection/databases-by-subject).

Sometimes the online database list is overwhelming for students. Please remember, you can always seek advice from librarians on the best databases for your topic.

Exercise 3

From the list of databases on the CU Library Website (https://www.cameron.edu/office-of-teaching-and-learning/library/search-the-collection/databases-a-z) , choose at least two that you might want to search. Why did you choose those databases for your topic?

When you click on a link and open up a database, you will see a search box or several search boxes. Try typing some of your **keywords/search terms** into the search box. If you don't see the type or number of results you want, try some of your other alternate terms. The main point is to keep trying! Sometimes you need to change your search terms or try searching in a different database to find new or different results.

Tip

If you can't find the sources you need, visit the library, or use the chat tool on the CU library website for one-on-one help from a librarian. You can find the library's hours and contact information on the CU Library Website

Key Takeaways

- Academic libraries subscribe to special search engines for scholarly sources called databases.
- Librarians can help you find and use the best databases for your subject or topic.

Additional Links

CU Library LibGuides (https://cameron.libguides.com/?b=g&d=a), Cameron University

Scholarly Source Annotation, (http://libguides.radford.edu/scholarly) Radford University

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Figure 6.2 "Understanding the Academic Peer Review Process," Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

Figure 6.3 "Example Scholarly Source", Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-BY-SA, derivative image from "Transnational Debts: The Cultural Memory of Navajo Code Talkers in World War II" in American Studies Journal, by Birgit Dawes, American Studies Journal, CC-BY-SA.

Figure 6.4 "Developing a Research Question," Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

Figure 6.5 "What's Your Research Question?," Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

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39. Assessing Source Credibility for Crafting a Well-Informed Argument

KATE WARRINGTON; NATASHA KOVALYOVA; AND CINDY KING

Overview

This article walks students through how to use critical reading strategies to help them select credible sources for their research papers and helps them understand how critical reading assignments they may have completed earlier in the semester have prepared them for the difficult task of selecting sources. Through analysis of how logos, ethos, and pathos are used in potential sources, students will understand that these persuasive techniques can influence the overall credibility of a source. Seven questions are presented that aid in critical reading, and examples of student writing are provided that demonstrate the connection between the use of persuasive techniques and their effect on the credibility of a particular source. The chapter concludes with a brief evaluation of two Internet sources on the topic of animal shelters, providing students with an anchor for evaluating sources as they prepare their own research papers.

In your writing course, you're likely to encounter a variety of assignments—reading, responding, writing essays—and each of these assignments is a building block to improved writing skills. Research writing requires all of the skills learned in these kinds

of assignments; it demands you put theory into practice, gather sources, synthesize them, and lend your voice to the ongoing conversation.

Critical Reading for Writing

Establishing Credibility

You've probably noticed that establishing credibility (ethos) is one of the most important things an author can do, and nearly every aspect of the essay—its audience awareness, organization, and content—can affect the author's credibility. Therefore, when determining the credibility of published sources for your research paper, you'll have to be thorough and focused. Even though you may not realize it, if you have engaged in discussions or written responses to assigned readings in the past, you may already have had plenty of practice assessing an author's credibility. For example, take a look at this excerpt from Jack's reading response. Jack is responding to Dorothy Allison's essay "What Did You Expect?" that was assigned in his Composition I class:

> I feel that Dorothy Allison is a very creative and honest writer, who believes in the importance of writing about the truths of life…she doesn't have any qualms talking about where and how she was raised. Even though she is a very accomplished writer, Allison is very self conscious of how people perceive her. Her childhood seems to be the cause of her low self-esteem and inadequacies which are stated in her writing… I was happy to know that Allison decided to go with a photo shoot of her in a Laundromat. This is showing that she is a down-to-earth everyday person, which to me is more appealing than an unrealistic Barbie doll figure that a

> lot of famous women try to personify. In sticking to her guns about not doing the powdered sugar photo shoot, Dorothy Allison is proving that she is not a sell out, and has moral value and self worth. (Jack (pseudonym). Reader Response to "What Did You Expect?").

Jack has approached this reading assignment as an active and engaged reader. He evaluates Allison's credibility in the essay and uses examples from the text that lead him to the conclusion that "Dorothy Allison is a creative and honest writer." Jack recognizes that Allison is an "accomplished writer" who is well-educated. He learns these facts by reading the introduction to the essay that included facts about Dorothy Allison, a writer whom Jack was not familiar with before he read this essay. Jack takes this information with him as he reads the text and looks for other clues to Allison's credibility as an author. Allison's willingness to share information about her childhood, and her "down-to-earth" quality that she expresses in her writing despite her apparent fame persuades Jack that what Allison writes is genuine and important.

The qualities Jack looks for in Allison's writing to evaluate her credibility are qualities that you can use to evaluate any author's credibility. You can ask yourself:

1. Who is the author?
2. How do I know that he/she is knowledgeable about the subject?

In Jack's case, he knows who the author is because he read the introductory material, and he believes Allison is knowledgeable about the subject because she writes about herself in a way that Jack perceives to be honest and forthright. It doesn't hurt that Allison writes about herself, a topic that any reader would expect Allison to know more about than anyone else.

Determining the credibility of an author can involve more than just knowing the author's credentials and whether or not they are knowledgeable about the topic. Authors establish credibility with

the way they construct their arguments. If an argument is illogical or seems to be biased in some way, this damages the author's credibility. One common mistake writers make is to represent only one side of an argument, which could make the audience believe that the author is either not knowledgeable about other possible arguments or not interested in these arguments. If an author is forthright about presenting a biased viewpoint, then you might believe the author to be more credible than one who claims to be presenting both sides of the story but does not.

Assessing Source Bias

The way authors choose to make their point is also important when evaluating sources for credibility. For example, you've probably seen the ASPCA commercials featuring melancholy music and heartbreaking pictures of sad or abused animals. The goal of these commercials is to persuade viewers to donate money to the ASPCA—and the appeal to emotions is hard to miss. The ASPCA and homeless pets have certainly benefitted from the generosity of viewers whose heartstrings were tugged by the use of emotion in these commercials.

Appealing to the reader's emotions (using pathos) can be very effective at helping the reader connect to the author's main point, but when we select sources for research projects, we must make sure that an author's appeal to emotion is not a sign of bias. Biased sources may cause readers to feel guilty about holding certain viewpoints or engaging in certain activities, which may be the goal of the source. For example, Lisa writes in her reading journal about Kasper Hauser's "Skymaul"—a parody of the SkyMall catalog that used to be found in most airlines' seatback pockets. She understands that Kasper Hauser is poking fun at consumer culture while realizing that she is an active part of that culture:

> We don't necessarily need any of the things advertised in

> the media or even in magazines though we more than often desire the things that might not even benefit our everyday lives… I find the pepper self-spray quite ironic; maybe it's just me but sometimes I feel like I'm actually pepper spraying myself when I purchase such things like are sold in the Skymall catalogue because maybe it just wasn't worth it or it didn't function as advertised. (Lisa (pseudonym). Reader Response to "Skymaul?").

In her response, Lisa knows that Kasper Hauser is presenting a particular side of the argument about consumer culture. Viewing the parody makes her feel a bit stupid for participating in this kind of culture—like she's "pepper spraying" herself. Kasper Hauser's "Skymaul" is biased because it only presents one side of the argument about consumerism, and it makes the reader aware of his or her place in the culture the group critiques—even causing the viewer to feel guilty or stupid for being part of that culture.

Using biased sources in your research can be problematic, particularly if you do not acknowledge that the source is biased. When you are engaging in critical reading assignments and/or evaluating sources for your research, ask yourself these questions to determine the degree to which a source is biased:

1. Is the author using emotional appeals/manipulation in his or her argument?
2. Does the author use "loaded" language to distract readers from relevant reasons and evidence?

Sometimes authors dismiss opposing arguments by claiming that these arguments are "uninformed" or "nonsensical." Some less savvy authors will be as bold as to claim another viewpoint is "stupid." Watch for these kinds of words because they are signs of bias.

Evaluating an Argument's Support

How authors put arguments together and what support they use to bolster their arguments can affect the credibility of the source. If an author makes an argument that remains logical and consistent from beginning to end, then readers are likely to be persuaded. When an author presents an illogical argument or an argument that seems to change as it develops, the author's credibility and persuasiveness is damaged. For instance, in John Freyer's "All My Life for Sale" some readers might sense that the stated purpose of the essay doesn't seem to match up with its tone. Telling his story, Freyer reflects on a project where he set up a Web site and sold all of his belongings over the Internet. He kept track of where many of his belongings went and attempted to visit his old belongings and the people who purchased them. While the reader might appreciate the author's creativity and a sense of adventure, deriving further "gains" from the initial project and publishing an essay might appear to some as merely a promotional campaign. A cautious reader might even suspect a hidden agenda behind the Freyer's project in which personal attachments were mined for money-making opportunities.

Despite Freyer's disclaimer that his motivations were more complex than just to make some money, readers who believe that his project as a whole and his essay in particular is an attempt at self-promotion will be questioning the essay with the following:

1. Is the support for the argument appropriate to the claim?
2. Are all the statements believable?
3. Is the argument consistent and complete?

Like questions 1-4, questions 5, 6, and 7 also can help you to determine whether an author is credible; these three questions address whether the argument is logically acceptable. The more logical an argument is, the more likely the reader will be persuaded.

When you evaluate a piece of writing using these seven questions,

you are using critical reading and thinking skills. These are the same skills you will use when you are evaluating sources for the research essay you are preparing. You are going to want to establish your own credibility in your writing. If you use sources that aren't credible, then your own credibility will suffer.

Finding Sources

While searching for sources, you will be making a lot of decisions. Some of them are easy; others are tough. Yet, regardless of what your decisions are going to be about—the focus, the argument, the support materials—at the core lies your credibility as a writer. In fact, there will be two kinds of credibility to juggle—that of your sources and that of your own. If you want to come across as a knowledgeable writer, the company you assemble (that is, the sources you bring in) will speak volumes about you and your understanding of the subject.

Striking as it might sound, credibility is not an innate quality. Credibility is established. Demonstrate a firm grasp of the matter at hand, and your audience will perceive you as a knowledgeable person, worthy of their attention. Show that you know who argues against your case, and your audience will take your argument more seriously. "But what if I am not particularly knowledgeable about the subject matter?" you might ask. "What if I am making my first scholastic steps?" Well, there is plenty of good news for you: good sources *lend you their credibility*.

How do you find good sources, then? Earlier in this chapter, we listed seven questions that can help you to determine the credibility of your sources:

1. Who is the author?
2. How do I know that he/she is knowledgeable about the subject?

3. Is the author using emotional appeals/manipulation in his or her argument?
4. Does the author use "loaded" language to distract readers from relevant reasons and evidence?
5. Is the support for the argument appropriate to the claim?
6. Are all the statements believable?
7. Is the argument consistent and complete?

These questions will help you select the sources that contribute best to your credibility as a writer. You may come across an insightful comment on your topic in a book, on a flyer, in an email, or a blog. You may hear important information in a radio program or on a late-night TV show. No media should be banned from your search effort, but you should be very picky about making the source yours. Remind yourself that sources are people and that you are about to jump into a conversation they have been having. To do so effectively, take a critical view of their conversation first. In other words, evaluate your sources.

Evaluating sources and critical reading go hand-in-hand. You read a piece critically in order to understand it. You evaluate the same piece in order to make an informed decision about "inviting" the writer to have a conversation with you on a topic. Simply put, when evaluating, you "read with an attitude" (Palmquist 49). The following advice might be useful:

> Accept nothing at face value; ask questions about your topic; look for similarities and differences in the source you read; examine the implications of what you read for your research project; be on the alert for unusual information; and note relevant sources and information. Most importantly, be open to ideas and arguments, even if you don't agree with them. Give them a chance to affect how you think about the conversation you have decided to join. (Palmquist 53)

Okay, given the variety of sources and the virtual sea of information, do you have to read and evaluate all sources in the same way? The

short answer is, "It depends." The general rules of critical reading and evaluating apply to the majority of sources. However, as more and more information is posted on the Web, additional precautions are needed.

Let's revisit, for a moment, the library setting. You have probably been told that print materials collected by librarians have great advantages. They are of a high quality because librarians review and carefully select books and journals for the library to buy. Library collections are systematically organized and cataloged. In case you are having trouble navigating the collection, the library staff can help you find what you are looking for or suggest where to look.

These are all good points. But libraries and print materials do have some disadvantages. Collections are limited by the physical space and the budget. Libraries cannot buy all the books printed in the world nor can they subscribe to all periodicals out there. They specialize in some subjects, while collecting very basic materials in other fields. To find a movie that came out, say, in the early 1940s, you might need to travel to a place that holds a copy of it or use the interlibrary loan system and borrow it for a short period of time.

Don't online resources have an advantage here? Yes and no. When your computer is connected to the Internet, you have a world of information at your fingertips. Type in a search term, and hundreds, if not thousands, of documents appear on your screen in a split second. News that broke an hour ago, game schedules, flight information, stock quotes, currency exchange rates, current temperature at your location, a list of courses offered at your school next semester, a menu at a nearby restaurant—you can access all that without leaving home.

In addition to being conveniently accessible, online information comes from a variety of sources that sometimes rival those in a library. Videos, audio files, and images all reside on the Internet. Say you are writing about global warming. In addition to scholarly journal articles, news briefs, environmental agencies' reports, statistics, transcripts of Congressional hearings, activists' blogs and discussion forums, a simple Google search can also bring you

videos, maps, PowerPoint presentations, and the like. To find all those resources in one library would be very difficult, if not impossible.

The Web, however, has its own disadvantages. One particularly notable concern is that because anyone can upload materials online, no one can be assured of their quality. No trained staff is out there to assist you in sieving through what you have pulled onto your screen. The sheer volume of information might be overwhelming, making you sometimes feel that there exists nothing of value on your particular topic.

There is no shortage of materials—both online and in print—as you have found by now. But which ones are good ones? To make that determination, it's time to be as picky as possible, scrutinizing the structure of their argument (logos), their motives and agendas (ethos), and their fair use of emotional appeals (pathos).

When you are writing a research paper, you will be expected to do precisely that, and more. You will also need to enter in a conversation with your sources and respond to them rather than report what they are saying. While your audience will, no doubt, benefit from knowing what experts have said, they are reading your paper and are interested in hearing what you have to say. Listen to what your sources say (that is, *read* carefully and critically) and try to understand their position. Then, agree or disagree, draw parallels between their views and yours, ask questions and take sides. Translated onto a written page, your conversation will take the shape of your quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. By doing so, you will be contributing to the discussion with your own observations, questions, comments, and concerns.

Selecting Sources Sample Topic: Animal Treatment

Let's explore the topic of animal treatment. After watching an

ASPCA commercial, you decided to explore the topic of animal shelters. Your interest in the topic was piqued by a brief memory of a handmade poster you saw earlier at a gas station. "Emily Missing," you remember it saying. Judging by the picture, Emily happened to be a kitten that ran away. "What if someone found Emily but had not seen the poster?" you wondered. Someone could have tried to return her to her owners if she wore a tag, or Emily could have been turned in to the nearest animal shelter or humane society. With Emily's fortune at the back of your mind, you want to learn more about animals in animal shelters and possibly write your findings in a paper.

You have a zillion questions to ask. How many animal shelters are currently in operation in the United States, or even in a given state? How many animals are kept there? What are the most common animals in a shelter? Do most animals in shelters get adopted? How do shelters ensure that an animal goes to good hands and not to abusive owners or research labs? What happens to those who cannot find a new owner because of their age, illness, or behavioral problems? How do shelters raise money? What happens to animals when a shelter cannot house them any longer?

Following in the steps of dozens of your fellow classmates, you opened a Google search and typed in "animal shelter" (see figure 1). Among the top results, you saw links to your local animal shelters and other rescue organizations.

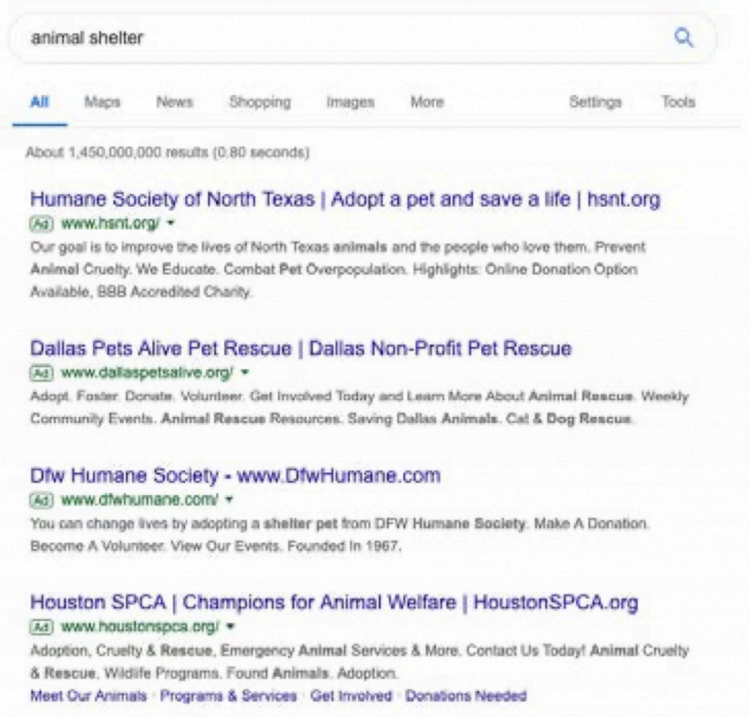

Figure 1. Google search for "animal shelter" shows several ad results, including "Humane Society of North Texas," "Dallas Pets Alive Pet Rescue," DFW Humane Society," and "Houston SPCA."

When searching for "animal shelter," you receive more than one billion results. You are now faced with a formidable evaluation task, but you can't possibly look at all of these sources. You could choose to narrow your search terms to something like "animal shelters and lost pets" (which yields 66,200,000 results) or take Google's apparent suggestion and focus your search on animal shelters in your local area. Let's say you decide to focus on the Humane Society of North Texas, the first result from your original search (see figure 2).

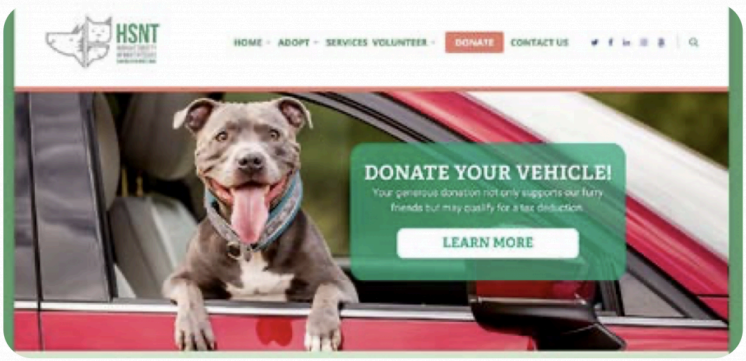

Figure 2. The Humane Society of North Texas homepage shows the organization's logo, a basic navigational menu, and a photo of a large dog looking out a car window into the camera. Text next to the dog encourages viewers to donate their vehicle in support of the Humane Society.

To guide you during this evaluation process are the critical reading questions that we discussed earlier.

1. Who is the author?
2. How do I know that he/she is knowledgeable about the subject?
3. Is the author using emotional appeals/manipulation in his or her argument?
4. Does the author use "loaded" language to distract readers from relevant reasons and evidence?
5. Is the support for the argument appropriate to the claim?
6. Are all the statements believable?
7. Is the argument consistent and complete?

Using the Questions to Determine Credibility

Just by looking at the homepage, it is clear that the Humane Society

of North Texas sponsors and maintains the site. After clicking on some of the more specific links on the top of the page, you locate some press releases that name individual authors and their titles. For example, if you clicked on the item "Newsroom" from the drop-down menu under "Home," then on the press release titled "We Like Big Mutts and We Cannot Lie (Ok- Cats, Too)!," you will be directed to the page shown here in Figure 3. Notice that the author is Cassie Lackey, who is the Director of Communications for the Humane Society of North Texas. Because Lackey works for the Humane Society of North Texas, she likely has access to accurate information about this organization. Her role as Director of Communications is to inform the community about news related to the Humane Society, so from what we can tell so far, she appears to be a credible author (see figure 3).

HSNT
HUMANE SOCIETY OF NORTH TEXAS
SAVING LIVES SINCE 1905.

Cassie Lackey
Director of Communications
Humane Society of North Texas
Cell: 817-909-0667
Email: communications@hsnt.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

We Like Big Mutts and We Cannot Lie (Ok–Cats, Too)!

Fort Worth, Texas, May 24, 2019:
The Humane Society of North Texas (HSNT), will fly over 160 dogs and cats on Saturday, May 25, 2019, to Washington and Idaho. HSNT is partnering with Wings of Rescue, GreaterGood.org, and the ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) to fly pets to the Pacific Northwest, where adopters are excitedly awaiting big and small furry friends alike! Flying large dogs to other states will ease overcrowding in HSNT's shelter.

Large dogs are surrendered to HSNT consistently and abundantly. What HSNT has recognized is the majority of large dogs coming through its doors are much harder to adopt into homes due to their size. Larger dogs are susceptible to spending longer times in the shelter waiting for their forever homes. There is a tremendous need for adopters and fosters of large dogs. To learn more about the available pets at the Humane Society of North Texas, visit hsnt.org.

"The Humane Society of North Texas is beyond grateful for these lifesaving flights. We desperately need to find homes for our larger dogs," said Cassie Lackey, Director of Communications at HSNT. "As our intake continues to grow, we need to pursue finding forever homes and placement for the voiceless pets in our care."

Figure 3. "We Like Big Mutts and We Cannot Lie (Ok–Cats, Too)!" press release was found by following the "Newsroom" link from hsnt.org. The release discusses a partnership with several organizations that will allow them to fly larger dogs to other states to be adopted, thus increasing rates of adoption. Source: The Human Society of North Texas.

While it appears as if this source has a credible author, we should look for other clues to help us feel certain about its credibility. The extension .org in the URL indicates that this Web site is not set up for commercial purposes—that is, not for deriving profit from the activity on the site. In fact, the central features of the site are the menu items at the top of the home page: Adopt, Services Volunteer, and Donate. The information appears very straightforward and oriented toward a clear purpose: to help people adopt animals or volunteer their time and money to help homeless animals.

By now, it's easy to conclude that *hsnt.org* may be a useful source if you live in the North Texas area and want to focus your research on local animal shelters. But, you can't hang your hat on just one source.

After browsing through several local animal shelter sites, you expand your search and click on the Web site for the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA): www.peta.org. The banner has a direct slogan: "Animals are not ours to experiment on, eat, wear, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way." That slogan provides some insight into the mission of the organization. The breadth and depth of information you find here is impressive: feature stories, news briefs, files on a series of animal cruelty issues, factsheets, blog posts, and a sizeable collection of videos. It is here, however, that a peculiar approach to presenting information becomes prominent, namely, the extensive use of celebrities to attract attention and (hopefully) advance the organization's cause.

You might also notice that on this site a lot of effort is put into raising awareness about animal cruelty and stirring grassroots activism. You will find tips for activists, templates of correspondence to send to public officials, and news of upcoming events. Does that constitute a bias? Well, it definitely points to a well-shaped agenda, and you need to recognize that, whether you agree or disagree with the mission the site is promoting. Without doubt, some of the material you come across can be considered controversial. Therefore, when you consider the question, "Are all the statements believable?" think not only about your own assessment of the material but also about what your audience may think. If your audience believes that some of the source material you choose to include in your paper is not believable, then your credibility will be damaged. After carefully evaluating PETA's Web site, you will likely decide that while it contains some useful and credible information, you will need to use this site with care and acknowledge its agenda.

All information that you have discovered so far is valuable, but you

know that to write a well-informed research paper, you'll have to search further.

Conclusion

To succeed as a researcher, and ultimately a persuasive, credible writer, you have learned that you can't fly solo—that, in fact, no one can go it alone. You will come to understand that strong, well-defended arguments need support, just as, for instance, most singers need a solid back-up band. And like any good front person, you should audition and choose carefully those who will stand behind you. In other words, interrogate those sources. Ask the tough questions. If you do so, you can resist the charges of loaded language, recognize when sources tug at your heartstrings, and leave unreliable statements behind.

This chapter has taken you step-by-step through the process of how to critically evaluate your sources. With practice, this type of thinking will become a natural part of your approach to both assigned reading and research material as well to what's outside the classroom. And the more critical you are in your reading and research, the more it will become a part of how you view the world, be it in the classroom, online, or virtually everywhere. This ability to encounter the world with a critical eye is a valuable tool, one that allows you to more fully engage with it. And your capacity for determining credibility can help you make informed decisions in your writing, work, and life.

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Teacher Resources for Assessing Source Credibility for Crafting a Well- Informed Argument by Kate Warrington, Natasha Kovalyova, and Cindy King

Overview and Teaching Strategies

This essay is ideally taught in preparation for collecting sources for research writing and provides a nice scaffold for students who have already engaged in some critical reading assignments or reading responses prior to being assigned a research writing assignment. The flow of activities was designed to support students in introductory composition, although the topic of source evaluation

fits well at all levels, across the curriculum. Recognizing a widespread practice among college students to Google their topics, we have found it critical to introduce students to some concrete ways to evaluate all types of sources since we've found it to be unlikely (and impractical) to prohibit the use of Web sources.

Questions

1. How, if at all, do sources dealing with certain subjects and/or arguments call for a more rigorous scrutiny of credibility? For example, do those that are emotionally charged demand a closer look? Do sources in highly specialized fields require you to scrutinize the structure of their arguments more carefully?
2. To what extent should you consider an author's credentials when determining his or her knowledge of the field, and ultimately the credibility of the source? When, for example, might a source written by a layperson be as valuable as one by an expert in the field? How might you compare, for instance, an article on juvenile delinquency written by a legislator to one produced by a social psychologist? How might you treat a book written by a physician who is also a TV personality?
3. Do certain subjects, purposes, and audiences allow for a less critical evaluation of bias? How,

specifically, might you determine when sources use emotional appeals without bias?

4. What further challenges do Internet sources pose when it comes to gauging their credibility? How, for example, can you evaluate credibility when a Web site's content comes from an indeterminate source or multiple authors?
5. In what situations, if any, might you disregard credibility of a source? If a source lacks credibility according to your examination through critical reading, does it always mean you shouldn't use it? How, if at all, might you use a source that lacks credibility in your essay?

Activities

The following are two class activities that can help students put to action the advice and steps for critical reading discussed in the essay.

Critical Reading Practice

To get students more comfortable with reading academic writing, have them practice these skills in small groups in a low-stakes environment. Hand out a short scholarly source (3 to 5 pages) on an accessible topic and give them time in class to read it. Then divide them into small groups and ask them to apply the seven questions presented in the essay to this source. Once they have done so, they present to the class their recommendation about whether the source is credible, and if they would or wouldn't use it in their research paper. These presentations typically generate a vibrant class discussion.

Web source Evaluation Practice

Since most students feel comfortable using the popular Internet to find sources for their research, offer them an opportunity to work through credibility of Internet sources during small group work in class. Ask each small group to choose a topic (it can be a topic they plan to work with for their research paper) and conduct an Internet search for sources on that topic. Once they have located a source that they believe looks like it has good information, ask them to locate basic information like the author/ sponsoring organization and publication date. In many cases, this information will be difficult to locate, which not only helps

them to prepare for the challenges they may face citing Internet sources, but also helps them to take a second look at the credibility of Internet sources.

This essay is a chapter in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Volume 3, a peer-reviewed open textbook series for the writing classroom: https://writingspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/warrington-kovalyova-king-assessing-source-credibility-1.pdf

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40. Annoying Ways People Use Sources

KYLE D. STEDMAN

How Slow Driving Is Like Sloppy Writing

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

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

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

One day, you may discover that something you've written has just been read by a reader who, unfortunately, was annoyed at some of

the ways you integrated sources. She was reading along and then suddenly exclaimed, "What . . . ? But, hey . . . oh come on!" If you're lucky, this reader will try to imagine why you typed things the way you did, giving you the benefit of the doubt. But sometimes you'll be slotted into positions that might not really be accurate. When this frustrated reader walks away from your work, trying to figure out, say, why you used so many quotations, or why you kept starting and ending paragraphs with them, she may come to the same conclusions I do about slow drivers:

1. You don't know the generally accepted practices of using sources (especially in academic writing) in the U.S. Or,
2. You know the guidelines but don't care.

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

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

It helps me to remember that the conventions of writing have

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

The Annoyances

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

Armadillo Roadkill

> *Armadillo Roadkill: dropping in a quotation without introducing it first*

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

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

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

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

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

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

> We should all be prepared with a backup plan if a zombie

> invasion occurs. **Max Brooks suggests a number of ways to prepare for zombies' particular traits, though he underestimates the ability of humans to survive in harsh environments. For example, he writes,** "Unlike its human counterparts, an army of zombies is completely independent of support" (155). **His shortsightedness could have a number of consequences. . . .**

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

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

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

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

Dating Spider-Man

> *Dating Spider-Man: starting or ending a paragraph with a quotation*

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

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

> [End of a preceding paragraph:] . . . Therefore, the evidence clearly suggests that we should be exceptionally careful about deciding when and where to rest.
>
> "When taking a nap, always rest your elbow on your desk and keep your arm perpendicular to your desktop" (Piven and Borgenicht 98). After all, consider the following scenario. . . .

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

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

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

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

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

Uncle Barry and His Encyclopedia of Useless Information

Uncle Barry and his Encyclopedia of Useless Information: using too many quotations in a row

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

I might even think to myself, "Wait, I want to know more about that topic, but you're zooming on before you contextualize your information at all."

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

> Addressing this issue, David M. Potter comments, "Whether Seward meant this literally or not, it was in fact a singularly accurate forecast for territorial Kansas" (199). Of course, Potter's view is contested, even though he claims, "Soon, the Missourians began to perceive the advantages of operating

> without publicity" (200). Interestingly, "The election was bound to be irregular in any case" (201).

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

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

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

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

Toner's response to the Obama video is like a diving board that Jessica bounces off of before she gets to the really interesting stuff: the pool (her own observations). A bunch of diving boards lined up

without a pool (tons of quotes with no analysis) wouldn't please anyone—except maybe Uncle Barry.

Am I in the Right Movie?

> *Am I in the Right Movie? failing to integrate a quotation into the grammar of the preceding sentence*

When reading drafts of my writing, this is a common experience: I start to read a sentence that seems interesting and normal, with everything going just the way I expect it to. But then the unexpected happens: a quotation blurts itself into the sentence in a way that doesn't fit with the grammar that built up to quotation.

It feels like sitting in a movie theater, everything going as expected, when suddenly the opening credits start for a movie I didn't plan to see. Here are two examples of what I'm talking about. Read them out loud, and you'll see how suddenly wrong they feel.

1. Therefore, the author warns that a zombie's vision "are no different than those of a normal human" (Brooks 6).
2. Sheila Anne Barry advises that "Have you ever wondered what it's like to walk on a tightrope—many feet up in the air?" (50)

In the first example, the quoter's build-up to the quotation uses a singular subject—*a zombie's vision*—which, when paired with the quotation, is annoyingly matched with the plural verb *are*. It would be much less jolting to write, "a zombie's vision *is*," which makes the subject and verb agree. In the second example, the quoter builds up to the quotation with a third-person, declarative independent clause: *Sheila Anne Barry advises*. But then the quotation switches into second person—*you*—and unexpectedly asks a

question—completely different from the expectation that was built up by the first part of the sentence.

The Fix is usually easy: you read your essay out loud to someone else, and if you stumble as you enter a quotation, there's probably something you can adjust in your lead-in sentence to make the two fit together well. Maybe you'll need to choose a different subject to make it fit with the quote's verb (reader instead of readers; each instead of all), or maybe you'll have to scrap what you first wrote and start over. On occasion you'll even feel the need to transparently modify the quotation by adding an [s] to one of its verbs, always being certain to use square brackets to show that you adjusted something in the quotation. Maybe you'll even find a way to quote a shorter part of the quotation and squeeze it into the context of a sentence that is mostly your own, a trick that can have a positive effect on readers, who like smooth water slides more than they like bumpy slip-and-slides. Jennifer does this well in the following sentence, for example:

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

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

I Can't Find the Stupid Link

> *I Can't Find the Stupid Link: no connection between the first letter of a parenthetical citation and the first letter of a works cited entry*

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

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

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

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

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

[Works Cited Page:] Brooks, Max. The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection from the Living Dead. New York: Three Rivers, 2003. Print.

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

The Fix is to make sure that the first word of the works cited entry is the word you use in your in-text citation, every time. If the works cited entry starts with Brooks, use (Brooks) in the essay text.

Citations not including last names may seem to complicate this advice, but they all follow the same basic concept. For instance, you might have:

- **A citation that only lists a title**. For instance, your citation might read ("Gray Wolf General Information"). In this case, the assumption is that the citation can be found under the G section of the works cited page. Leah cites her paraphrase of a source with no author in the following way, indicating that I should head to the G's if I want to learn more about her source:
    - Alaska is the only refuge that is left for the wolves in the United States, and once that is gone, they will more than likely become extinct in this country ("Gray Wolf General Information").
- **A citation that only lists a page number.** Maybe the citation simply says (25). That implies that somewhere in the surrounding text, the essay writer must have made it stupendously clear what name or title to look up in the works cited list. This happens a lot, since it's common to introduce a

quotation by naming the person it came from, in which case it would be repetitive to name that author again in the citation.

- **A quotation without a citation at all.** This happens when you cite a work that is both A) from a web page that doesn't number the pages or paragraphs and B) is named in the text surrounding the quotation. Readers will assume that the author is named nearby. Stephanie wisely leaves off any citation in the example below, where it's already clear that I should head to the O's on the works cited page to find information about this source, a web page written by Opotow:
    - To further this point, Opotow notes, "Don't imagine you'll be unscathed by the methods you use. The end may justify the means. . . . But there's a price to pay, and the price does tend to be oneself."

I Swear I Did Some Research!

> *I Swear I Did Some Research: dropping in a citation without making it clear what information came from that source*

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

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

> scale theories of the universe to the small concerns of quantum physics (Hawking 51).

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

But on the other hand, which of these three sentences, exactly, came from Hawking's book? Did Hawking claim that physics experts should join up with folks in other academic disciplines, or is that the student writer? In other words, at which point does the author's point of view meld into material taken specifically from Hawking?

I recognize that there often aren't clean answers to a question like that. What we read and what we know sometimes meld together so unnoticeably that we don't know which ideas and pieces of information are "ours" and which aren't. Discussing "patchwriting," a term used to describe writing that blends words and phrases from sources with words and phrases we came up with ourselves, scholar Rebecca Moore Howard writes, "When I believe I am not patchwriting, I am simply doing it so expertly that the seams are no longer visible—or I am doing it so unwittingly that I cannot cite my sources" (91). In other words, all the moves we make when writing came from somewhere else at some point, whether we realize it or not. Yikes. But remember our main purpose here: to not look annoying when using sources. And most of your instructors aren't going to say, "I understand that I couldn't tell the difference between your ideas and your source's because we quite naturally patchwrite all the time. That's fine with me. Party on!" They're much more likely to imagine that you plopped in a few extra citations as a way of defensively saying, "I swear I did some research! See? Here's a citation right here! Doesn't that prove I worked really hard?"

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

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

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

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

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

Whoa—that's a lot of citations. Remember how the writer of my earlier example cited Stephen Hawking because she summarized his ideas? Well, a number of essays describing the results of experiments, like this one, use citations with a different purpose, citing previous studies whose general conclusions support the study described in this new paper, like building blocks. It's like saying to your potentially skeptical readers, "Look, you might be wondering if I'm a quack. But I can prove I'm not! See, all these other people published in similar areas! Are you going to pick fights with

all of them too?" You might have noticed as well that these citations are in APA format, reflecting the standards of the social sciences journal this passage was published in. Well, in this kind of context APA's requirement to cite the year of a study makes a lot of sense too—after all, the older a study, the less likely it is to still be relevant.

Conclusion: Use Your Turn Signals

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

Discussion

1. Because so many of these guidelines depend on the writer's purpose, publication space, and audience, it can be difficult to know when to follow them strictly and when to bend them. What are some specific writing situations where a writer is justified to bend the standards of how to incorporate sources?
2. Choose one of the annoyances. Then, look through a number of different pieces of writing from different genres and collect two examples of writers who followed your chosen guideline perfectly and two who didn't. For each source you found, jot a sentence or two describing the context of that source and why you think its writer did or did not follow the guideline.
3. Rank the annoyances in order of most annoying to least annoying, pretending that you are a college professor. Now, rank them from the point of view of a newspaper editor, a popular blogger, and another college student. What changes did you make in your rankings?

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41. Integrating Evidence Appropriately

ALEXANDRA W. WATKINS

Research is a major component of many genres of writing. During the research process, writers discover academic conversations and learn how to build on those conversations with their own ideas. However, creating an effective balance between these two things can be tricky.

One of the common questions that writers have about research-based assignments is how they can integrate evidence from appropriate academic sources effectively. This component of writing can be difficult because the writer knows it is their paper, and may not understand why they need to use other people's work or how this can be done effectively. In the following chart from the Purdue Online Writing Lab, Stolley, Brizee, and Paiz suggest that some of the reasons writers have difficulty navigating the appropriate place of outside material in their writing is due to some seeming contradictions in assignment guidelines instructors give:

Develop a topic based on what has already been said and written	**BUT**	Write something new and original
Rely on experts' and authorities' opinions	**BUT**	Improve upon and/or disagree with those same opinions
Give credit to previous researchers	**BUT**	Make your own significant contribution
Improve your English to fit into a discourse community by building upon what you hear and read	**BUT**	Use your own words and your own voice

These different perspectives may make you feel like you're trying to perform a high-wire act. What does it mean to be original while

entering the research conversations that others have had? When is the writer's voice appropriate, and when will it lead to reader's confusion? Some of the guidelines may even seem contradictory to each other.

However, in the middle of these different directives, there is a middle ground where writers can successfully integrate evidence without it overtaking their own messages. The process of writing a research paper becomes easier if you imagine it is like building a house. While writers use the blueprint established by others who write on the same topic, they nevertheless have to construct their house on their own. What kind of "upgrades" are you including–granite countertops or tile? Carpet or hardwood flooring? These choices make the house your own. Similarly, using source material and established conventions are important–you wouldn't build a house without a roof and walls–but the paper still needs to be distinguishable from others.

As writers move into building their own "houses," finding that middle ground for integrating evidence still might not be clear. Writers who are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with incorporating outside material into their own work may make some of the following common mistakes:

Plagiarism

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "plagiarism" as "the action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft." " Plagiarism in writing occurs when writers use information they found in an outside source and don't say where the information came from. In the United States intellectual system, plagiarism carries a significant stigma, and tends to be viewed as an intentional act of deceit (or dishonesty). As a result, the consequences of plagiarism in the American classroom

are severe. When writers enroll in classes, they are expected to submit assignments that represent their own, honest efforts.

However, writers may still commit plagiarism for a variety of reasons, such as being unfamiliar with the conventions of citation, feeling uncomfortable writing academic discourse, and coming from a culture with a different philosophy on using other people's words or ideas. Nevertheless, the prevalence of plagiarism detection sites, such as Turn It In or Safe Assign, make it likely that writers will be caught if they plagiarize, so it is best to avoid plagiarism and its inevitable consequences. For further information on how to avoid plagiarism, you might review your university's handbook and your professor's syllabus. Remember, it is always better to ask questions about plagiarism, rather than suffer the consequences.

Over- or mis-use of Quoted Material

Overuse of Quotes

Again, because some writers feel uncomfortable with constructing their own arguments, they feel compelled to overuse the writing that has already been done on the topic. This use of evidence, though, is rarely considered effective by readers. Writers should aim for the overwhelming majority–usually about 80% or more–of their paper to be in their own words. Direct quotations should only be used when the information quoted is representative. This might include when you're citing a counterargument, for example, and it's important to include the words as they were written to develop ethos, or when someone has coined a phrase or term.

This information sometimes confounds writers. How, they wonder, are they supposed to write RESEARCH papers without RESEARCH? What these writers have to learn is that direct quotes are only one type of evidence that can be used to support a claim.

Other options for using outside material are paraphrases, summaries, data, and statistics. Remember, though, that even though these types of evidence are in your own words, you still have to give credit to the author who originally collected the data/had the thought.

Misuse of Quotes – Block Quotes

In your previous experience, you may have run into very long blocks of text from other sources that a writer has used.

The following is an example of a block quote in MLA style. The information is from a page of The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill's website:

> Use quotations at strategically selected moments. You have probably been told by teachers to provide as much evidence as possible in support of your thesis. But packing your paper with quotations will not necessarily strengthen your argument. The majority of your paper should still be your original ideas in your own words (after all, it's your paper). And quotations are only one type of evidence: well-balanced papers may also make use of paraphrases, data, and statistics. The types of evidence you use will depend in part on the conventions of the discipline or audience for which you are writing. (par. 2)

There are specific conventions for integrating block quotes depending on the citation style. However, because of the nature of first-year writing courses, the use of block quotations for these classes is highly unusual. Because you are probably just learning how to use source material, realize that the use of block quotes may be a crutch. It's better to paraphrase or shorten quotations to a length below that required for block quotes (four lines for MLA) whenever possible. This will ensure that the focus of your papers

is your writing and ideas instead of the quotations you are using as support.

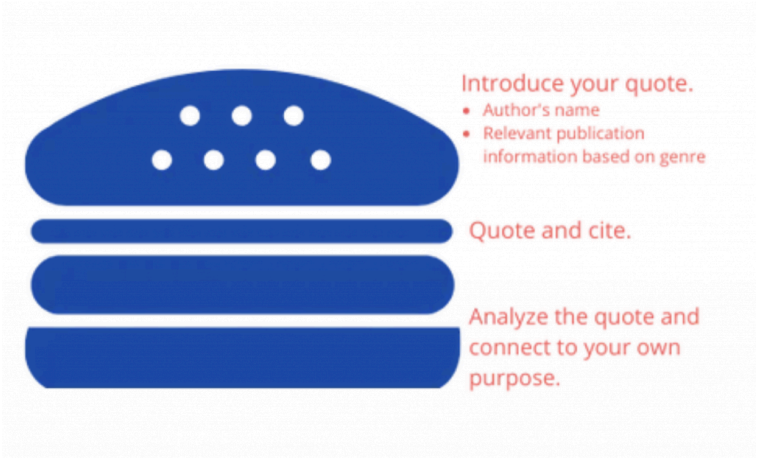
Misuse of Quotes – Dropped Quotes

Another issue that may arise with using quoted material is a dropped quote. A dropped quote happens when a writer places a quote in their paper without introducing it or giving any context for it. Unlike a block quote, a dropped quote is never considered effective. An example looks like this:

> Writers may sometimes have an issue with integrating quoted material. "Because citation work is detail-oriented, requires great concentration, and is sometimes perceived as 'drudge work,' it often generates a high level of frustration" (Dickerson 477). This statement is true for all writers.

Because the quote in the middle has been dropped in as its own sentence, it could be interpreted differently by the reader than it was by the writer. Moreover, by pulling quotes without thinking about their context, a writer is more likely to misinterpret the meaning of the quote, therefore losing credibility.

To avoid dropped quotes, always use the "quote sandwich" model: begin by prefacing what is happening in the original work, information about the piece of writing, or information by the author. Then, integrate the quote. Finally, explain your interpretation of the quote and its significance, i.e., the reason you incorporated it.



The quote, then, is sandwiched by your own words.
Here's what the example looks like after this process:

> Writers may sometimes have an issue with integrating quoted material. Discussing her students who work at a law review journal, Stetson professor Darby Dickerson proposes that "because citation work is detail-oriented, requires great concentration, and is sometimes perceived as 'drudge work,' it often generates a high level of frustration" (Dickerson 477). Although she writes about her particular context, the frustration that she mentions translates to other writing situations as well.

Incorporating this material, the new example both better represents the purpose of the original article and borrows the credibility associated with the original's author and position. While the first time the writer is introduced needs to be more thorough, each subsequent time that quotes from the same writer are introduced also needs to have an incorporation of the quote sandwich model.

Issues with Citation

Citation issues can result in accidental issues with evidence. Some writers think that only direct quotations need to be cited, whereas the writer's own summaries or paraphrases of the same material don't. However, this is not true. In order to incorporate evidence effectively, you must know that any information that you found in an outside source has to be cited appropriately in text, followed by a fuller bibliographic citation in the appropriate place (which depends on the citation style).

For MLA, the citation practice is to place the author's name in parentheses for in-text citations, and the full entry on the Works Cited page. Here is an example of a summary of the chart at the beginning of this article:

> Writers need to augment the existing conversation about a topic, but still need to provide adequate credit to existing sources (Stolley, Brizee, and Paiz, par. 3).

Notice that although this information has been changed significantly, it still requires citation because the ideas are the authors', not mine.

Specific conventions are followed for citation depending on the style a writer uses. More information about citation can be found at Writing Commons or through the associated style manual.

By avoiding these three pitfalls and appropriately integrating evidence, writers can boost their credibility and improve the quality of their own claims.

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PART X
ARGUMENTATION

42. Argument: Overview

THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

What this handout is about

This handout will define what an argument is and explain why you need one in most of your academic essays.

You may be surprised to hear that the word "argument" does not have to be written anywhere in your assignment for it to be an important part of your task. In fact, making an argument—expressing a point of view on a subject and supporting it with evidence—is often the aim of academic writing. Your instructors may assume that you know this and thus may not explain the importance of arguments in class.

Most material you learn in college is or has been debated by someone, somewhere, at some time. Even when the material you read or hear is presented as a simple fact, it may actually be one person's interpretation of a set of information. Instructors may call on you to examine that interpretation and defend it, refute it, or offer some new view of your own. In writing assignments, you will almost always need to do more than just summarize information that you have gathered or regurgitate facts that have been discussed in class. You will need to develop a point of view on or interpretation of that material and provide evidence for your position.

Consider an example. For nearly 2000 years, educated people in many Western cultures believed that bloodletting—deliberately causing a sick person to lose blood—was the most effective treatment for a variety of illnesses. The claim that bloodletting is beneficial to human health was not widely questioned until the 1800s, and some physicians continued to recommend bloodletting

as late as the 1920s. Medical practices have now changed because some people began to doubt the effectiveness of bloodletting; these people argued against it and provided convincing evidence. Human knowledge grows out of such differences of opinion, and scholars like your instructors spend their lives engaged in debate over what claims may be counted as accurate in their fields. In their courses, they want you to engage in similar kinds of critical thinking and debate.

Argumentation is not just what your instructors do. We all use argumentation on a daily basis, and you probably already have some skill at crafting an argument. The more you improve your skills in this area, the better you will be at thinking critically, reasoning, making choices, and weighing evidence.

Making a claim

What is an argument? In academic writing, an argument is usually a main idea, often called a "claim" or "thesis statement," backed up with evidence that supports the idea. In the majority of college papers, you will need to make some sort of claim and use evidence to support it, and your ability to do this well will separate your papers from those of students who see assignments as mere accumulations of fact and detail. In other words, gone are the happy days of being given a "topic" about which you can write anything. It is time to stake out a position and prove why it is a good position for a thinking person to hold. See our handout on thesis statements.

Claims can be as simple as "Protons are positively charged and electrons are negatively charged," with evidence such as, "In this experiment, protons and electrons acted in such and such a way." Claims can also be as complex as "Genre is the most important element to the contract of expectations between filmmaker and audience," using reasoning and evidence such as, "defying genre expectations can create a complete apocalypse of story form and

content, leaving us stranded in a sort of genre-less abyss." In either case, the rest of your paper will detail the reasoning and evidence that have led you to believe that your position is best.

When beginning to write a paper, ask yourself, "What is my point?" For example, the point of this handout is to help you become a better writer, and we are arguing that an important step in the process of writing effective arguments is understanding the concept of argumentation. If your papers do not have a main point, they cannot be arguing for anything. Asking yourself what your point is can help you avoid a mere "information dump." Consider this: your instructors probably know a lot more than you do about your subject matter. Why, then, would you want to provide them with material they already know? **Instructors are usually looking for two things:**

1. Proof that you understand the material
2. A demonstration of your ability to use or apply the material in ways that go beyond what you have read or heard.

This second part can be done in many ways: you can critique the material, apply it to something else, or even just explain it in a different way. In order to succeed at this second step, though, you must have a particular point to argue.

Arguments in academic writing are usually complex and take time to develop. Your argument will need to be more than a simple or obvious statement such as "Frank Lloyd Wright was a great architect." Such a statement might capture your initial impressions of Wright as you have studied him in class; however, you need to look deeper and express specifically what caused that "greatness." Your instructor will probably expect something more complicated, such as "Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture combines elements of European modernism, Asian aesthetic form, and locally found materials to create a unique new style," or "There are many strong similarities between Wright's building designs and those of his mother, which suggests that he may have borrowed some of her

ideas." To develop your argument, you would then define your terms and prove your claim with evidence from Wright's drawings and buildings and those of the other architects you mentioned.

Evidence

Do not stop with having a point. You have to back up your point with evidence. The strength of your evidence, and your use of it, can make or break your argument. See our handout on evidence. You already have the natural inclination for this type of thinking, if not in an academic setting. Think about how you talked your parents into letting you borrow the family car. Did you present them with lots of instances of your past trustworthiness? Did you make them feel guilty because your friends' parents all let them drive? Did you whine until they just wanted you to shut up? Did you look up statistics on teen driving and use them to show how you didn't fit the dangerous-driver profile? These are all types of argumentation, and they exist in academia in similar forms.

Every field has slightly different requirements for acceptable evidence, so familiarize yourself with some arguments from within that field instead of just applying whatever evidence you like best. Pay attention to your textbooks and your instructor's lectures. What types of argument and evidence are they using? The type of evidence that sways an English instructor may not work to convince a sociology instructor. Find out what counts as proof that something is true in that field. Is it statistics, a logical development of points, something from the object being discussed (art work, text, culture, or atom), the way something works, or some combination of more than one of these things?

Be consistent with your evidence. Unlike negotiating for the use of your parents' car, a college paper is not the place for an all-out blitz of every type of argument. You can often use more than one type of evidence within a paper, but make sure that within each

section you are providing the reader with evidence appropriate to each claim. So, if you start a paragraph or section with a statement like "Putting the student seating area closer to the basketball court will raise player performance," do not follow with your evidence on how much more money the university could raise by letting more students go to games for free. Information about how fan support raises player morale, which then results in better play, would be a better follow-up. Your next section could offer clear reasons why undergraduates have as much or more right to attend an undergraduate event as wealthy alumni—but this information would not go in the same section as the fan support stuff. You cannot convince a confused person, so keep things tidy and ordered.

Counterargument

One way to strengthen your argument and show that you have a deep understanding of the issue you are discussing is to anticipate and address counterarguments or objections. By considering what someone who disagrees with your position might have to say about your argument, you show that you have thought things through, and you dispose of some of the reasons your audience might have for not accepting your argument. Recall our discussion of student seating in the Dean Dome. To make the most effective argument possible, you should consider not only what students would say about seating but also what alumni who have paid a lot to get good seats might say.

You can generate counterarguments by asking yourself how someone who disagrees with you might respond to each of the points you've made or your position as a whole. **If you can't immediately imagine another position, here are some strategies to try:**

- Do some research. It may seem to you that no one could possibly disagree with the position you are arguing, but someone probably has. For example, some people argue that a hotdog is a sandwich. If you are making an argument concerning, for example, the characteristics of an exceptional sandwich, you might want to see what some of these people have to say.
- Talk with a friend or with your teacher. Another person may be able to imagine counterarguments that haven't occurred to you.
- Consider your conclusion or claim and the premises of your argument and imagine someone who denies each of them. For example, if you argued, "Cats make the best pets. This is because they are clean and independent," you might imagine someone saying, "Cats do not make the best pets. They are dirty and needy."

Once you have thought up some counterarguments, consider how you will respond to them—will you concede that your opponent has a point but explain why your audience should nonetheless accept your argument? Will you reject the counterargument and explain why it is mistaken? Either way, you will want to leave your reader with a sense that your argument is stronger than opposing arguments.

When you are summarizing opposing arguments, be charitable. Present each argument fairly and objectively, rather than trying to make it look foolish. You want to show that you have considered the many sides of the issue. If you simply attack or caricature your opponent (also referred to as presenting a "straw man"), you suggest that your argument is only capable of defeating an extremely weak adversary, which may undermine your argument rather than enhance it.

It is usually better to consider one or two serious counterarguments in some depth, rather than to give a long but superficial list of many different counterarguments and replies.

Be sure that your reply is consistent with your original argument. If considering a counterargument changes your position, you will need to go back and revise your original argument accordingly.

Audience

Audience is a very important consideration in argument. Take a look at our handout on audience. A lifetime of dealing with your family members has helped you figure out which arguments work best to persuade each of them. Maybe whining works with one parent, but the other will only accept cold, hard statistics. Your kid brother may listen only to the sound of money in his palm. It's usually wise to think of your audience in an academic setting as someone who is perfectly smart but who doesn't necessarily agree with you. You are not just expressing your opinion in an argument ("It's true because I said so"), and in most cases your audience will know something about the subject at hand—so you will need sturdy proof. At the same time, do not think of your audience as capable of reading your mind. You have to come out and state both your claim and your evidence clearly. Do not assume that because the instructor knows the material, he or she understands what part of it you are using, what you think about it, and why you have taken the position you've chosen.

Critical reading

Critical reading is a big part of understanding argument. Although some of the material you read will be very persuasive, do not fall under the spell of the printed word as authority. Very few of your instructors think of the texts they assign as the last word on the

subject. Remember that the author of every text has an agenda, something that he or she wants you to believe. This is OK—everything is written from someone's perspective—but it's a good thing to be aware of. For more information on objectivity and bias and on reading sources carefully, read our handouts on evaluating print sources and reading to write.

Take notes either in the margins of your source (if you are using a photocopy or your own book) or on a separate sheet as you read. Put away that highlighter! Simply highlighting a text is good for memorizing the main ideas in that text—it does not encourage critical reading. Part of your goal as a reader should be to put the author's ideas in your own words. Then you can stop thinking of these ideas as facts and start thinking of them as arguments.

When you read, ask yourself questions like "What is the author trying to prove?" and "What is the author assuming I will agree with?" Do you agree with the author? Does the author adequately defend her argument? What kind of proof does she use? Is there something she leaves out that you would put in? Does putting it in hurt her argument? As you get used to reading critically, you will start to see the sometimes hidden agendas of other writers, and you can use this skill to improve your own ability to craft effective arguments.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

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43. Argument: Components, Vocabulary, Logic, Types of Argument & Fallacies

KIRSTEN DEVRIES

At school, at work, and in everyday life, argument is one of main ways we exchange ideas with one another. Academics, business people, scientists, and other professionals all make arguments to determine what to do or think, or to solve a problem by enlisting others to do or believe something they otherwise would not. Not surprisingly, then, argument dominates writing, and training in argument writing is essential for all college students.

This chapter will explore how to define argument, how to talk about argument, how logic works in argument, the main argument types, and a list of logical fallacies.

1. **What Is Argument?**
2. **What Are the Components and Vocabulary of Argument?**
3. **What Is Logic?**
4. **What Are the Different Types of Argument in Writing?**
5. **A Repository of Logical Fallacies**

1. What Is Argument?

All people, including you, make arguments on a regular basis. When you make a claim and then support the claim with reasons, you are making an argument. Consider the following:

- If, as a teenager, you ever made a case for borrowing your parents' car using reasonable support—a track record of responsibility in other areas of your life, a good rating from your driving instructor, and promises to follow rules of driving conduct laid out by your parents—you have made an argument.

- If, as an employee, you ever persuaded your boss to give you a raise using concrete evidence—records of sales increases in your sector, a work calendar with no missed days, and personal testimonials from satisfied customers—you have made an argument.

- If, as a gardener, you ever shared your crops at a farmer's market, declaring that your produce is better than others using relevant support—because you used the most appropriate soil, water level, and growing time for each crop—you've made an argument.

- If, as a literature student, you ever wrote an essay on your interpretation of a poem—defending your ideas with examples from the text and logical explanations for how those examples demonstrate your interpretation—you have made an argument.

The two main models of argument desired in college courses as part of the training for academic or professional life are **rhetorical argument** and **academic argument**. If rhetoric is the study of the craft of writing and speaking, particularly writing or speaking designed to convince and persuade, the student studying **rhetorical argument** focuses on how to create an argument that convinces and persuades effectively. To that end, the student must understand how to think broadly about argument, the particular vocabulary of argument, and the logic of argument. The close sibling of rhetorical argument is academic argument, argument used to discuss and evaluate ideas, usually within a professional field of study, and to convince others of those ideas. In **academic argument**, interpretation and research play the central roles.

However, it would be incorrect to say that academic argument

and rhetorical argument do not overlap. Indeed, they do, and often. A psychologist not only wishes to prove an important idea with research, but she will also wish to do so in the most effective way possible. A politician will want to make the most persuasive case for his side, but he should also be mindful of data that may support his points. *Thus, throughout this chapter, when you see the term* ***argument****, it refers to a broad category including both* ***rhetorical*** *and* ***academic argument****.*

Before moving to the specific parts and vocabulary of argument, it will be helpful to consider some further ideas about what argument is and what it is not.

Argument vs. Controversy or Fight

Consumers of written texts are often tempted to divide writing into two categories: argumentative and non-argumentative. According to this view, to be argumentative, writing must have the following qualities: It has to defend a position in a debate between two or more opposing sides, it must be on a controversial topic, and the goal of such writing must be to prove the correctness of one point of view over another.

A related definition of argument implies a confrontation, a clash of opinions and personalities, or just a plain verbal fight. It implies a winner and a loser, a right side and a wrong one. Because of this understanding of the word "argument," many students think the only type of argument writing is the debate-like position paper, in which the author defends his or her point of view against other, usually opposing, points of view.

For a fun illustration of the reductive nature of a mere fight, see "**The Argument Clinic**" (https://youtu.be/

XNkjDuSVXiE, transcript **here**) skit from Monty Python.

These two characteristics of argument—as controversial and as a fight—limit the definition because arguments come in different disguises, from hidden to subtle to commanding. It is useful to look at the term "argument" in a new way. What if we think of argument as an opportunity for conversation, for sharing with others our point of view on an issue, for showing others our perspective of the world? What if we think of argument as an opportunity to connect with the points of view of others rather than defeating those points of view?

One community that values argument as a type of communication and exchange is the community of scholars. They advance their arguments to share research and new ways of thinking about topics. Biologists, for example, do not gather data and write up analyses of the results because they wish to fight with other biologists, even if they disagree with the ideas of other biologists. They wish to share their discoveries and get feedback on their ideas. When historians put forth an argument, they do so often while building on the arguments of other historians who came before them. Literature scholars publish their interpretations of different works of literature to enhance understanding and share new views, not necessarily to have one interpretation replace all others. There may be debates within any field of study, but those debates can be healthy and constructive if they mean even more scholars come together to explore the ideas involved in those debates. Thus, be prepared for your college professors to have a much broader view of argument than a mere fight over a controversial topic or two.

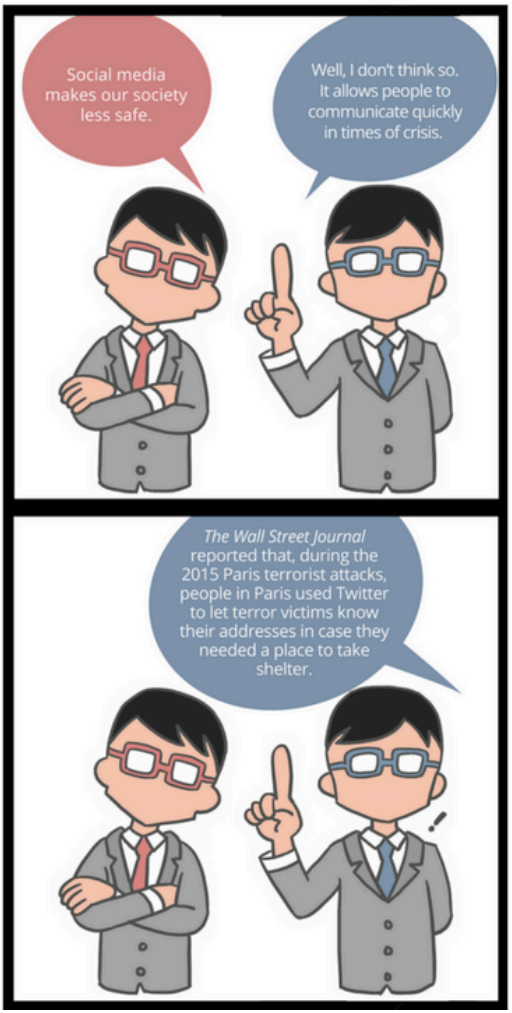
Argument vs. Opinion

Argument is often confused with opinion. Indeed, arguments and opinions sound alike. Someone with an opinion asserts a claim that he thinks is true. Someone with an argument asserts a claim that she thinks is true. Although arguments and opinions do sound the same, there are two important differences:

1. **Arguments have rules; opinions do not**. In other words, to form an argument, you must consider whether the argument is reasonable. Is it worth making? Is it valid? Is it sound? Do all of its parts fit together logically? Opinions, on the other hand, have no rules, and anyone asserting an opinion need not think it through for it to count as one; however, it will not count as an argument.
2. **Arguments have support; opinions do not**. If you make a claim and then stop, as if the claim itself were enough to demonstrate its truthfulness, you have asserted an opinion only. An argument must be supported, and the support of an argument has its own rules. The support must also be reasonable, relevant, and sufficient.

Figure 3.1 “Opinion vs Argument”

Opinion vs. Argument



Argument vs. Thesis

Another point of confusion is the difference between an argument and an essay's **thesis**. For college essays, there is no essential difference between an argument and a thesis; most professors use these terms interchangeably. An argument is a claim that you must then support. The main claim of an essay is the point of the essay and provides the purpose for the essay. Thus, the main claim of an essay is also the thesis. For more on the thesis, see **Chapter 4, "The Writing Process."**

Consider this as well: Most formal essays center upon one main claim (the thesis) but then support that main claim with supporting evidence and arguments. The **topic sentence** of a body paragraph can be another type of argument, though a supporting one, and, hence, a narrower one. Try not to be confused when professors call both the thesis and topic sentences arguments. They are not wrong because arguments come in different forms; some claims are broad enough to be broken down into a number of supporting arguments. Many longer essays are structured by the smaller arguments that are a part of and support the main argument. Sometimes professors, when they say supporting points or supporting arguments, mean the reasons (**premises**) for the main claim (**conclusion**) you make in an essay. If a claim has a number of reasons, those reasons will form the support structure for the essay, and each reason will be the basis for the topic sentence of its body paragraph.

Argument vs. Fact

Arguments are also commonly mistaken for statements of fact. This comes about because often people privilege facts over opinions, even as they defend the right to have opinions. In other words, facts are "good," and opinions are "bad," or if not exactly bad, then

fuzzy and thus easy to reject. However, remember the important distinction between an argument and an opinion stated above: While argument may sound like an opinion, the two are not the same. An opinion is an assertion, but it is left to stand alone with little to no reasoning or support. An argument is much stronger because it includes and demonstrates reasons and support for its claim.

As for mistaking a fact for an argument, keep this important distinction in mind: An argument must be **arguable**. In everyday life, arguable is often a synonym for doubtful. For an argument, though, arguable means that it is worth arguing, that it has a range of possible answers, angles, or perspectives: It is an answer, angle, or perspective with which a reasonable person might disagree. Facts, by virtue of being facts, are not arguable. **Facts** are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as definitively true or definitively false. For example, 2 + 2 = 4. This expression identifies a verifiably true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data. When a fact is established, there is no other side, and there should be no disagreement.

The misunderstanding about facts (being inherently good) and argument (being inherently problematic because it is not a fact) leads to the mistaken belief that facts have no place in an argument. This could not be farther from the truth. First of all, most arguments are formed by analyzing facts. Second, facts provide one type of support for an argument. Thus, do not think of facts and arguments as enemies; rather, they work closely together.

Explicit vs. Implicit Arguments

Arguments can be both explicit and implicit. **Explicit arguments** contain prominent and definable thesis statements and multiple specific proofs to support them. This is common in academic

writing from scholars of all fields. **Implicit arguments**, on the other hand, work by weaving together facts and narratives, logic and emotion, personal experiences and statistics. Unlike explicit arguments, implicit ones do not have a one-sentence thesis statement. Implicit arguments involve evidence of many different kinds to build and convey their point of view to their audience. Both types use rhetoric, logic, and support to create effective arguments.

Exercise 1

Go on a hunt for an implicit argument in the essay, "**37 Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police**" (https://tinyurl.com/yc35o25x) by Martin Gansberg.

1. Read the article, and take notes on it–either using a notebook or by annotating a printed copy of the text itself. Mark or write down all the important details you find.

2. After you are finished reading, look over your notes or annotations. What do all the details add up to? Use the details you have read about to figure out what Gansberg's implicit argument is in his essay. Write it in your own words.

3. Discuss your results with a partner or a group. Did you come up with the same argument? Have everyone explain the reasoning for his or her results.

Argument and Rhetoric

An argument in written form involves making choices, and knowing the principles of rhetoric allows a writer to make *informed* choices about various aspects of the writing process. Every act of writing takes place in a specific rhetorical situation. The most basic and important components of a rhetorical situation are

- **Author** of the text.
- **Purpose** of the text.
- **Intended audience** (i.e., those the author imagines will be reading the text).
- **Form or type** of text.

These components give readers a way to analyze a text on first encounter. These factors also help writers select their topics, arrange their material, and make other important decisions about the argument they will make and the support they will need.

Key Takeaways: What is an Argument?

With this brief introduction, you can see what rhetorical or academic argument *is not*:

- An argument need not be controversial or about a controversy.
- An argument is not a mere fight.
- An argument does not have a single winner or loser.
- An argument is not a mere opinion.
- An argument is not a statement of fact.

Furthermore, you can see what rhetorical argument *is*:

- An argument is a claim asserted as true.
- An argument is arguable.
- An argument must be reasonable.
- An argument must be supported.
- An argument in a formal essay is called a thesis. Supporting arguments can be called topic sentences.
- An argument can be explicit or implicit.
- An argument must be adapted to its rhetorical situation.

2. What Are the Components and Vocabulary of Argument?

Questions are at the core of arguments. What matters is not just that you believe that what you have to say is true, but that you give others viable reasons to believe it as well—and also show them that you have considered the issue from multiple angles. To do that, build your argument out of the answers to the five questions a rational reader will expect answers to. In academic and professional writing, we tend to build arguments from the answers to these main questions:

1. What do you want me to do or think?
2. Why should I do or think that?
3. How do I know that what you say is true?
4. Why should I accept the reasons that support your claim?

5. What about this other idea, fact, or consideration?
6. How should you present your argument?

When you ask people to do or think something they otherwise would not, they quite naturally want to know why they should do so. In fact, people tend to ask the same questions. As you make a reasonable argument, you anticipate and respond to readers' questions with a particular part of argument:

1. The answer to *What do you want me to do or think?* is your **conclusion**: "I conclude that you should do or think X."

2. The answer to *Why should I do or think that?* states your **premise**: "You should do or think X because . . ."

3. The answer to *How do I know that what you say is true?* presents your **support**: "You can believe my reasons because they are supported by these facts . . ."

4. The answer to *Why should I accept that your reasons support your claim?* states your general principle of reasoning, called a **warrant**: "My specific reason supports my specific claim because whenever this general condition is true, we can generally draw a conclusion like mine."

5. The answer to *What about this other idea, fact, or conclusion?* **acknowledges** that your readers might see things differently and then **responds** to their **counterarguments**.

6. The answer to *How should you present your argument?* leads to the **point of view**, **organization**, and **tone** that you should use when making your arguments.

As you have noticed, the answers to these questions involve knowing the particular vocabulary about argument because these terms refer to specific parts of an argument. The remainder of this section will cover the terms referred to in the questions listed above as well as others that will help you better understand the building blocks of argument.

What Is a Conclusion, and What Is a Premise?

The root notion of an argument is that it convinces us that something is true. What we are being convinced of is the **conclusion**. An example would be this claim:

Littering is harmful.

A reason for this conclusion is called the **premise**. Typically, a conclusion will be supported by two or more **premises**. Both premises and conclusions are **statements**. Some premises for our littering conclusion might be these:

Littering is dangerous to animals.
Littering is dangerous to humans.

Thus, to be clear, understand that an argument asserts that the writer's claim is true in *two* main parts: the **premises** of the argument exist to show that the **conclusion** is true.

> **Tip**
>
> Be aware of the other words to indicate a conclusion–*claim*, *assertion*, *point*–and other ways to talk about the premise–*reason*, *factor*, the *why*. Also, do not confuse this use of the word conclusion with a conclusion paragraph for an essay.

What Is a Statement?

A **statement** is a type of sentence that can be true or false and

corresponds to the grammatical category of a **declarative sentence**. For example, the sentence,

The Nile is a river in northeastern Africa,

is a statement because it makes sense to inquire whether it is true or false. (In this case, it happens to be true.) However, a sentence is still a statement, even if it is false. For example, the sentence,

The Yangtze is a river in Japan,

is still a statement; it is just a false statement (the Yangtze River is in China). In contrast, none of the following sentences are statements:

Please help yourself to more casserole.
Don't tell your mother about the surprise.
Do you like Vietnamese pho?

None of these sentences are statements because it does not make sense to ask whether those sentences are true or false; rather, they are a request, a command, and a question, respectively. Make sure to remember the difference between sentences that are declarative statements and sentences that are not *because arguments depend on declarative statements*.

Tip

A question cannot be an argument, yet students will often pose a question at the end of an introduction to an essay, thinking they have declared their thesis. They have not. If, however, they answer that question (**conclusion**) and give some reasons for that answer (**premises**), they then have the components necessary

for both an argument and a declarative statement of that argument (**thesis**).

To reiterate: All arguments are composed of premises and conclusions, both of which are types of statements. The premises of the argument provide reasons for thinking that the conclusion is true. Arguments typically involve more than one premise.

What Is Standard Argument Form?

A standard way of capturing the structure of an argument, or diagramming it, is by numbering the premises and conclusion. For example, the following represents another way to arrange the littering argument:

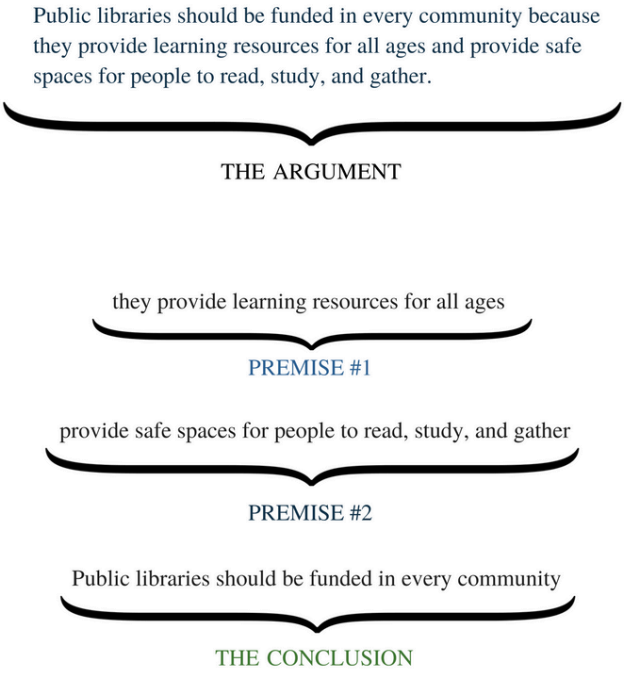
1. Littering is harmful
2. Litter is dangerous to animals
3. Litter is dangerous to humans

This numbered list represents an argument that has been put into **standard argument form**. A more precise definition of an argument now emerges, employing the vocabulary that is specific to academic and rhetorical arguments. An argument is a set of **statements**, some of which (the **premises**: statements 2 and 3 above) attempt to provide a reason for thinking that some other statement (the **conclusion**: statement 1) is true.

Tip

Diagramming an argument can be helpful when trying to figure out your essay's thesis. Because a thesis is an argument, putting the parts of an argument into standard form can help sort ideas. You can transform the numbered ideas into a cohesive sentence or two for your thesis once you are more certain what your argument parts are.

Figure 3.2 "Argument Diagram"



Recognizing arguments is essential to analysis and critical thinking; if you cannot distinguish between the details (the support) of a piece of writing and what those details are there to support (the argument), you will likely misunderstand what you are reading. Additionally, studying how others make arguments can help you learn how to effectively create your own.

What Are Argument Indicators?

While mapping an argument in standard argument form can be a

good way to figure out and formulate a thesis, identifying arguments by other writers is also important. The best way to identify an argument is to ask whether a claim exists (in statement form) that a writer justifies by reasons (also in statement form). Other identifying markers of arguments are key words or phrases that are premise indicators or conclusion indicators. For example, recall the littering argument, reworded here into a single sentence (much like a thesis statement):

Littering is harmful *because* it is dangerous to both animals and humans.

The word "because" here is a **premise indicator**. That is, "because" indicates that what follows is a reason for thinking that littering is bad. Here is another example:

The student plagiarized *since* I found the exact same sentences on a website, and the website was published more than a year before the student wrote the paper.

In this example, the word "since" is a premise indicator because what follows is a statement that is clearly intended to be a reason for thinking that the student plagiarized (i.e., a premise). Notice that in these two cases, the premise indicators "because" and "since" are interchangeable: "because" could be used in place of "since" or "since" in the place of "because," and the meaning of the sentences would have been the same.

Figure 3.3 "Common Premise Indicators"

COMMON PREMISE INDICATORS	
since	because
for	as
given that	seeing that
for the reason that	is shown by the fact that

In addition to premise indicators, there are also **conclusion indicators**. Conclusion indicators mark that what follows is the conclusion of an argument. For example,

Bob-the-arsonist has been dead for a year, so Bob-the-arsonist didn't set the fire at the East Lansing Starbucks last week.

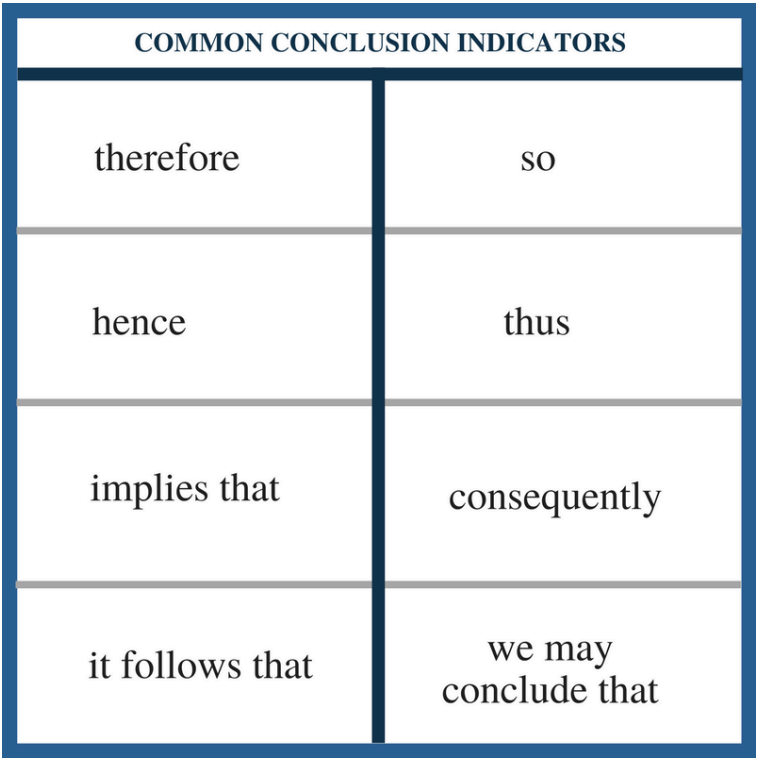
In this example, the word "so" is a conclusion indicator because what follows it is a statement that someone is trying to establish as true (i.e., a conclusion). Here is another example of a conclusion indicator:

A poll administered by Gallup (a respected polling company) showed candidate X to be substantially behind candidate Y with

only a week left before the vote; *therefore*, candidate Y will probably not win the election.

In this example, the word "therefore" is a conclusion indicator because what follows it is a statement that someone is trying to establish as true (i.e., a conclusion). As before, in both of these cases, the conclusion indicators "so" and "therefore" are interchangeable: "So" could be used in place of "therefore" or "therefore" in the place of "so," and the meaning of the sentences would have been the same.

Figure 3.4 "Common Conclusion Indicators"



Exercise 2

Which of the following are arguments? If it is an argument, identify the conclusion (claim) of the argument. If it is not an argument, explain why not. Remember to look for the qualifying features of an argument: (1) It is a statement or series of statements, (2) it states a claim (a conclusion), and (3) it has at least one premise (reason for the claim).

1. The woman with the hat is not a witch since witches have long noses, and she doesn't have a long nose.
2. I have been wrangling cattle since before you were old enough to tie your own shoes.
3. Albert is angry with me, so he probably won't be willing to help me wash the dishes.
4. First, I washed the dishes, and then I dried them.
5. If the road weren't icy, the car wouldn't have slid off the turn.
6. Marvin isn't a fireman and isn't a fisherman, either.
7. Are you seeing the rhinoceros over there? It's huge!
8. Obesity has become a problem in the US because obesity rates have risen over the past four decades.
9. Bob showed me a graph with rising obesity rates, and I was very surprised to see how much they had risen.
10. Marvin isn't a fireman because Marvin is a Greyhound, which is a type of dog, and dogs can't be firemen.
11. What Susie told you is not the actual reason she

missed her flight to Denver.

12. Carol likely forgot to lock her door this morning because she was distracted by a clown riding a unicycle while singing Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Simple Man."
13. No one who has ever gotten frostbite while climbing K2 has survived to tell about it; therefore, no one ever will.

What Constitutes Support?

To ensure that your argument is sound—that the premises for your conclusion are true—you must establish **support**. The burden of proof, to borrow language from law, is on the one making an argument, not on the recipient of an argument. If you wish to assert a claim, you must then also support it, and this support must be relevant, logical, and sufficient.

It is important to use the right kind of evidence, to use it effectively, and to have an appropriate amount of it.

- If, for example, your philosophy professor did not like that you used a survey of public opinion as your primary evidence in an ethics paper, you most likely used material that was not **relevant** to your topic. Rather, you should find out what philosophers count as good evidence. Different fields of study involve types of evidence based on relevance to those fields.

- If your professor has put question marks by your thesis or has

written, “It does not follow,” you likely have problems with **logic**. Make sure it is clear how the parts of your argument logically fit together.

- If your instructor has told you that you need more analysis, suggested that you are “just listing” points or giving a “laundry list,” you likely have not included enough explanation for how a point connects to and supports your argument, which is another problem with **logic**, this time related to the **warrants** of your argument. You need to fully incorporate evidence into your argument. (See more on warrants immediately below.)

- If you see comments like “for example?,” “proof?,” “go deeper,” or “expand,” you may need more evidence. In other words, the evidence you have is not yet **sufficient**. One or two pieces of evidence will not be enough to prove your argument. Similarly, multiple pieces of evidence that aren’t developed thoroughly would also be flawed, also insufficient. Would a lawyer go to trial with only one piece of evidence? No, the lawyer would want to have as much evidence as possible from a variety of sources to make a viable case. Similarly, a lawyer would fully develop evidence for a claim using explanation, facts, statistics, stories, experiences, research, details, and the like.

You will find more information about the different types of evidence, how to find them, and what makes them credible in this textbook’s chapter on Finding and Using Outside Sources.Logic will be covered later on in this chapter.

What Is the Warrant?

Above all, connect the evidence to the argument. This connection is the **warrant**. Evidence is not self-evident. In other words, after introducing evidence into your writing, you must demonstrate why and how this evidence supports your argument. You must explain the significance of the evidence and its function in your paper. What turns a fact or piece of information into evidence is the connection it has with a larger claim or argument: Evidence is always evidence *for*or *against* something, and you have to make that link clear.

Tip

Student writers sometimes assume that readers already know the information being written about; students may be wary of elaborating too much because they think their points are obvious. But remember, readers are not mind readers: Although they may be familiar with many of the ideas discussed, they don't know what writers want to do with those ideas unless they indicate that through explanations, organization, and transitions. Thus, when you write, be sure to explain the connections you made in your mind when you chose your evidence, decided where to place it in your paper, and drew conclusions based on it.

What Is a Counterargument?

Remember that arguments are multi-sided. As you brainstorm and prepare to present your idea and your support for it, consider other sides of the issue. These other sides are **counterarguments**. Make a list of counterarguments as you work through the writing process, and use them to build your case – to widen your idea to include a valid counterargument, to explain how a counterargument might be defeated, to illustrate how a counterargument may not withstand the scrutiny your research has uncovered, and/or to show that you are aware of and have taken into account other possibilities.

For example, you might choose the issue of declawing cats and set up your search with the question should I have my indoor cat declawed? Your research, interviews, surveys, personal experiences might yield several angles on this question: Yes, it will save your furniture and your arms and ankles. No, it causes psychological issues for the cat. No, if the cat should get outside, he will be without defense. As a writer, be prepared to address alternate arguments and to include them to the extent that it will illustrate your reasoning.

Almost anything claimed in a paper can be refuted or challenged. Opposing points of view and arguments exist in every debate. It is smart to anticipate possible objections to your arguments – and to do so will make your arguments stronger. Another term for a counterargument is **antithesis** (i.e., the opposition to a thesis). To find possible counterarguments (and keep in mind there can be many counterpoints to one claim), ask the following questions:

- Could someone draw a different conclusion from the facts or examples you present?
- Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims?
- Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue?
- Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the next set of questions can help you respond to these potential objections:

Is it possible to concede the point of the opposition, but then challenge that point's importance/usefulness?

- Can you offer an explanation of why a reader should question a piece of evidence or consider a different point of view?
- Can you explain how your position responds to any contradicting evidence?
- Can you put forward a different interpretation of evidence?

It may not seem likely at first, but clearly recognizing and addressing different sides of the argument, the ones that are not your own, can make your argument and paper stronger. By addressing the antithesis of your argument essay, you are showing your readers that you have carefully considered the issue and accept that there are often other ways to view the same thing.

You can use signal phrases in your paper to alert readers that you are about to present an objection. Consider using one of these phrases–or ones like them–at the beginning of a paragraph:

- Researchers have challenged these claims with…
- Critics argue that this view…
- Some readers may point to…

What Are More Complex Argument Structures?

So far you have seen that an argument consists of a conclusion and a premise (typically more than one). However, often arguments and explanations have a more complex structure than just a few premises that directly support the conclusion. For example, consider the following argument:

No one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The reason is simple: The lava was flowing too fast,

and there was nowhere to go to escape it in time. Therefore, this account of the eruption, which claims to have been written by an eyewitness living in Pompeii, was not actually written by an eyewitness.

The **main conclusion** of this argument—the statement that depends on other statements as evidence but doesn't itself provide any evidence for other statements—is

> A. This account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius was not actually written by an eyewitness.

However, the argument's structure is more complex than simply having a couple of premises that provide evidence directly for the conclusion. Rather, some statements provide evidence directly for the main conclusion, but some premise statements support other premise statements which then support the conclusion.

To determine the structure of an argument, you must determine which statements support which, using premise and conclusion indicators to help. For example, the passage above contains the phrase, "the reason is…" which is a premise indicator, and it also contains the conclusion indicator, "therefore." That conclusion indicator helps identify the main conclusion, but the more important element to see is that statement A does not itself provide evidence or support for any of the other statements in the argument, which is the clearest reason statement A is the main conclusion of the argument. The next questions to answer are these: Which statement most directly supports A? What most directly supports A is

> B. No one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.

However, there is also a reason offered in support of B. That reason is the following:

> C. The lava from Mt. Vesuvius was flowing too fast, and there

was nowhere for someone living in Pompeii to go to escape it in time.

So the main conclusion (A) is directly supported by B, and B is supported by C. Since B acts as a premise for the main conclusion but is also itself the conclusion of further premises, B is classified as an **intermediate conclusion**. What you should recognize here is that *one and the same statement can act as both a premise and a conclusion*. Statement B is a premise that supports the main conclusion (A), but it is also itself a conclusion that follows from C. Here is how to put this complex argument into standard form (using numbers this time, as is typical for diagramming arguments):

1. The lava from Mt. Vesuvius was flowing too fast, and there was nowhere for someone living in Pompeii to go to escape it in time.
2. Therefore, no one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. (from 1)
3. Therefore, this account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius was not actually written by an eyewitness. (from 2)

Notice that at the end of statement 2 is a written indicator in parentheses (from 1), and, likewise, at the end of statement 3 is another indicator (from 2). From 1 is a shorthand way of saying, "this statement follows logically from statement 1." Use this convention as a way to keep track of an argument's structure. It may also help to think about the structure of an argument spatially, as the figure below shows:

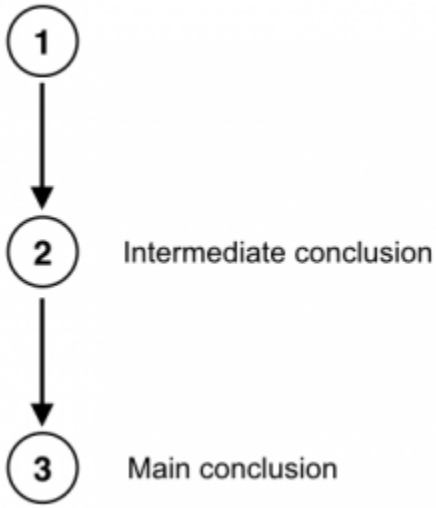


Figure 3.5 from Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking by Matthew Van Cleave

The main argument here (from 2 to 3) contains a **subargument**, in this case, the argument from 1 (a premise) to 2 (the intermediate conclusion). A subargument, as the term suggests, is a part of an argument that provides indirect support for the main argument. The main argument is simply the argument whose conclusion is the main conclusion.

Another type of structure that arguments can have is when two or more premises provide direct but independent support for the conclusion. Here is an example of an argument with that structure:

> Wanda rode her bike to work today because when she arrived at work she had her right pant leg rolled up, which cyclists do to keep their pants legs from getting caught in the chain. Moreover, our co-worker, Bob, who works in accounting, saw her riding towards work at 7:45 a.m.

The conclusion of this argument is "Wanda rode her bike to work today"; two premises provide independent support for it: the fact that Wanda had her pant leg cuffed and the fact that Bob saw her riding her bike. Here is the argument in standard form:

1. Wanda arrived at work with her right pant leg rolled up.
2. Cyclists often roll up their right pant leg.
3. Bob saw Wanda riding her bike towards work at 7:45.
4. Therefore, Wanda rode her bike to work today. (from 1-2, 3 independently)

Again, notice that next to statement 4 of the argument is an indicator of how each part of the argument relates to the main conclusion. In this case, to avoid any ambiguity, you can see that the support for the conclusion comes independently from statements 1 and 2, on the one hand, and from statement 3, on the other hand. It is important to point out that an argument *or subargumen*t can be supported by one or more premises, the case in this argument because the main conclusion (4) is supported jointly by 1 and 2, and singly by 3. As before, we can represent the structure of this argument spatially, as the figure below shows:

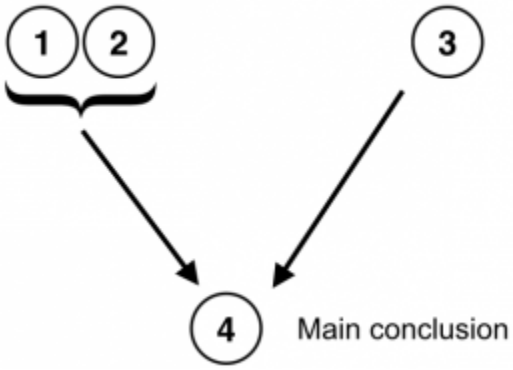


Figure 3.6 from Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking by Matthew Van Cleave

There are endless argument structures that can be generated from a few simple patterns. At this point, it is important to understand that arguments can have different structures and that some arguments will be more complex than others. Determining the structure of complex arguments is a skill that takes some time to master, rather like simplifying equations in math. Even so, it may help to remember that any argument structure ultimately traces back to some combination of premises, intermediate arguments, and a main conclusion.

Exercise 3

Write the following arguments in standard form. If any arguments are complex, show how each complex argument is structured using a diagram like those shown just above.

1. There is nothing wrong with prostitution because there is nothing wrong with consensual sexual and economic interactions between adults. Moreover, there is no difference between a man who goes on a blind date with a woman, buys her dinner and then has sex with her and a man who simply pays a woman for sex, which is another reason there is nothing wrong with prostitution.

2. Prostitution is wrong because it involves women who have typically been sexually abused as children. Proof that these women have been abused comes from multiple

surveys done with female prostitutes that show a high percentage of self-reported sexual abuse as children.

3. Someone was in this cabin recently because warm water was in the tea kettle and wood was still smoldering in the fireplace. However, the person couldn't have been Tim because Tim has been with me the whole time. Therefore, someone else must be in these woods.

4. Someone can be blind and yet run in the Olympic Games since Marla Runyan did it at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

5. The train was late because it had to take a longer, alternate route seeing as the bridge was out.

6. Israel is not safe if Iran gets nuclear missiles because Iran has threatened multiple times to destroy Israel, and if Iran had nuclear missiles, it would be able to carry out this threat. Furthermore, since Iran has been developing enriched uranium, it has the key component needed for nuclear weapons; every other part of the process of building a nuclear weapon is simple compared to that. Therefore, Israel is not safe.

7. Since all professional hockey players are missing front teeth, and Martin is a professional hockey player, it follows that Martin is missing front teeth. Because almost all

professional athletes who are missing their front teeth have false teeth, it follows that Martin probably has false teeth.

8. Anyone who eats the crab rangoon at China Food restaurant will probably have stomach troubles afterward. It has happened to me every time; thus, it will probably happen to other people as well. Since Bob ate the crab rangoon at China Food restaurant, he will probably have stomach troubles afterward.

9. Lucky and Caroline like to go for runs in the afternoon in Hyde Park. Because Lucky never runs alone, any time Albert is running, Caroline must also be running. Albert looks like he has just run (since he is panting hard), so it follows that Caroline must have run, too.

10. Just because Linda's prints were on the gun that killed Terry and the gun was registered to Linda, it doesn't mean that Linda killed Terry since Linda's prints would certainly be on her own gun, and someone else could have stolen her gun and used it to kill Terry.

Key Takeaways: Components of Vocabulary and Argument

- **Conclusion**—a claim that is asserted as true. One part of an argument.
- **Premise**—a reason behind a conclusion. The other part of an argument. Most conclusions have more than one premise.
- **Statement**—a declarative sentence that can be evaluated as true or false. The parts of an argument, premises and the conclusion, should be statements.
- **Standard Argument Form**—a numbered breakdown of the parts of an argument (conclusion and all premises).
- **Premise Indicators**—terms that signal that a premise, or reason, is coming.
- **Conclusion Indicator**—terms that signal that a conclusion, or claim, is coming.
- **Support**—anything used as proof or reasoning for an argument. This includes evidence, experience, and logic.
- **Warrant**—the connection made between the support and the reasons of an argument.
- **Counterargument**—an opposing argument to the one you make. An argument can have multiple counterarguments.
- **Complex Arguments**–these are formed by more than individual premises that point to a conclusion. Complex arguments may have layers to them, including an intermediate argument that may act as both a conclusion (with its own premises) and a

premise (for the main conclusion).

3. What Is Logic?

Logic, in its most basic sense, is the study of how ideas reasonably fit together. In other words, when you apply logic, you must be concerned with analyzing ideas and arguments by using reason and rational thinking, not emotions or mysticism or belief. As a dedicated field of study, logic belongs primarily to math, philosophy, and computer science; in these fields, one can get professional training in logic. However, *all* academic disciplines employ logic: to evaluate evidence, to analyze arguments, to explain ideas, and to connect evidence to arguments. One of the most important uses of logic is in composing and evaluating arguments.

The study of logic divides into two main categories: formal and informal. **Formal logic** is the formal study of logic. In other words, in math or philosophy or computer science, if you were to take a class on logic, you would likely be learning formal logic. The purpose of formal logic is to eliminate any imprecision or lack of objectivity in evaluating arguments. Logicians, scholars who study and apply logic, have devised a number of formal techniques that accomplish this goal for certain classes of arguments. These techniques can include truth tables, Venn diagrams, proofs, syllogisms, and formulae. The different branches of formal logic include, but are not limited to, propositional logic, categorical logic, and first order logic.

Informal logic is logic applied outside of formal study and is most

often used in college, business, and life. According to *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

For centuries, the study of logic has inspired the idea that its methods might be harnessed in efforts to understand and improve thinking, reasoning, and argument as they occur in real life contexts: in public discussion and debate; in education and intellectual exchange; in interpersonal relations; and in law, medicine, and other professions. Informal logic is the attempt to build a logic suited to this purpose. It combines the study of argument, evidence, proof and justification with an instrumental outlook which emphasizes its usefulness in the analysis of real life arguing.

When people apply the principles of logic to employ and evaluate arguments in real life situations and studies, they are using informal logic.

Why Is Logic Important?

Logic is one of the most respected elements of scholarly and professional thinking and writing. Consider that logic teaches us how to recognize good and bad arguments—not just arguments about logic, *any* argument. Nearly every undertaking in life will ultimately require that you evaluate an argument, perhaps several. You are confronted with a question: "Should I buy this car or that car?" "Should I go to this college or that college?" "Did that scientific experiment show what the scientist claims it did?" "Should I vote for the candidate who promises to lower taxes, or for the one who says she might raise them?" Your life is a long parade of choices.

When answering such questions, to make the best choices, you often have only one tool: an argument. You listen to the reasons for and against various options and must choose among them. Thus, the ability to evaluate arguments is an ability useful in everything that you will do—in your work, your personal life, and your deepest reflections. This is the job of logic.

If you are a student, note that nearly every discipline–be it a science, one of the humanities, or a study like business–relies upon arguments. Evaluating arguments is the most fundamental skill common to math, physics, psychology, history, literary studies, and any other intellectual endeavor. Logic alone tells you how to evaluate the arguments of *any* discipline.

The alternative to developing logic skills is to be always at the mercy of bad reasoning and, as a result, bad choices. Worse, you can be manipulated by deceivers. Speaking in Canandaigua, New York, on August 3, 1857, the escaped slave and abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass observed,

> Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

Add this to Frederick Douglass's words: If you find out just how much a person can be deceived, that is just how far she will be deceived. The limits of tyrants are also prescribed by the reasoning abilities of those they aim to oppress. What logic teaches you is how to demand and recognize good reasoning, and, hence, avoid deceit. You are only as free as your powers of reasoning enable.

The remaining part of this logic section will concern two types of logical arguments—**inductive** and **deductive**—and the tests of those arguments, including **validity**, **soundness**, **reliability**, and **strength**, so that you can check your own arguments and evaluate the arguments of others, no matter if those arguments come from the various academic disciplines, politics, the business world, or just discussions with friends and family.

What Is Deductive Argument?

A **deductive argument** is an argument whose conclusion is supposed to follow from its premises with absolute certainty, thus leaving no possibility that the conclusion doesn't follow from the premises. If a deductive argument fails to guarantee the truth of the conclusion, then the deductive argument can no longer be called a deductive argument.

The Tests of Deductive Arguments: Validity and Soundness

So far in this chapter, you have learned what arguments are and how to determine their structure, including how to reconstruct arguments in standard form. But what makes an argument good or bad? There are four main ways to test arguments, two of which are for deductive arguments. The first test for deductive arguments is **validity**, a concept that is central to logical thinking. Validity relates to how well the premises support the conclusion and is the golden standard that every deductive argument should aim for. A **valid argument** is an argument whose conclusion cannot possibly be false, assuming that the premises are true. Another way to put this is as a conditional statement: A valid argument is an argument in which *if* the premises are true, the conclusion *must* be true. Here is an example of a valid argument:

1. Violet is a dog.
2. Therefore, Violet is a mammal. (from 1)

You might wonder whether it *is* true that Violet is a dog (maybe she's a lizard or a buffalo—you have no way of knowing from the information given). But, for the purposes of validity, it doesn't matter whether premise 1 is *actually* true or false. All that matters for validity is whether the conclusion follows from the premise. You can see that the conclusion—that Violet is a mammal—does seem to follow from the premise—that Violet is a dog. That is, given the truth of the premise, the conclusion has to be true. This argument is clearly valid because *if* you assume that "Violet is a dog" is true, then,

since all dogs are mammals, *it follows* that "Violet is a mammal" must also be true. Thus, whether an argument is valid has nothing to do with whether the premises of the argument are actually true. Here is an example where the premises are clearly false, yet the argument is valid:

1. Everyone born in France can speak French.
2. Barack Obama was born in France.
3. Therefore, Barack Obama can speak French. (from 1-2)

This is a valid argument. Why? Because when you *assume* the truth of the premises (everyone born in France can speak French, and Barack Obama was born in France) the conclusion (Barack Obama can speak French) *must* be true. Notice that this is so even though none of these statements is *actually* true. Not everyone born in France can speak French (think about people who were born there but then moved somewhere else where they didn't speak French and never learned it), and Barack Obama was not born in France, but it is also false that Obama can speak French. However, the argument is still valid even though neither the premises nor the conclusion is actually true. That may sound strange, but if you understand the concept of validity, it is not strange at all. Remember: *validity describes the relationship between the premises and conclusion, and it means that the premises imply the conclusion, whether or not that conclusion is true.*

To better understand the concept of validity, examine this example of an *invalid* argument:

1. George was President of the United States.
2. Therefore, George was elected President of the United States. (from 1)

This argument is **invalid** because it is possible for the premise to be true and yet the conclusion false. Here is a counterexample to the argument. Gerald Ford was President of the United States,

but he was never elected president because Ford replaced Richard Nixon when Nixon resigned in the wake of the Watergate scandal. Therefore, it does not follow that just because someone is President of the United States that he was *elected* President of the United States. In other words, it is possible for the premise of the argument to be true and yet the conclusion false. This means that the argument is invalid. If an argument is invalid, it will always be possible to construct a counterexample to show that it is invalid (as demonstrated in the Gerald Ford scenario). A **counterexample** is simply a description of a scenario in which the premises of the argument are all true while the conclusion of the argument is false.

Exercise 4

Determine whether the following arguments are valid by using an informal test of validity. In other words, ask whether you can imagine a scenario in which the premises are both true and yet the conclusion is false. For each argument do the following: (1) If the argument is valid, explain your reasoning, and (2) if the argument is invalid, provide a counterexample. Remember, this is a test of validity, so you may assume all premises are true (even if you know or suspect they are not in real life) for the purposes of this assignment.

1. Katie is a human being. Therefore, Katie is smarter than a chimpanzee.

2. Bob is a fireman. Therefore, Bob has put out fires.

3. Gerald is a mathematics professor. Therefore, Gerald knows how to teach mathematics.

4. Monica is a French teacher. Therefore, Monica knows how to teach French.

5. Bob is taller than Susan. Susan is taller than Frankie. Therefore, Bob is taller than Frankie.

6. Craig loves Linda. Linda loves Monique. Therefore, Craig loves Monique.

7. Orel Hershizer is a Christian. Therefore, Orel Hershizer communicates with God.

8. All Muslims pray to Allah. Muhammad is a Muslim. Therefore, Muhammad prays to Allah.

9. Some protozoa are predators. No protozoa are animals. Therefore, some predators are not animals.

10. Charlie only barks when he hears a burglar outside. Charlie is barking. Therefore, there must be a burglar outside.

A good deductive argument is not only valid but also **sound**. A **sound argument** is a valid argument that has all true premises. That means that the conclusion, or claim, of a sound argument will always be true because if an argument is valid, the premises transmit truth to the conclusion on the assumption of the truth of the premises. If the premises are actually true, as they are in a sound argument, and since all sound arguments are valid, we know that the conclusion of a sound argument is true. The relationship between soundness and validity is easy to specify: *all sound arguments are valid arguments, but not all valid arguments are sound arguments.*

Professors will expect sound arguments in college writing. Philosophy professors, for the sake of pursuing arguments based on logic alone, may allow students to pursue unsound arguments, but nearly all other professors will want sound arguments. How do you

make sure that all the premises of your argument are true? How can we know that Violet is a dog or that littering is harmful to animals and people? Answers to these questions come from **evidence**, often in the form of research.

Tip

One way to counter another's argument is to question his premises and test them for soundness. If you find that one or more premise is unsound, you can add that information–and your explanations–to the support of your own argument.

One way to test the accuracy of a premise is to apply the following questions:

- Is there a sufficient amount of data?
- What is the quality of the data?
- Has additional data been missed?
- Is the data relevant?
- Are there additional possible explanations?

Determine whether the starting claim is based upon a sample that is both representative and sufficiently large, and ask yourself whether all relevant factors have been taken into account in the analysis of data that leads to a generalization.

Another way to evaluate a premise is to determine whether its source is credible. Ask yourself,

- Are the authors identified?

- What are their backgrounds?
- Was the claim something you found on an undocumented website?
- Did you find it in a popular publication or a scholarly one?
- How complete, how recent, and how relevant are the studies or statistics discussed in the source?

What Is Inductive Argument?

In contrast to a deductive argument, an **inductive argument** is an argument whose conclusion is supposed to follow from its premises with a high level of probability, which means that although it is possible that the conclusion doesn't follow from its premises, it is unlikely that this is the case. Here is an example of an inductive argument:

Tweets is a healthy, normally functioning bird and since most healthy, normally functioning birds fly, Tweets most likely flies.

Notice that the conclusion, "Tweets probably flies," contains the words "most likely." This is a clear indicator that the argument is supposed to be inductive, not deductive. Here is the argument in standard form:

1. Tweets is a healthy, normally functioning bird. (**premise**)
2. Most healthy, normally functioning birds fly. (**premise**)
3. Therefore, Tweets probably flies. (**conclusion**)

Given the information provided by the premises, the conclusion does seem to be well supported. That is, the premises provide strong reasons for accepting the conclusion. The inductive argument's conclusion is a strong one, even though we can imagine a scenario in which the premises are true and yet the conclusion is false.

Remember, inductive arguments cannot guarantee the truth of the conclusion, which means they will look like invalid deductive

arguments. Indeed, they are. There *will* be counterexamples for inductive arguments because an inductive argument never promises absolute truth. We measure inductive arguments by degrees of **probability** and **plausibility**, not absolute categories like validity and soundness. Validity and soundness do not allow for a sliding scale of degrees. They are absolute conditions: There is no such thing as being partially valid or somewhat sound.

Do not let this difference between deductive and inductive arguments cause you to privilege deductive and revile inductive because inductive arguments cannot guarantee truth. That is an unfair measure, and it is not practical. The truth is that most arguments we create and evaluate in life are inductive arguments. It might be helpful to think of deductive arguments as those created in perfect lab conditions, where all the ideal parameters can be met. Life is much messier than that, and we rarely get ideal conditions. One main reason is that we rarely ever have all the information we need to form an absolutely true conclusion. When new information is discovered, a scientist or historian or psychologist or business executive or a college student should investigate how it affects previous ideas and arguments, knowing that those previous ideas may need to be adjusted based on new information. For example, suppose that we added the following premise to our earlier argument:

> Tweets is 6 feet tall and can run 30 mph. (**premise**)

When we add this premise, the conclusion that Tweets can fly would no longer be likely because any bird that is 6 feet tall and can run 30 mph, is not a kind of bird that can fly. That information leads us to believe that Tweets is an ostrich or emu, which are not kinds of birds that can fly.

The Tests of Inductive Arguments: Reliability and Strength

Inductive arguments can never lead to absolute certainty, which is one reason scholars keep studying and trying to add to knowledge. This does not mean, however, that any inductive argument will be

a good one. Inductive arguments must still be evaluated and tested, and the two main tests are **reliability** and **strength**.

Test of **reliability**, much like that of validity for deductive arguments, tests an inductive argument's reason, its internal logic. In other words, just because an inductive argument cannot guarantee a true conclusion doesn't mean that it should not be logically constructed. One cannot make just any sort of claim, particularly one that does not have a reliable basis. Reliability, unlike validity, can be measured by degree. More reliable arguments are ones that have a more solid basis in reason. Consider this example:

> Ninety-seven percent of Banana™ computers work without any glitches. (**premise**)
> Max has a Banana™ computer. (**premise**)
> Therefore, Max's computer works without any glitches. (**conclusion**)

This argument has a high degree of reliability. While it may well be true that Max has one of the three percent of computers that have glitches, it is much more likely, given the initial premise that he does not. If the initial premise changes, however, so does the reliability of the argument:

> Thirty-three percent of Banana™ computers work without any glitches.
> Max has a Banana™ computer.
> Therefore, Max's computer works without any glitches.

Note how the degree of reliability has gone done dramatically. The argument can now be considered unreliable since the conclusion that Max's computer will work without glitches is improbable given the premises provided. The conclusion still could be true, but it has tipped toward unlikely.

The second test of inductive arguments is **strength**. Strength, like reliability, can be measured by degree. Strong arguments must have the following conditions: (1) They must be reliable arguments;

(2) they draw upon multiple lines of reasoning as support and/or a collection of data. Indeed, the more the data and the more the reasons for a conclusion, the stronger the argument. Consider the following argument:

> Susie has walked by Mack the dog every day for ten days. (**premise**)
>
> Mack the dog has never bitten Susie. (**premise**)
>
> Thus, when Susie walks by Mack the dog today, he will not bite her. (**conclusion**)

This argument is reasonable; we can see that the premises may logically lead to the conclusion. However, the argument is not very strong as Susie has only walked by the dog for ten days. Is that enough data to make the conclusion a likely one? What if we had more data, like so—

> Susie has walked by Mack the dog every day for five years.
>
> Mack the dog has never bitten Susie.
>
> Thus, when Susie walks by Mack the dog today, he will not bite her.

This argument, with more data to consider (five years of information instead of just ten days), is much stronger. An argument also gets stronger when reasons are added:

> Susie has walked by Mack the dog every day for five years.
>
> Mack the dog has never bitten Susie.
>
> Mack's owners trained him to be friendly to people. (**additional premise**)
>
> Mack the dog's breed is not known for aggression. (**additional premise**)
>
> Thus, when Susie walks by Mack the dog today, he will not bite her.

This argument is even stronger. Not only does it have more data, but it also has additional reasons for Mack's gentle nature.

Remember these tests when writing your own essays. You are most likely going to be using inductive arguments, and you should make them as reliable and strong as you can because you can bet your professors will be evaluating your arguments by those criteria as well.

What Are Logical Fallacies, and Why Should You Avoid Them?

Fallacies are errors or tricks of reasoning. A fallacy is an *error* of reasoning if it occurs accidentally; it is a *trick* of reasoning if a speaker or writer uses it to deceive or manipulate his audience. Fallacies can be either **formal** or **informal**.

Whether a fallacy is an error or a trick, whether it is formal or informal, its use undercuts the validity and soundness of any argument. At the same time, fallacious reasoning can damage the credibility of the speaker or writer and improperly manipulate the emotions of the audience or reader. This is a consideration you must keep in mind as a writer who is trying to maintain credibility (*ethos*) with the reader. Moreover, being able to recognize logical fallacies in the speech and writing of others can greatly benefit you as both a college student and a participant in civic life. Not only does this awareness increase your ability to think and read critically—and thus not be manipulated or fooled—but it also provides you with a strong basis for counter arguments.

Even more important, using faulty reasoning is unethical and irresponsible. Using logical fallacies can be incredibly tempting. The unfortunate fact is they work. Every day—particularly in politics and advertising—we can see how using faults and tricks of logic effectively persuade people to support certain individuals, groups, and ideas and, conversely, turn them away from others. Furthermore, logical fallacies are easy to use. Instead of doing the often difficult work of carefully supporting an argument with facts, logic, and researched evidence, the lazy debater turns routinely to

the easy path of tricky reasoning. Human beings too often favor what is easy and effective, even if morally questionable, over what is ethical, particularly if difficult. However, your college professors' task is not to teach you how to join the Dark Side. Their job is to teach you how to write, speak, and argue effectively and *ethically*. To do so, you must recognize and avoid the logical fallacies.

What Are Formal Fallacies?

Most **formal fallacies** are errors of logic: The conclusion does not really "follow from" (is not supported by) the premises. Either the premises are untrue, or the argument is invalid. Below is an example of an invalid deductive argument:

Premise: All black bears are omnivores.
Premise: All raccoons are omnivores.
Conclusion: All raccoons are black bears.

Bears are a subset of omnivores. Raccoons also are a subset of omnivores. But these two subsets do not overlap, and that fact makes the conclusion illogical. The argument is invalid—that is, the relationship between the two premises does not support the conclusion.

"Raccoons are black bears" is instantaneously recognizable as fallacious and may seem too silly to be worth bothering about. However, that and other forms of poor logic play out on a daily basis, and they have real world consequences. Below is an example of a common fallacious argument:

Premise: All Arabs are Muslims.
Premise: All Iranians are Muslims.
Conclusion: All Iranians are Arabs.

This argument fails on two levels. First, the premises are untrue because, although many Arabs and Iranians are Muslim, not all are. Second, the two ethnic groups (Iranians and Arabs) are sets that do not overlap; nevertheless, the two groups are confounded because they (largely) share one quality in common (being Muslim). One only

has to look at comments on the web to realize that the confusion is widespread and that it influences attitudes and opinions about US foreign policy. The logical problems make this both an invalid and an unsound argument.

What Are Informal Fallacies?

Informal fallacies take many forms and are widespread in everyday discourse. Very often they involve bringing irrelevant information into an argument, or they are based on assumptions that, when examined, prove to be incorrect. Formal fallacies are created when the relationship between premises and conclusion does not hold up or when premises are unsound; informal fallacies are more dependent on misuse of language and of evidence.

It is easy to find lists of informal fallacies, but that does not mean that it is always easy to spot them.

How Can You Check for Logical Fallacies?

One way to go about evaluating an argument for fallacies is to return to the concept of the three fundamental appeals: **ethos**, **logos**, and **pathos**. As a quick reminder,

- **Ethos** is an appeal to ethics, authority, and/or credibility.
- **Logos** is an appeal to logic.
- **Pathos** is an appeal to emotion.

Once you have refreshed your memory of the basics, you may begin to understand how ethos, logos, and pathos can be used appropriately to strengthen your argument or inappropriately to manipulate an audience through the use of fallacies. Classifying fallacies as fallacies of ethos, logos, or pathos will help you to understand their nature and to recognize them. Please keep in mind, however, that some fallacies may fit into multiple categories. For more details and examples on errors in the rhetorical appeals, see **Chapter 2, "Rhetorical Analysis."**

Fallacies of ethos relate to credibility. These fallacies may unfairly build up the credibility of the author (or his allies) or unfairly attack the credibility of the author's opponent (or her allies). Some fallacies

give an unfair advantage to the claims of the speaker or writer or an unfair disadvantage to his opponent's claims. These are **fallacies of logos**. **Fallacies of pathos** rely excessively upon emotional appeals, attaching positive associations to the author's argument and negative ones to his opponent's position.

Key Takeaways: Logic

- **Logic**—shows how ideas fit together by using reason.
- **Formal Logic**—a formal and rigorous study of logic, such as in math and philosophy.
- **Informal Logic**—the application of logic to arguments of all types: in scholarship, in business, and in life. Informal logic is what this part of the chapter covers.
- **Deductive Argument**—guarantees a true conclusion based on the premises. The tests for deductive arguments are validity and soundness.
- **Validity**—a way to evaluate a deductive argument; a valid argument is one which, *if* the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.
- **Soundness**—the second way to evaluate a deductive argument; a sound argument is one where the argument is valid AND the premises have been shown to be true (via support).
- **Inductive Argument**—cannot guarantee a true conclusion but can only assert what is most likely to be true based on the premises and the support. The tests for inductive arguments are reliability and

strength.

- **Reliability**—a test of reason for inductive arguments. Inductive arguments must still be reasonable, must still have a reliable basis in logic.
- **Strength**—another test for inductive arguments. Inductive arguments are stronger when they have more reasons and more data to support them.
- **Logical Fallacy**—a flaw or trick of logic to be avoided at all costs. Fallacies can be formal or informal. See the Repository of Logical Fallacies below for individual examples.

4. What Are the Different Types of Arguments in Writing?

Throughout this chapter, you have studied the definition of argument, parts of argument, and how to use logic in argument. This section brings all of the previous material together and tackles arguments in writing. Foremost on most students' minds when taking college composition courses is this question: "How do I write an argument paper?" The answer is not a simple one because, as mentioned previously, arguments come in a variety of packages. This means that written arguments–whether in essay or some other form–also come in many different types.

Arguments of the Rhetorical Modes

Most arguments involve one or more of the **rhetorical modes**. Once again, rhetoric is the study and application of effective writing techniques. There are a number of standard rhetorical modes of writing—structural and analytical models that can be used effectively to suit different writing situations. The rhetorical modes include, but are not limited to, narrative, description, process analysis, illustration and exemplification, cause and effect, comparison, definition, persuasion, and classification. Any and all rhetorical modes can be used to pursue an argument. In fact, most professors will insist upon it.

> **Tip**
>
> Remember that when writing arguments, always be mindful of the point of view you should use. Most academic arguments should be pursued using third person.

Arguments of Persuasion

One of the most common forms of argument is that of **persuasion**, and often standardized tests, like the SOL, will provide writing prompts for persuasive arguments. On some level, all arguments have a persuasive element because the goal of the argument is to persuade the reader to take the writer's claim seriously. Many arguments, however, exist primarily to introduce new research and

interpretation whereas persuasive arguments expressly operate to change someone's mind about an issue or a person.

A common type of persuasive essay is an **Op-Ed article**. Included in the opinion section of a newspaper, these articles are more appropriately called argument essays because most authors strive not only to make explicit claims but also to support their claims, sometimes even with researched evidence. These articles are often well-designed persuasive essays, written to convince readers of the writer's way of thinking.

In addition to essays, other forms of persuasive writing exist. One common and important example is the **job letter**, where you must persuade others to believe in your merits as a worker and performer so that you might be hired.

In a persuasive essay, you should be sure to do the following:

- Clearly articulate your claim and the main reasons for it. Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case because a negative is hard to prove. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is too low or insufficient.

- Anticipate and address counterarguments. Think about your audience and the counterarguments they would mostly likely have. Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.

- Make sure your support comes in many different forms. Use logical reasoning and the rhetorical appeals, but also strive for concrete examples from your own experience and from society.

- Keep your tone courteous, but avoid being obsequious. In other words, shamelessly appealing to your readers' vanity will likely ring false. Aim for respectful honesty.

- Avoid the urge to win the argument. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your claim as a sound one, not simply the right one.

Tip

Because argument writing is designed to convince readers of an idea they may not have known before or a side of an issue they may not agree with, you must think carefully about the attitude you wish to convey as you advance your argument. The overall attitude of a piece of writing is its **tone**, and it comes from the words you choose. In argument writing, strive for the following:

- **Confidence**—The reader needs to know that you believe in what you say, so be confident. Avoid

hedgy and apologetic language. However, be careful not to cross the line from confidence to overconfidence. Arrogance can rebuff your readers, even if they agree with you.

- **Neutrality**—While you may advocate for one side or way of thinking, you still must demonstrate that you are being as objective as you can in your analysis and assessment. Avoid loaded terms, buzzwords, and overly emotional language.
- **Courtesy and fairn**ess—Particularly when dealing with any counterarguments, you want your tone to reveal that you have given other points of view due consideration. Avoid being smug, snide, or harshly dismissive of other ideas.

Sample Writing Assignment 1

Find an Op-Ed article from one of the major US newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, or the *LA Times*. Then, do the following:

1. Prewriting Work: Read the article carefully, taking notes or annotating it. Be sure to find the main argument and map the support used by the author, i.e., how the

author is trying to persuade you. Note any use of rhetorical appeals, expert testimony, and research.

2. Write a paragraph summary of the article. Include the main argument and its support. Explain the different types of support used by the author (rhetorical appeals, expert testimony, and research).

3. In a paragraph, devise and explain your own counterargument(s) to the author's thesis.

4. In a paragraph, explain what kind of support you would use for your counterargument. What rhetorical appeals would you use? What experts might you call on? Do you think you would need to do research and if so, on what?

Sample Writing Assignment 2

Write a job letter. As you design it, be sure to do the following:

1. Use formal letter format. Be sure to include these elements: your address, the address of the job you're applying to (or the department you are applying to), the date you send the letter, a greeting, the letter content in coherent paragraphs (single-spaced paragraphs with a double space in between paragraphs), a sign off, any additional information (your phone and/or email address). For some visual examples of what this would look like, do a Google image search for "job letter format."

2. Prewriting Work 1: Imagine a job you would like to apply for. Ask yourself the following questions and brainstorm answers to them: "What skills would I need to have for this job, and which of those skills do I have?" "What educational background would be required, and can I show that I fulfill the requirements?" "What experience might the hiring committee want to me to have, and do I have any experience that would be relevant?"

3. Prewriting Work 2: Take the notes you have come up with and add as many specific details as you can. If you believe you do have relevant skills, what are they, specifically? Where did you get those skills, specifically? How long have you had those skills, specifically? Do you have examples where you have shown excellence with those skills, specifically?

4. Drafting: Shape your details into three paragraphs organized by issue: skills, education, and experience. Be specific, include a couple examples per paragraph, and be succinct in your delivery.

5. Proofread carefully. First of all, excellent sentence composition, punctuation, and spelling communicate your seriousness to those who might hire you. Mistakes make you look sloppy and make it easy for them to toss your letter on the rejection pile. Second, watch word choice. Choose specific over general words as much as possible (you say you are a hard worker, but what does that mean, practically speaking?). Make sure you avoid clichés and overly gushy sentiment ("I'm passionate about people!"). Finally, proofread for tone. Strive for courteousness and objectivity. Make it seem like you are being objective about your own abilities.

Arguments of Evaluation

If you have ever answered a question about your personal take on a book or movie or television show or piece of music, you have given a **review**. Most times, these reviews are somewhat hasty and based on initial or shallow impressions. However, if you give thought to your review, if you explain more carefully what you liked or didn't like and why, if you bring in specific examples to back up your points, then you have moved on to an argument of evaluation. Reviews of film, books, music, food, and other aspects of taste and culture represent the most familiar type of argument of evaluation. The main objective of an **argument of evaluation** is to render a critical judgment on the merits of something.

Another common argument of evaluation is the **performance review**. If you have ever held a job, you know what it feels like to be on the receiving end of such a review; your timeliness and productivity and attitude are scrutinized to determine if you have been a good worker or need to worry about looking for another job. If you are in any sort of supervisory position, you will be the one writing and delivering those reviews, and your own supervisor will want to know that you have logical justification and evidence for your judgements.

For all types of reviews or evaluation arguments, make sure to plan for the following:

- Declare your overall judgment of the subject under review—good, bad, or somewhere in between. This is your conclusion or thesis.

- Lay out the criteria for your judgment. In other words, your

review must be based on logical criteria—i.e., the standards by which you evaluate something. For example, if you are reviewing a film, reasonable criteria would include acting, writing, storytelling, directing, cinematography, music, and special effects. If you are evaluating an employee, that criteria will change and more likely involve punctuality, aspects of job performance, and overall attitude on the job.

- Make sure to evaluate each criteria and provide evidence. Draw your evidence from what you are reviewing, and use as many specific examples as you can. In a movie review in which you think the acting quality was top notch, give examples of a particular style that worked well or lines delivered effectively or emotions realistically conveyed.

- Use concrete language. A review is only an argument if we can reasonably see—from examples and your explanations—how you arrived at your judgment. Vague or circular language ("I liked it because it was just really good!") will keep your evaluation at the opinion level only, preventing it from being taken seriously as an argument.

- Keep the tone respectful—even if you ultimately did not like the subject of your review. Be as objective as you can when giving your reasons. Insulting language detracts from the seriousness of your analysis and makes your points look like personal attacks.

Figure 3.7 "Roger Ebert"

Roger Ebert (1942-2013), a movie reviewer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, was once one of the most famous movie critics in America. His reviews provide excellent examples of the argument of evaluation.

Consider his **review** (https://tinyurl.com/y82ylaav) of the 2009 film *Avatar* and note how clearly he declares his judgements, how he makes his reader aware of just what standards he uses for judgement (his criteria), and how he uses a wealth of examples and reasons to back his critiques (although he is careful to avoid spoilers, the review went to print as the movie was coming out).

Sample Writing Assignment 3

Write a brief review of your first job. How would you rate that experience, and what would your rating be based on?

1. Declare your overall judgment of your job experience. This is your main claim.

2. Come up with at least four criteria for evaluation. Give your judgment for each criteria. Include at least two specific examples to support each evaluation, and explain the logic of your support.
3. Proofread for tone, making sure to look for any words that would cause a reader to think your critique was unfair or hostile. For example, even if you loathed your first job, treat it dispassionately, like you are a social scientist putting that work experience under a microscope. (This might allow you to say, for example, that although the job was dull and repetitive, it gave you some useful experience.)

Sample Writing Assignment 4

Evaluate a source that you plan to use for a research project. Explain what type of source you have (website? journal article? book? newspaper article?), and declare your source to be credible or not, using the following criteria:

1. Author's credentials. First of all, are the authors named? Can you find out anything about them, like degrees and professional information? If you cannot find anything, how does that affect credibility? If you can find information, how does that information show credibility or lack of it?

2. Publication information and process. Was the article or book peer reviewed? Was it online or in print? Did you find it through a database or a Google search? Who funded publication? Explain what the results of these questions tell you about the source's credibility.
3. The use of support. Does the source have footnotes or endnotes? A bibliography? Links to different articles? In other words, how carefully is the author trying to back up his or her claims?

Arguments of Fact and Explanation

In the beginning of this chapter, arguments were shown to be distinct from facts. Facts are not arguable, they do not have "two sides," and they are not up for debate. However, as we well know, people disagree with facts all the time. We wouldn't have a nonsense term like "alternative facts" otherwise. We do, however, have arguments that deal with this scenario: **arguments of fact and explanation**. Arguments of fact seek to establish, often in the face of doubters, *that* a fact is indeed true. Arguments of explanation establish *why* that fact is true. Not surprisingly, these arguments often go hand in hand, and they lie primarily in the domain of the research paper.

Arguments of Fact: Many times, the goal of giving an argument is simply to establish that the conclusion is true. For example, to convince someone that obesity rates are rising in the US, the writer should cite evidence such as studies from the Center for Disease

Control (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The studies cited would function as premises for the conclusion that obesity rates are rising:

Obesity is on the rise in the US because multiple studies carried out by the CDC and NIH have consistently shown a rise in obesity over the last four decades.

Putting this simple argument into standard form would look like this:

1. Multiple studies by the CDC and NIH have consistently shown a rise in obesity over the last four decades. (**premises**)
2. Therefore, obesity is on the rise in the US. (**conclusion**)

The standard form argument clearly distinguishes the premise from the conclusion and shows how the conclusion is supposed to be supported by the evidence offered in the premise. Again, the goal of this simple argument would be to convince someone that the conclusion is *true*. However, sometimes we already know that a statement or claim is true, and we are trying to establish *why* it is true rather than *that* it is true.

Arguments of Explanation: An argument that attempts to show *why* its conclusion is true is an explanation. Contrast the previous example with the following:

The reason that the rate of obesity is on the rise in the US is that the foods we most often consume over the past four decades have increasingly contained high levels of sugar and low levels of dietary fiber. Because eating foods high in sugar and low in fiber triggers the insulin system to start storing those calories as fat, it follows that people who consume foods high in sugar and low in fiber will tend to store more of the calories consumed as fat.

This passage gives an explanation for *why* obesity is on the rise in the US. Unlike the earlier example, here it is taken for granted that obesity *is* on the rise in the US. That is the claim whose truth the author must explain. The obesity explanation can also be put into standard form just like any other argument:

1. Over the past four decades, Americans have increasingly consumed foods high in sugar and low in fiber. (**premise**)
2. Consuming foods high in sugar and low in fat triggers the insulin system to start storing those calories as fat. (**premise**)
3. When people store more calories as fat, they tend to become obese. (**premise**)
4. Therefore, the rate of obesity is on the rise in the US. (**conclusion**)

Notice that in this explanation, the premises (1-3) attempt to explain *why* the conclusion is true, rather than a reason for thinking *that* the conclusion is true. That is, in an argument of explanation, we assume that what we are trying to explain (i.e., the conclusion) is true. In this case, the premises are supposed to show why we should *expect* or *predict* that the conclusion is true. Explanations often give us an *understanding* of why the conclusion is true.

Arguments of Interpretation

Arguments of interpretation come mainly in the form of **critical analysis** writing. Scholars and students use critical analysis to understand a text more deeply; therefore, it is common in disciplines in which texts are the main objects of study—literature, philosophy, and history. However, we can also think of critical analysis as any analysis where someone takes raw data—from texts, from objects and images, from laboratory experiments, from surveys of people—and analyzes that data to come up with what they mean. The "what it all means" is an **interpretation**. The argument in critical analysis writing is the interpretation of the data. This must be a logical interpretation with the data also used to support the interpretation through reasoning and examples.

The guidelines for analyzing data are determined by the experts in those areas. Scholars of the life, earth, and physical sciences; the social sciences; and the humanities gather all sorts of different

data. When writing up an interpretation of that data, writers and researchers should follow the models and standards provided by experts in those fields of study. In college, professors are important sources of these models and standards.

In the humanities, particularly in literature, there are generally four ways (or perspectives) for analyzing a text: writing from the perspective of a **reader**, writing as if the text were an **object of study**, writing about or from the perspective of an **author**, and writing about where a text fits into a particular **context**.

- Writing from the perspective of a reader: You seek to understand a text through your own experience, yet you also try to understand how others who may be different from you understand the same writing through their experience. This is characterized by noting down first impressions and lines or words that strike you in profound ways. This sort of analysis is common in journal or response paper assignments and can be a simple way to begin a discussion of a text.

- Writing about the text as an object of study: This is a perspective that highlights what makes up that text and what meaning we can find in it. Finding meaning relies on identifying the patterns, segments, and strategies (devices) in the writing you choose to analyze. This is one of the most common types of essay assignments in a literature class.

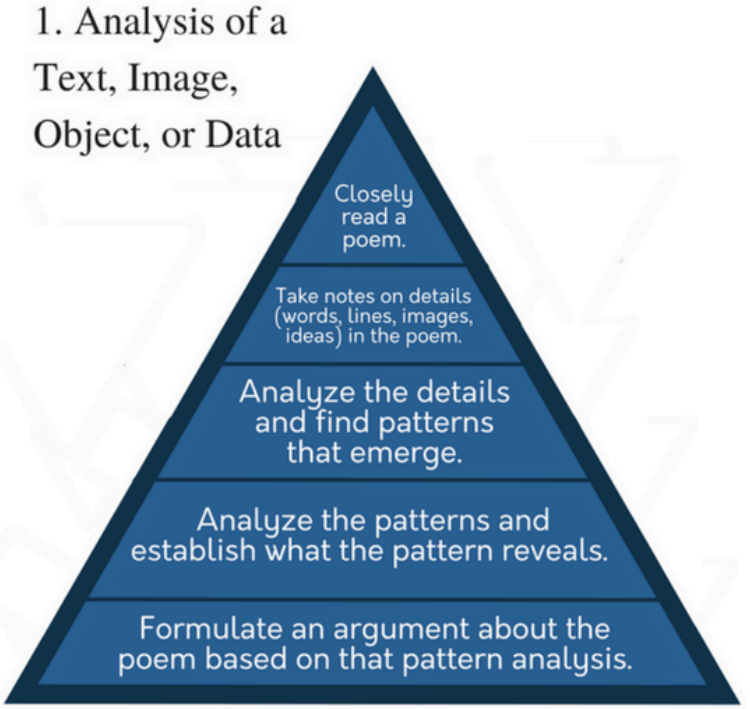
- Writing about the text's author: Sometimes this provides another perspective with which to deepen an understanding of a piece of writing. Examining his or her life, thought processes, behaviors, and beliefs can help you to further understand an author's work. This type of analysis can be the basis of a research paper on a work of history or literature.

- Writing about the text's context: This approach usually has to do with how a text compares to other texts as well as how the text interacts with history and society. When historians analyze texts, studying context is crucial, but contextual analysis can also be the focus of a literature essay.

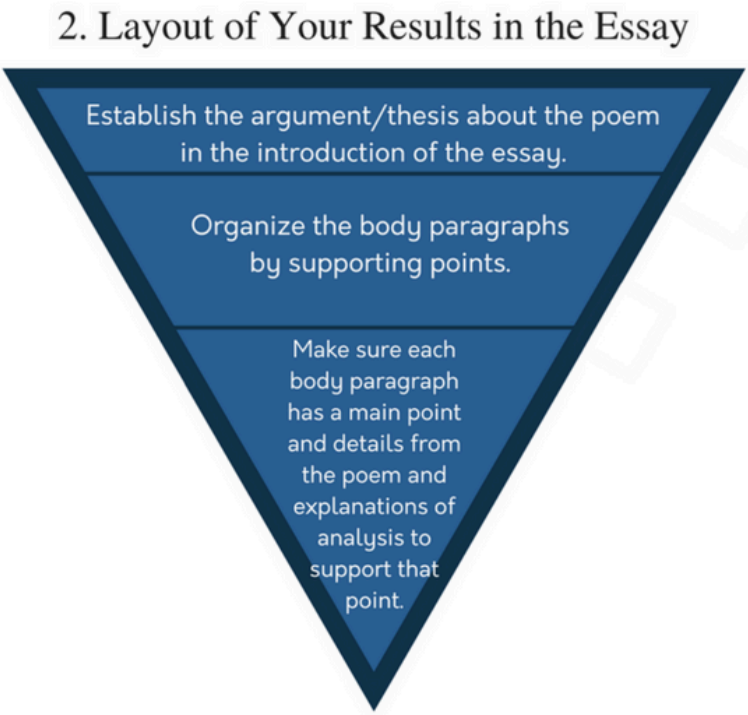
The process of critical analysis is dependent on **close reading** of the data or text and is an analytical process in which the writer moves from analyzing the details of the text to a broader conclusion that is logically based on those details. What can confuse a lot of students is that formal essay structure is must be framed by the conclusion, not the details: They must establish the main claim immediately, and then use the reasons for the claim to organize the details in each body paragraph. For more on close reading, see the chapters "Critical Thinking in College Writing" , "How to Read like a Writer," and "Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources."

Figure 3.8 "From Analysis to Argument"

From Analysis to Argument



You may go through this pattern several times, but the goal is to find a central claim that you can support in an essay.

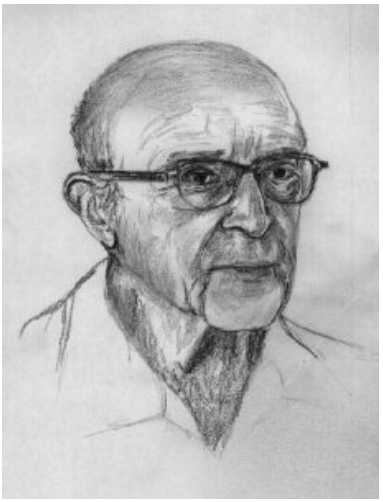


Rogerian Argument

The Rogerian argument, inspired by the influential psychologist Carl Rogers, aims to find compromise or common ground about an issue. If, as stated in the beginning of the chapter, academic or rhetorical argument is not merely a two-sided debate that seeks a winner and a loser, the Rogerian argument model provides a structured way to move beyond the win-lose mindset. Indeed, the Rogerian model

can be employed to deal effectively with controversial arguments that have been reduced to two opposing points of view by forcing the writer to confront opposing ideas and then work towards a common understanding with those who might disagree.

Figure 3.9 “Carl Ransom Rogers”



The following are the basic parts of a Rogerian Argument:

1. **Introduction**: Introduce the issue under scrutiny in a non-confrontational way. Be sure to outline the main sides in the debate. Though there are always more than two sides to a debate, Rogerian arguments put two in stark opposition to one another. Crucially, be sure to indicate the overall purpose of the essay: to come to a **compromise** about the issue at hand. If this intent is not stated up front, the reader may be confused or even suspect manipulation on the part of the writer, i.e., that the writer is massaging the audience just to win a fight. Be advised that the Rogerian essay uses an inductive reasoning structure, so *do not* include your thesis in your introduction. You will build toward the thesis and then include it in your conclusion. Once again, state the *intent* to compromise, but do not yet state what the compromise is.

2. **Side A**: Carefully map out the main claim and reasoning for the **opposing side** of the argument first. The writer’s view should never really come first because that would defeat the purpose of what Rogers called **empathetic listening**, which guides the overall approach to this type of argument. By allowing the opposing argument to come first, you communicate to the reader that you are willing to respectfully consider another’s view on the issue.

Furthermore, you invite the reader to then give you the same respect and consideration when presenting your own view. Finally, presenting the opposition first can help those readers who would side against you to ease into the essay, keeping them invested in the project. If you present your own ideas first, you risk polarizing those readers from the start, which would then make them less amenable to considering a compromise by the end of the essay. **You can listen to Carl Rogers himself discuss the importance of empathy on *YouTube*** (https://youtu.be/2dLsgpHw5x0, transcript **here**).

3. **Side B**: Carefully go over **your side** of the argument. When mapping out this side's claim and support, be sure that it parallels that of Side A. In other words, make sure not to raise entirely new categories of support, or there can be no way to come to a compromise. Make sure to maintain a non-confrontational tone; for example, avoid appearing arrogant, sarcastic, or smug.

4. **The Bridge**: A solid Rogerian argument acknowledges the desires of each side and tries to accommodate both. In this part, point out the ways in which you agree or can find **common ground** between the two sides. There should be at least one point of agreement. This can be an acknowledgement of the one part of the opposition's agreement that you also support or an admittance to a shared set of values even if the two sides come to different ideas when employing those values. This phase of the essay is crucial for two reasons: finding common ground (1) shows the audience the two views are not necessarily at complete odds, that they share more than they seem, and (2) sets up the compromise to come, making it easier to digest for all parties. Thus, this section **builds a bridge** from the two initial isolated and opposite views to a compromise that both sides can reasonably support.

5. **The Compromise**: Now is the time to finally announce your compromise, which is your thesis. The compromise is what the essay has been building towards all along, so explain it carefully and demonstrate the logic of it. For example, if debating about whether to use racial profiling, a compromise might be based on both sides'

desire for a safer society. That shared value can then lead to a new claim, one that disarms the original dispute or set of disputes. For the racial profiling example, perhaps a better solution would focus on more objective measures than race that would then promote safety in a less problematic way.

Figure 3.10 "Rogerian Argument"

ROGERIAN ARGUMENT

THE ISSUE: You are pro-homeschooling.

THE INTRODUCTION: Indicate your intent to find a compromise. Outline both sides of the argument— what "opponents believe" and what "proponents believe."

SIDE A: You show an deep understanding of the positions of those who are opposed to homeschooling.

SIDE B: Present your side of the issue— the benefits of homeschooling.

THE BRIDGE: Build a bridge to compromise between the two sides. What can both sides agree on?

Example: Both sides want the best education possible for all students.

THE COMPROMISE: The state can ensure that parents who want to home-school can do so, while it also ensures that home-schooled students receive a high-quality education in a safe environment with information and access to standardized testing.

Sample Writing Assignment 5

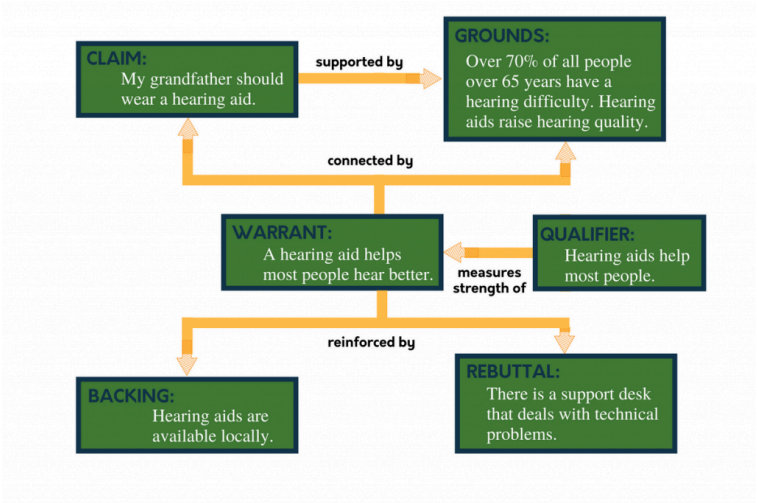
Find a controversial topic, and begin building a Rogerian argument. Write up your responses to the following:

1. The topic or dilemma I will write about is…
2. My opposing audience is…
3. My audience's view on the topic is…
4. My view on the topic is…
5. Our common ground–shared values or something that we both already agree on about the topic–is…
6. My compromise (the main claim or potential thesis) is…

The Toulmin Argument Model

Stephen Edelston Toulmin (born March 25, 1922) was a British philosopher, author, and educator. Toulmin devoted his works to analyzing moral reasoning. He sought to develop practical ways to evaluate ethical arguments effectively. The Toulmin Model of Argumentation, a diagram containing six interrelated components, was considered Toulmin's most influential work, particularly in the fields of rhetoric, communication, and computer science. His components continue to provide useful means for analyzing arguments, and the terms involved can be added to those defined in earlier sections of this chapter.

Figure 3.11 "Toulmin Argument"



The following are the parts of a Toulmin argument:

1. **Claim**: The claim is a statement that you are asking the other person to accept as true (i.e., a conclusion) and forms the nexus of the Toulmin argument because all the other parts relate back to the claim. The claim can include information and ideas you are asking readers to accept as true or actions you want them to accept and enact. One example of a claim:

> My grandfather should wear a hearing aid.

This claim both asks the reader to believe an idea and suggests an action to enact. However, like all claims, it can be challenged. Thus, a Toulmin argument does not end with a claim but also includes grounds and warrant to give support and reasoning to the claim.

2. **Grounds**: The grounds form the basis of real persuasion and includes the reasoning behind the claim, data, and proof of expertise. Think of grounds as a combination of **premises** and **support**. The truth of the claim rests upon the grounds, so those

grounds should be tested for strength, credibility, relevance, and reliability. The following are examples of grounds:

> Over 70% of all people over 65 years have a hearing difficulty.
>
> Hearing aids raise hearing quality.

Information is usually a powerful element of persuasion, although it does affect people differently. Those who are dogmatic, logical, or rational will more likely be persuaded by factual data. Those who argue emotionally and who are highly invested in their own position will challenge it or otherwise try to ignore it. Thus, grounds can also include appeals to emotion, provided they aren't misused. The best arguments, however, use a variety of support and rhetorical appeals.

3. **Warrant**: A warrant links data and other grounds to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the grounds to be **relevant**. The warrant may be carefully explained and explicit or unspoken and implicit. The warrant answers the question, "Why does that data mean your claim is true?" For example,

> A hearing aid helps most people hear better.

The warrant may be simple, and it may also be a longer argument with additional sub-elements including those described below. Warrants may be based on ***logos***, ***ethos*** or ***pathos***, or values that are assumed to be shared with the listener. In many arguments, warrants are often implicit and, hence, unstated. This gives space for the other person to question and expose the warrant, perhaps to show it is weak or unfounded.

4. **Backing**: The backing for an argument gives additional support to the warrant. Backing can be confused with grounds, but the main difference is this: Grounds should directly support the premises of the main argument itself, while backing exists to help the warrants make more sense. For example,

> Hearing aids are available locally.

This statement works as backing because it gives credence to the warrant stated above, that a hearing aid will help most people hear better. The fact that hearing aids are readily available makes the warrant even more reasonable.

5. **Qualifier**: The qualifier indicates how the data justifies the warrant and may limit how universally the claim applies. The necessity of qualifying words comes from the plain fact that most absolute claims are ultimately false (all women want to be mothers, e.g.) because one counterexample sinks them immediately. Thus, most arguments need some sort of qualifier, words that temper an absolute claim and make it more reasonable. Common qualifiers include "most," "usually," "always," or "sometimes." For example,

> Hearing aids help most people.

The qualifier "most" here allows for the reasonable understanding that rarely does one thing (a hearing aid) universally benefit all people. Another variant is the reservation, which may give the possibility of the claim being incorrect:

> Unless there is evidence to the contrary, hearing aids do no harm to ears.

Qualifiers and reservations can be used to bolster weak arguments, so it is important to recognize them. They are often used by advertisers who are constrained not to lie. Thus, they slip "usually," "virtually," "unless," and so on into their claims to protect against liability. While this may seem like sneaky practice, and it can be for some advertisers, it is important to note that the use of qualifiers and reservations can be a useful and legitimate part of an argument.

6. **Rebuttal**: Despite the careful construction of the argument, there may still be counterarguments that can be used. These may be rebutted either through a continued dialogue, or by pre-empting the counter-argument by giving the rebuttal during the initial presentation of the argument. For example, if you anticipated a counterargument that hearing aids, as a technology, may be fraught

with technical difficulties, you would include a rebuttal to deal with that counterargument:

> There is a support desk that deals with technical problems.

Any rebuttal is an argument in itself, and thus may include a claim, warrant, backing, and the other parts of the Toulmin structure.

Even if you do not wish to write an essay using strict Toulmin structure, using the Toulmin checklist can make an argument stronger. When first proposed, Toulmin based his layout on legal arguments, intending it to be used analyzing arguments typically found in the courtroom; in fact, Toulmin did not realize that this layout would be applicable to other fields until later. The first three elements–"claim," "grounds," and "warrant"–are considered the essential components of practical arguments, while the last three—"qualifier," "backing," and "rebuttal"—may not be necessary for all arguments.

Exercise 5

Find an argument in essay form and diagram it using the Toulmin model. The argument can come from an Op-Ed article in a newspaper or a magazine think piece or a scholarly journal. See if you can find all six elements of the Toulmin argument. Use the structure above to diagram your article's argument.

Key Takeaways: Types of Argument

- **Arguments in the Rhetorical Modes**—models of writing that can be used for an argument, including the rhetorical modes: narration, comparison, causal analysis, process, description, definition, classification, and exemplification.
- **Arguments of Persuasion**—used to change someone's thinking on a topic or person.
- **Arguments of Evaluation**—critical reviews based on logical evaluation of criteria and evidence for that evaluation.
- **Arguments of Fact and Explanation**—establishes *that* a fact is true (the former) or *why* it is true (the latter).
- **Arguments of Interpretation**—critical analysis writing in which one makes an argument about what data mean. Data can come from texts, objects, surveys, and scientific experiments.
- **The Rogerian Argument Model**—an argument model designed to bring about consensus and mutual understanding rather than conflict.
- **Toulmin's Argument Model**—six interrelated components used to diagram an argument, drawn from both rhetorical and academic argument.

5. A Repository of Logical Fallacies

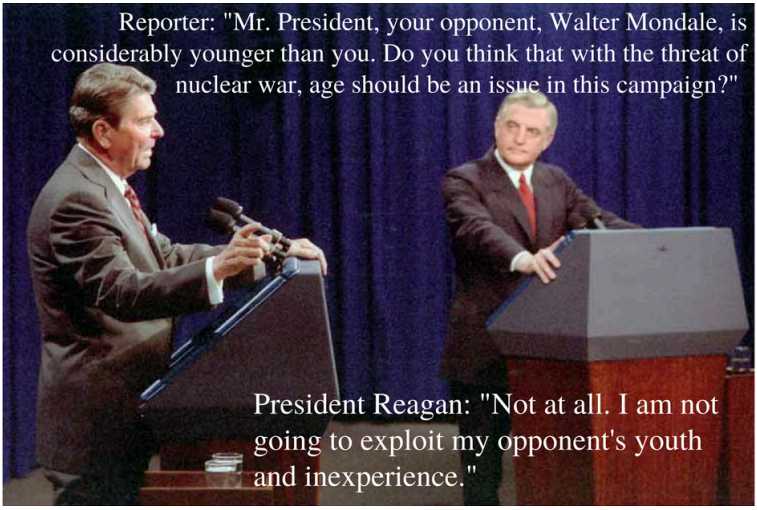
Below is a list of informal fallacies, divided into four main categories: fallacies of irrelevance, presumption, ambiguity, and inconsistency. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it will include some of the most common fallacies used by writers and speakers, both in the world and in the classroom.

Fallacies of Irrelevance

One of the most common ways to go off track in an argument is to bring up irrelevant information or ideas. They are grouped here into two main categories: the **red herring fallacies** and the **irrelevant appeals**.

- **Red Herring Fallacies**—These aim to distract the reader by introducing irrelevant ideas or information. They divert attention away from the validity, soundness, and support of an argument. Think of red herrings as squirrels to a dog—almost impossible to resist chasing once spotted.

Figure 3.12 "Reagan's Red Herring"



- **Weak/False Analogy**—An analogy is a brief comparison, usually to make writing more interesting and to connect with the reader. While writers often use analogies effectively to illustrate ideas, a bad analogy can be misleading and even inflammatory.

Example: "Taxes are like theft." This statement makes a false analogy because taxes are legal and thus cannot logically be defined as, or even compared to, something illegal.

- **Tu Quoque**—Also known as an appeal to hypocrisy, this fallacy translates from the Latin as "you, too." Known on grade school playgrounds around the world, this false argument distracts by turning around any critique on the one making the critique with the implication that the accuser should not have made the accusation in the first place because it reveals him as a hypocrite—even if the accusation or critique has validity.

Example 1: "Mom, Joey pushed me!" "Yeah, but Sally pushed me first!" Any sister who has ratted out a brother before knows she will have to deal with an immediate counter attack, claiming that she has perpetrated the same crime she has accused the brother of doing (and more than likely, she has done so). The brother hopes that the sister's blatant hypocrisy will absolve him of his crime. Any veteran parent of siblings will know not to fall for this trick.

Example 2: Joe the Politician has been legitimately caught in a lie. Joe and his supporters try to deflect the damage by pointing out the times his opponents have been caught lying, too; this counter accusation implies that Joe's lie should be excused because of the hypocrisy of those who found it and who dare to even talk about it. However, this counter accusation does not actually do anything logically to disprove or challenge the fact of Joe's lie.

- **Ad Hominem Attacks**—The *argumentum ad hominem* is one of the most recognizable and irresistible of the red herring fallacies. Ad hominem attacks distract from an argument by focusing on the one making the argument, trying to damage his or her credibility. There are two main types of ad hominem attack: **abuse** and **circumstance**:

Ad hominem attacks of **abuse** are personal (often ruthlessly so), meant to insult and demean. Attacks of abuse distract the audience as well as the speaker or writer because he will believe it necessary to defend himself from the abuse rather than strengthen his argument.

Examples: These can include attacks on the body, intelligence, voice, dress, family, and personal choices and tastes.

Figure 3.13 "Student vs. Freud Ad Hominem"

In ad hominem attacks of circumstance, the debater implies that his opponent only makes an argument because of a personal connection to it instead of the quality and support of the argument itself, which should be considered independent of any personal connection.

Example: "You only support the Latino for this job because you're a Latino."

This statement fails the logic test because it only takes a personal characteristic into account–race–when making this claim. This claim does not consider two important issues: (1) People do not base every decision they make on their race, and (2) there may have been other perfectly logical reasons to support the Latino job applicant that had nothing to do with race.

- **Poisoning the Well**—This is a type of ad hominem attack that attempts to damage the character of an opponent before that person even introduces an argument. Thus, by the time the argument is made, it often sounds weak and defensive, and the

person making the argument may already be suspect in the minds of the audience.

Example: If a speaker calls out a woman for being overly emotional or hysterical, any heightened feeling—even a raised voice—may be attributed to her inability to control emotion. Furthermore, if that woman makes an argument, she can be ignored and her argument weakened because of the perception that it is rooted in emotion, not reason.

Figure 3.14 "Poisoning the Well"

- **Guilt by Association**—This red herring fallacy works by associating the author of an argument with a group or belief so abhorrent and inflammatory in the minds of the audience that everyone, author and audience alike, is chasing squirrels up trees—that is, they are occupied by the tainted association to the reviled group—instead of dealing with the merits of the

original argument.

Example: the *argumentum ad Nazium*, or playing the Hitler card. To counter an argument, either the arguer or a part of the argument itself is associated with Hitler or the Nazis. ("Vegetarianism is a healthy option for dieters." "Never! You know, Hitler was a vegetarian!") Because almost no one wants to be associated with fascists (or other similarly hated groups, like cannibals or terrorists), the author now faces the task of defending himself against the negative association instead of pursuing the argument. If, however, there are actual Nazis–or the equivalent of Nazis, such as white supremacists or other neofascists–making an argument based on fascist ideology, it is perfectly reasonable to criticize, oppose, and object to their extreme and hateful views.

Figure 3.15 "Guilt by Association"

Irrelevant Appeals—Unlike the rhetorical appeals, the irrelevant appeals are attempts to persuade the reader with ideas and information that are irrelevant to the issues or arguments at hand, or the appeals rest on faulty assumptions in the first place. The irrelevant appeals can look and feel like logical support, but they are either a mirage or a manipulation.

- **Appeal to Emotion**—manipulates the audience by playing too much on emotion instead of rational support. Using scare tactics is one type of appeal to emotion. Using pity to pressure someone into agreement is another example.

Example: Imagine a prosecuting attorney in a murder case performing closing arguments, trying to convict the defendant by playing on the emotions of the jury: "Look at that bloody knife! Look at that poor, battered victim and the cruelty of all those terrible stab wounds!" The jury may well be swayed by such a blatant appeal to emotion–pity, horror, disgust—but this appeal doesn't actually provide any concrete proof for the defendant's guilt. If the lawyer has built a logical case that rests on an abundance of factual data, then this appeal to emotion may be justified as a way to personalize that data for the jury. If, however, the lawyer *only* uses this appeal to emotion, the argument for guilt is flawed because the lawyer has tried to make up for a weak case by turning the jury members' emotions into the main evidence for guilt.

- **Appeal to Popularity**—Also known as the bandwagon fallacy, the appeal to popularity implies that because many people believe or support something, it constitutes evidence for its validity. However, once we stop to think this idea through, we can easily remember popular ideas that were not at all good or justifiable: The majority does not always make the best choice.

Example: A good example here would be fashion trends. What is

popular from one day to the next does not necessarily have anything to do with whether something logically is a good idea or has practical use.

Figure 3.16 “Appeal to Popularity”

- **Appeal to Incredulity**—suggests that a lack of understanding is a valid excuse for rejecting an idea. Just because someone does not personally understand how something works does not mean that thing is false. A person does not need to understand how a car’s engine works to know that it *does* work, for instance. Often, in addition to rejecting the difficult idea, the arguer goes on to suggest that anyone who believes in the idea is foolish to do so.

Example: “It’s just common sense that the earth is flat because when I look at it, I can’t see any curve, not even when I’m in an

airplane. I don't need any scientist to tell me what I can clearly figure out with my own eyes." This person has casually dismissed any scientific evidence against a flat earth as if it did not matter. Often those making an illogical appeal to incredulity will substitute what they think of as "common sense" for actual scientific evidence with the implication that they do not need any other basis for understanding. The problem is that many of the truths of our universe cannot be understood by common sense alone. Science provides the answers, often through complex mathematical and theoretical frameworks, but ignorance of the science is not a justifiable reason for dismissing it.

- **Appeal to Nature**—the assumption that what is natural is (1) inherently good and therefore (2) constitutes sufficient reason for its use or support. This is flawed because (1) how we determine what is natural can and does change, and (2) not everything that is natural is beneficial.

Example: "Vaccines are unnatural; thus, being vaccinated is more harmful than not being vaccinated." A person making this statement has made an illogical appeal to nature. The fact that vaccines are a product of human engineering does not automatically mean they are harmful. If this person applied that logic to other cases, she would then have to reject, for instance, *all* medicines created in the lab rather than plucked from the earth.

- **Appeal to Tradition/Antiquity**—assumes that what is old or what "has always been done" is automatically good and beneficial. The objection, "But, we've always done it this way!" is fairly common, used when someone tries to justify or legitimize whatever "it" is by calling on tradition. The problems are these: (1) Most rudimentary history investigations usually prove that, in fact, "it" has *not* always been done that way; (2) tradition is not by itself a justification for the goodness or benefit of anything. Foot binding was a tradition at one point,

but a logical argument for its benefit would strain credulity.

Example: "We should bar women from our club because that is how it has always been done." The person making this argument needs to provide logical reasons women should not be included, not just rely on tradition.

- **Appeal to Novelty**—the mirror of the appeal to antiquity, suggesting that what is new is necessarily better.

Example: "Buy our new and improved product, and your life will forever be changed for the better!" Advertisers love employing the appeal to novelty to sell the public on the idea that because their product is new, it is better. Newness is no guarantee that something is good or of high quality.

- **Appeal to Authority**—Appealing to the ideas of someone who is a credentialed expert—or authority—on a subject can be a completely reasonable type of evidence. When one writes a research paper about chemistry, it is reasonable to use the works of credentialed chemists. However, the appeal to authority becomes a fallacy when misapplied. That same credentialed chemist would not be a logical authority to consult for information about medieval knights because authority in one area does not necessarily transfer to other areas. Another mistaken appeal to authority is to assume that because someone is powerful in some way that that power accords that person special knowledge or wisdom.

Example: Many societies throughout history have had hierarchical social and political structures, and those who happened to be in the top tier, like aristocrats and rulers, had authority over those below them. In fact, the term "nobility" in the west had embedded within it the notion that the aristocracy really were better—more ethical, more intelligent, more deserving of reward—than those lower on the social ladder. Careful study of the nobility shows, however, that

some members were just as capable of immorality and stupidity as lower social groups.

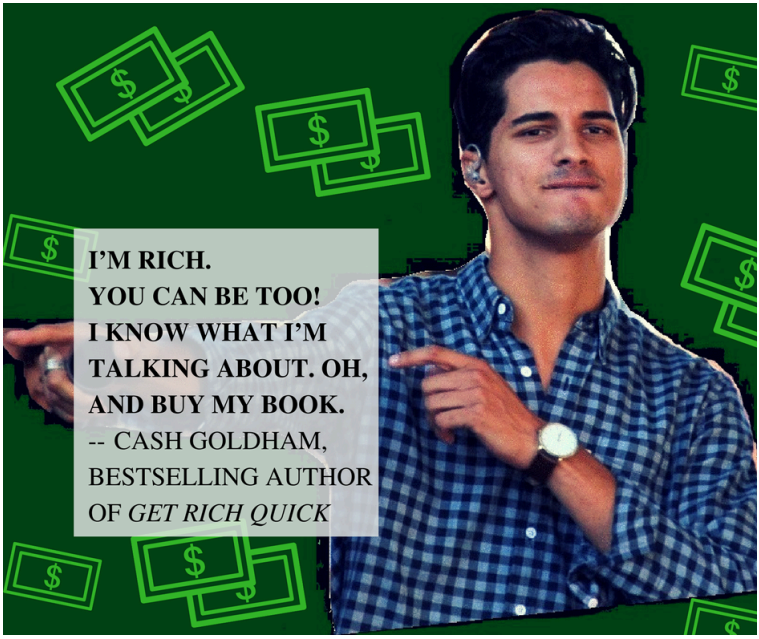
- **Appeal to Consequences/Force**—the attempt to manipulate someone into agreement by either implicit or explicit threats of consequences or force (violence!).

Example: "Agree with me or you'll be fired!" Holding something over another person's head is not a reasonable way to support an argument. The arguer avoids giving any sort of logic or evidence in favor of a threat.

- **Appeal to Wealth**—the assumption that wealthy people have special knowledge or wisdom that derives from their economic position and that can then be applied to any area of knowledge.

Example: "Hi, I'm a famous actress, and while I'm not a qualified psychologist, read my new self-help book for how you, too, can avoid depression!" Fame and fortune alone do not turn someone into a qualified expert. Appealing to a person's expertise solely based on wealth and position is thus logically flawed.

Figure 3.17 "Appeal to Wealth"



- **Appeal to Poverty**—the mirror of the above irrelevant appeal, that poor people have special knowledge or wisdom because of their adverse economic circumstances. This can work in another way: that poor people are particularly deficient in knowledge or wisdom because they are poor. However, neither assumption constitutes sound reasoning. The conditions of poverty are far too complex.

Example: "That man lives on unemployment benefits, so why would I care about his opinion on anything?" The arguer in this scenario unreasonably uses another's poverty against him, by implying that a poor person would have worthless ideas. This implication has embedded within it the idea that someone is only poor because of some sort of personal lack–intelligence, morality, good sense, and so on. However, it is quite reasonable for a poor person to be

intelligent, ethical, and wise. To assume otherwise is to risk making logical mistakes.

Fallacies of Presumption

To call someone presumptuous is to accuse that person of overreaching—making bold assertions without adequate reason or failing to follow the rules of behavior (but presuming it is okay to do so). The logical fallacy version of this involves making a case with inadequate or tainted evidence, or even no evidence whatsoever, or by having unjustified reasons for making the case in the first place.

Working with Flawed Evidence—These fallacies occur when an author uses evidence that has been compromised.

- **Hasty Generalization**—A hasty generalization derives its conclusion from too little information, evidence, or reason.

One type of hasty generalization is jumping to a conclusion from a small amount of evidence.

Example: Having one bad meal at a restaurant and then immediately concluding that all meals from that restaurant will be just as bad.

Figure 3.18 "Hasty Generalization"

Another type of hasty generalization involves relying on **anecdotal evidence** for support. As human beings, we overestimate the power of personal experience and connections, so they can drown out scientific data that contradict an individual—or anecdotal—experience. Additionally, anecdotal evidence is persuasive because of the human desire for perfection. Perfection is a lofty—and mostly unreachable—goal, and when a product or a person or a program fails to live up to perfection, it becomes easier to dismiss—particularly when a personal story or two of imperfection is involved. Accurate information, however, comes from a much larger amount of data—analysis of hundreds or thousands or even millions of examples. Unfortunately, data can feel impersonal and, therefore, less convincing.

Example: "I love my new Banana^{tm} laptop. The product ratings for it are very high." "Oh, no one should ever buy one of their computers! My brother had one, and it was full of glitches." Basing

a judgement or an argument on a personal story or two, as in this case, is not logical but can be incredibly persuasive. However, if 98% of Banana^{tm} computers run perfectly well, and only 2% have glitches, it is illogical to use that 2% to write this product off as universally terrible.

In scholarship, hasty generalizations can happen when conclusions derive from an **unrepresentative sample**. Data coming from a group that fail to represent the group's full complexity is unrepresentative, and any results drawn from that data will be flawed.

Example: If advances in cancer research were only, or mostly, tested on men, that would be unrepresentative of humanity because half of the human population—women—would not be represented. What if the cancer treatments affect women differently?

Another type of hasty generalization derived from poor research is the **biased sample**. This comes from a group that has a predisposed bias to the concepts being studied.

Example: If a psychologist were to study how high school students handled challenges to their religious views, it would be flawed to only study students at schools with a religious affiliation since most of those students may be predisposed toward a single type of religious view.

- **Sweeping Generalization**—the inverse of the hasty generalization. Instead of making a conclusion from little evidence, the sweeping generalization applies a general rule to a specific situation without providing proper evidence, without demonstrating that the rule even applies, or without providing for exceptions. Stereotyping is one prominent type of sweeping generalization; a stereotype derives from general ideas about a group of people without accounting for exceptions or accuracy or that there is any sound reasoning behind the stereotype.
- **Confirmation Bias**—a pernicious fallacy that can trip even careful scholars. It occurs when the writer or researcher is so

convinced by her point of view that she only seeks to confirm it and, thus, ignores any evidence that would challenge it. Choosing only data that support a preformed conclusion is called cherry picking and is a one-way ticket to skewed results. Related to this fallacy is another—disconfirmation bias—when the writer or researcher puts so much stock in her side of the argument that she does not apply equal critical evaluation to the arguments and evidence that support the other side. In other words, while too easily and uncritically accepting what supports her side, she is unreasonably critical of opposing arguments and evidence.

Example: In the later nineteenth century, when archaeology was a new and thrilling field of study, Heinrich Schliemann excavated the ancient city of Troy, made famous in Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*. In fact, Schliemann used *The Iliad* as a guide, so when he excavated, he looked to find structures (like walls) and situations (proof of battles) in the archaeological remains. While Schliemann's work is still considered groundbreaking in many ways, his method was flawed. It allowed him to cherry pick his results and fit them to his expectations–i.e., that his results would fit the myth. When Schliemann sought to confirm story elements from *The Iliad* in the archaeological record, he risked misinterpreting his data. What if the data was telling a different story than that in *The Iliad*? How could he know for sure until he put the book down and analyzed the archaeological evidence on its own merits? For more on Schliemann and his famous early excavations, see his Encyclopedia Britannica entry (https://tinyurl.com/y9tk4vou), or look up "Heinrich Schliemann" in the *Gale Virtual Reference Library* database.

- **No True Scotsman**—a false claim to purity for something that is too complex for purity, like a group, an identity, or an organization. Those making claims to purity usually attempt to declare that anyone who does not fit their "pure" definition does not belong. For example, national identity is complicated

and can mean something different to each person who claims that identity; therefore, it is too complex for a one-size-fits-all definition and for any one litmus test to prove that identity.

Examples: "No real Scot would put ice in his scotch!" "No real man would drink lite beer!" "No real feminist would vote Republican!" Each of these statements assumes that everyone has the same definition for the identities or groups discussed: Scots, men, and feminists. However, the members of each group are themselves diverse, so it is illogical to make such blanket declarations about them. It is actually quite reasonable for a Scottish person to like ice in her scotch and still claim a Scottish identity or for a man to drink lite beer without relinquishing his manhood or for a feminist to vote Republican while still working toward women's rights.

Figure 3.19 "No True Southerner, No True Scotsman"

Working with No Evidence—These fallacies occur when the evidence asserted turns out to be no evidence whatsoever.

- **Burden of Proof**—This logical fallacy, quite similar to the appeal to ignorance, occurs when the author forgets that she is the one responsible for supporting her arguments and, instead, shifts the burden of proof to the audience.

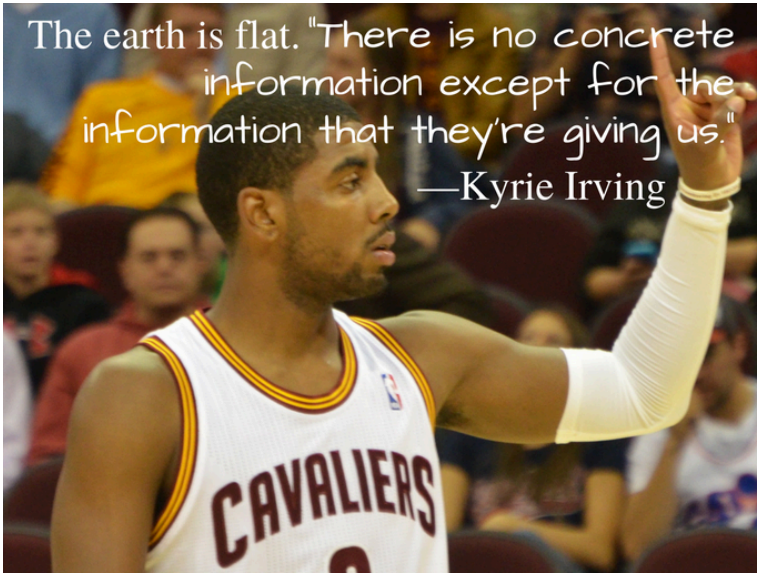
Example: "Larry stole my painting," Edith cried. "Prove to me he didn't!" No: The one making the claim must give reasons and evidence for that claim *before* anyone else is obligated to refute it. If Edith cannot give sound proof of Larry's guilt, the argument should be rejected.

- **Arguing from Silence or Ignorance**—Like the burden of proof fallacy, this one occurs when the author, either implicitly or explicitly, uses a lack of evidence as a type of proof. This is the basis for most conspiracy theory nonsense, as if the lack of evidence is so hard to believe, the only reason to explain why it is missing is a cover up. Remember, it is the writer's job to present positive proof (evidence that actually exists and can be literally seen) to support any argument made. If a writer cannot find evidence, he must admit that he may be wrong and then, find a new argument!

Example: "There is no proof that Joe the Politician conspired with the Canadians to rig the elections." "A-ha! That there is nothing to find is proof that he did! He must have paid off everyone involved to bury the evidence." Lack of proof cannot be–in and of itself–a type of proof because it has no substance; it is a nothing. Is it possible that proof may arise in the future? Yes, but until it does, the argument that Joe and the Canadians rigged an election is illegitimate. Is it possible that Joe both rigged the election and paid people off to hide it? Again, yes, but there are two problems with

this reasoning: (1) Possibility, like absence of evidence, is not in itself a type of evidence, and (2) possibility does not equal probability. Just because something is possible does not mean it is probable, let alone likely or a sure thing. Those supporting conspiracy theories try to convince others that lack of proof is a type of proof and that a remote possibility is actually a surety. Both fail the logic test.

Figure 3.20 "Arguing from Ignorance"



- **Circular Reasoning**—also known as begging the question, occurs when, instead of providing reasons for a claim, the arguer just restates the claim but in a different way. An author cannot sidestep reasons and proof for an argument by just repeating the claim over and over again.

Example: "The death penalty is sinful because it is wrong and immoral." The conclusion (the death penalty is sinful) looks like it is

supported by two premises (that it is wrong, that it is immoral). The problem is that the words "wrong" and "immoral" are too close in meaning to "sinful," so they are not actual reasons; rather, they are just other ways to state the claim.

- **Special Pleading**—Anyone who makes a case based on special circumstances without actually providing any reasonable evidence for those circumstances is guilty of special pleading.

Example: "Is there any extra credit I can do to make up for my missing work?" Many students have asked this of their college professors. Embedded within the question is a logical fallacy, the insistence that the student asking it should get special treatment and be rewarded with extra credit even though he missed prior assignments. If the student has logical (and preferably documented) reasons for missing course work, then the fallacy of special pleading does not apply. Those expecting to be given special treatment without reasonable justification have committed the special pleading fallacy.

- **Moving the Goalposts**—happens when one keeps changing the rules of the game in mid-play without any reasonable justification.

Example: This fallacy occurs in Congress quite a lot, where the rules for a compromise are established in good faith, but one side or the other decides to change those rules at the last minute without good reason or evidence for doing so.

- **Wishful Thinking**—involves replacing actual evidence and reason with desire, i.e., desire for something to be true. Wanting an idea to be real or true, no matter how intensely, does not constitute rational support. This fallacy often occurs when closely-held ideas and beliefs are challenged, particularly if they are connected to family and identity or if they serve self interest.

Example: People do not like to see their personal heroes tarnished in any way. If a popular sports hero, e.g., is accused of a crime, many fans will refuse to believe it because they just don't want to. This plays right into the wishful thinking fallacy.

Figure 3.21 "Wishful Thinking"

Working with False Ideas about Evidence or Reasoning—These fallacies either (1) presume something is a reason for or evidence of something else when that connection has not been adequately or fairly established or (2) unfairly limit one's choices of possible reasons.

- **False Dilemma/Dichotomy**—occurs when one presents only two options in an argument when there are, in fact, many more

options. Arguments have multiple sides, not just two, so when only two are presented, readers are forced to choose between them when they should be able to draw from a more complex range of options. Another way to talk about the false dichotomy is to call it reductionist because the arguer has *reduced* the options from many to only two.

Example: "So, are you a dog person or a cat person? Are you a Beatles person or a Rolling Stones person? You can be only one!" Both of these examples provide a false choice between two options when there are clearly others to choose from. One might also reasonably choose both or neither. When an arguer only provides two options, she tries to rig the response and to get the responder to only work within the severely limited framework provided. Life is more complicated than that, so it is unreasonable to limit choices to only two.

Figure 3.22 "False Dilemma"

- **Loaded Question**—embeds a hidden premise in the question, so anyone who responds is forced to accept that premise. This puts the responder at an unfair disadvantage because he has to either answer the question and, by doing so, accept the premise, or challenge the question, which can look like he is ducking the issue.

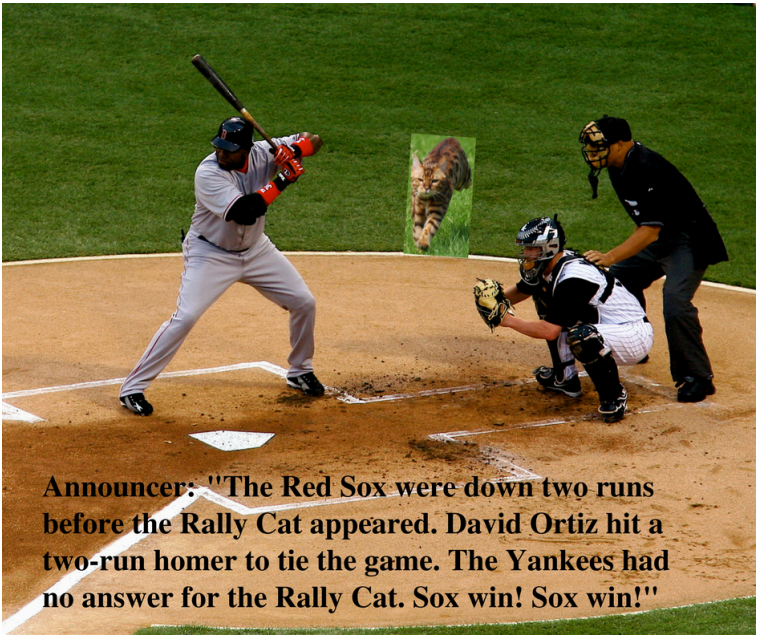
Example: "So, when did you start practicing witchcraft?" The hidden premise here is that the responder is a witch, and any reply is an admittance to that as a fact. An open question, one that does not trick the responder into admitting the presumption of witchcraft, would be this: "Are you a witch?"

False Cause—asserts causes that are more assumptions than actual causes. There are three types of false cause fallacies:

- **Post hoc ergo propter hoc**—In Latin, this phrase means "after this, therefore, because of this," which asserts that when one thing happens before another thing, the first must have caused the second. This is a false assumption because, even if the two things are related to each other, they do not necessarily have a causal relationship.

Example: Superstitions draw power from this logical fallacy. If a black cat crosses Joe the Politician's path, and the next day Joe loses the election, is he justified, logically, in blaming the cat? No. Just because the cat's stroll happened before the election results does not mean the one caused the other.

Figure 3.23 "Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc"



- **Slippery Slope**—the cause/effect version of jumping to a conclusion. A slippery slope argument claims that the first link in a causal chain will inevitably end in the most disastrous result possible, thus working to scare the audience away from the initial idea altogether. Keep in mind, legitimate and logical causal chains can be argued: where one cause leads to a logical effect, which then leads to the next logical effect, which then leads to the next logical effect, and so on. Those using the slippery slope fallacy, however, do not bother to carefully establish a logical chain but rather skip right ahead to the worst possible conclusion.

Example: "Oh no, if I fail this test, my whole life is ruined!" This is

a common fear among panicked students but is a prime example of the slippery slope. The student likely imagines this sort of logical chain: a failed test → failed class → getting behind in college → flunking out of college → all future job prospects falling through → total unemployment → abject poverty → becoming a pariah to family and friends → a thoroughly ruined life. The worry is that failing a test, should it even happen at all, will automatically result in the worst possible case: a totally failed life. However, when thought through more calmly and logically, hopefully, the student will realize that many mitigating factors lie between one failed test and total ruination and that the total ruination result is actually quite unlikely.

- **Cum hoc ergo propter hoc**—In Latin, this phrase translates to "with this, therefore, because of this," which suggests that because two or more things happen at the same time they must be related. This, however, doesn't account for other logical possibilities, including coincidence.

Example: "Gah! Why does the phone always ring as we sit down to dinner?" This question implies that those two events have something to do with each other when there are likely far more logical reasons that they do not.

Fallacies of Ambiguity

To be ambiguous is to be unclear; thus, fallacies of ambiguity are those that, intentionally or not, confuse the reader through lack of clarity. They create a fog that makes it difficult to see what the conclusion or the reasonable parts of an argument are, or the fog prevents a reasonable conclusion in the first place.

- **Quoting out of Context**—occurs when quoting someone without providing all the necessary information to understand

the author's meaning. Lack of context means that the original quote's meaning can be obscured or manipulated to mean something the original author never intended. Usually that context comes from the original text the quote came from that the borrower has failed to include or deliberately excluded.

Example: Original statement: "You may hand write your assignments but only when instructed to in the assignment schedule."

Quote used: "You may hand write your assignments."

Clearly, the quoted part leaves out some crucial information, qualifying information that puts limits on the initial instruction. The scenario may be this: The original statement came from a professor's syllabus, and the student quoted just the first part to an advisor, for instance, while trying to register a complaint over a bad grade for an assignment he hand wrote but wasn't supposed to. When the student exclaims, "But my professor told me I could hand write my assignments!" he is guilty of muddying the truth by quoting out of context. He left out the part that told him to verify the assignment instructions to see if handwriting were allowable or not.

- **Straw Man**—Creating a straw man argument involves taking a potentially reasonable argument and misrepresenting it, usually through scare tactics or oversimplification, i.e., by creating an argument that sounds similar to the original but in reality is not. The straw man argument is designed to be outrageous and upsetting, and thus easier to defeat or get others to reject. Why try to dismantle and rebut a reasonable argument when one can just knock the head off the straw man substitute instead?

Example: "I think we need to get rid of standardized testing in junior high and high school, at least in its current form." "That's terrible! I can't believe you don't want any standards for students. You just

want education to get even worse!" In this scenario, the second person has committed the straw man fallacy. She has distorted the first person's argument–that standardized *testing* in its current form should be eliminated–and replaced it with a much more objectionable one–that *all* educational standards should be eliminated. Because there are more ways than just testing to monitor educational standards, the second person's argument is a blatant misrepresentation and an over simplification.

Figure 3.24 "Straw Man"

- **Equivocation**—happens when an author uses terms that are abstract or complex—and, therefore, have multiple meanings or many layers to them—in an overly simple or misleading fashion or without bothering to define the particular use of that term.

Example: "I believe in freedom." The problem with this statement is it assumes that everyone understands just exactly what the speaker means by freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom to do what? Freedom in a legal sense? In an intellectual sense? In a spiritual sense? Using a vague sense of a complex concept like freedom leads to the equivocation fallacy.

Fallacies of Inconsistency

This category of fallacies involves a lack of logical consistency within the parts of the argument itself or on the part of the speaker.

- **Inconsistency Fallacy**—is one of the more blatant fallacies because the speaker is usually quite up-front about his inconsistency. This fallacy involves making contradictory claims but attempting to offset the contradiction by framing one part as a disclaimer and, thus, implying that the disclaimer inoculates the one making it from any challenge.

Example 1: "I'm not a racist but…." If what follows is a racist statement, the one saying this is guilty of the inconsistency fallacy and of making a racist statement. Making a bold claim against racism is not a shield.

Example 2: "I can't be sexist because I'm a woman." The speaker, when making this kind of statement and others like it, assumes that she cannot logically be called out for making a sexist statement because she happens to be a member of a group (women) who are frequent victims of sexism. If the statements she makes can objectively be called sexist, then she is guilty of both sexism and the inconsistency fallacy.

Figure 3.25 "Inconsistency Fallacy"

- **False Equivalence**—asserts that two ideas or groups or items or experiences are of equal type, standing, and quality when they are not.

Example: The belief in intelligent design and the theory of evolution are often falsely equated. The logical problem lies not with desire to support one or the other idea but with the idea that these two concepts are the same *type* of concept. They are not. Intelligent design comes out of belief, mainly religious belief, while evolution is a scientific theory underpinned by factual data. Thus, these two concepts should not be blithely equated. Furthermore, because these two concepts are not the same type, they do not need to be in opposition. In fact, there are those who may well believe in intelligent design while also subscribing to the theory of evolution.

In other words, their religious beliefs do not restrict an adherence to evolutionary theory. A religious belief is faith based and, thus, is not evaluated using the same principles as a scientific theory would be.

- **False Balance**—applies mainly to journalists who, because they wish to present an appearance of fairness, falsely claim that two opposing arguments are roughly equal to each other when one actually has much more weight to it—of both reasoning and evidence.

Example: The majority of scientists accept climate change as established by empirical evidence, while a scant few do not; putting one representative of each on a news program, however, implies that they represent an equal number of people, which is clearly false.

Key Takeaways: Logical Fallacies

- Both formal and informal fallacies are errors of reasoning, and if writers rely on such fallacies, even unintentionally, they undercut their arguments, particularly their crucial appeals to *logos*. For example, if someone defines a key term in an argument in an ambiguous way or if someone fails to provide credible evidence, or if someone tries to distract with irrelevant or inflammatory ideas, her arguments will appear logically weak to a critical audience.
- More than just *logos* is at stake, however. When

listeners or readers spot questionable reasoning or unfair attempts at audience manipulation, they may conclude that an author's ethics have become compromised. The credibility of the author (*ethos*) and perhaps the readers' ability to connect with that writer on the level of shared values (*pathos*) may well be damaged.

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44. Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?

REBECCA JONES

The word argument often means something negative. In Nina Paley's cartoon (see Figure 1), the argument is literally a cat fight. Rather than envisioning argument as something productive and useful, we imagine intractable sides and use descriptors such as "bad," "heated," and "violent." We rarely say, "Great, argument. Thanks!" Even when we write an academic "argument paper," we imagine our own ideas battling others.

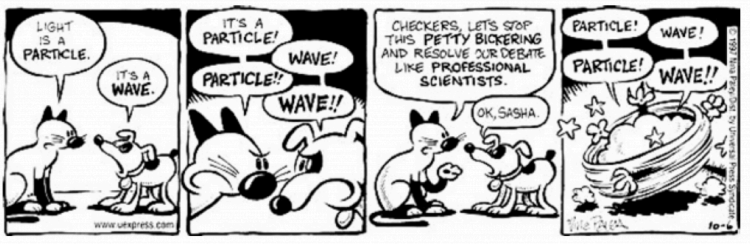


Figure 1. This cartoon demonstrates the absurdity of either/or arguments. (© 1997-1998 Nina Paley. Image available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike license.)[1]

Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain that the controlling metaphor we use for argument in western culture is war:

> It is important to see that we don't just talk about arguments in terms of war. We actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose

> ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. (4)

If we follow the war metaphor along its path, we come across other notions such as, "all's fair in love and war." If all's fair, then the rules, principles, or ethics of an argument are up for grabs. While many warrior metaphors are about honor, the "all's fair" idea can lead us to arguments that result in propaganda, spin, and, dirty politics. The war metaphor offers many limiting assumptions: there are only two sides, someone must win decisively, and compromise means losing. The metaphor also creates a false opposition where argument (war) is action and its opposite is peace or inaction. Finding better arguments is not about finding peace—the opposite of antagonism. Quite frankly, getting mad can be productive. Ardent peace advocates, such as Jane Addams, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., offer some of the most compelling arguments of our time through concepts like civil disobedience that are hardly inactive. While "argument is war" may be the default mode for Americans, it is not the only way to argue. Lakoff and Johnson ask their readers to imagine something like "argument is dance" rather than "argument is war" (5). While we can imagine many alternatives to the war metaphor, concepts like argument as collaboration are more common even if they are not commonly used. Argument as collaboration would be more closely linked to words such as dialogue and deliberation, cornerstone concepts in the history of American democracy.

However, argument as collaboration is not the prevailing metaphor for public argumentation we see/hear in the mainstream media. One can hardly fault the average American for not being able to imagine argument beyond the war metaphor. Think back to the coverage of the last major election cycle. The opponents on either side (democrat/republican) dug in their heels and defended every position, even if it was unpopular or irrelevant to the conversation

at hand. The political landscape divided into two sides with no alternatives. In addition to the entrenched positions, blogs and websites such as FactCheck.org flooded us with lists of inaccuracies, missteps, and plain old fallacies that riddled the debates. Unfortunately, the "debates" were more like speeches given to a camera than actual arguments deliberated before the public. These important moments that fail to offer good models lower the standards for public argumentation.

On an average news day, there are entire websites and blogs dedicated to noting ethical, factual, and legal problems with public arguments, especially on the news and radio talk shows. This is not to say that all public arguments set out to mislead their audiences, rather that the discussions they offer masquerading as arguments are often merely opinions or a spin on a particular topic and not carefully considered, quality arguments. What is often missing from these discussions is research, consideration of multiple vantage points, and, quite often, basic logic.

On news shows, we encounter a version of argument that seems more like a circus than a public discussion. Here's the visual we get of an "argument" between multiple sides on the average news show. In this example (see Figure 2), we have a four ring circus.

Figure 2. This mock up of a typical news show created by Colin Charlton offers a visual of the attempt to offer many "sides" of an argument.

While all of the major networks use this visual format, multiple speakers in multiple windows like The Brady Bunch for the news, it is rarely used to promote ethical deliberation. These talking heads offer a simulation of an argument. The different windows and figures pictured in them are meant to represent different views on a topic, often "liberal" and "conservative." This is a good start because it sets up the possibility for thinking through serious issues in need of solutions. Unfortunately, the people in the windows never actually engage in an argument (see Thinking Outside the Text). As we will discuss below, one of the rules of good argument is that participants in an argument agree on the primary standpoint and that individuals are willing to concede if a point of view is proven wrong. If you watch one of these "arguments," you will see a spectacle where prepared speeches are hurled across the long distances that separate the participants. Rarely do the talking heads respond to the actual ideas/arguments given by the person

pictured in the box next to them on the screen unless it is to contradict one statement with another of their own. Even more troubling is the fact that participants do not even seem to agree about the point of disagreement. For example, one person might be arguing about the congressional vote on health care while another is discussing the problems with Medicaid. While these are related, they are different issues with different premises. This is not a good model for argumentation despite being the predominant model we encounter.

Activity: Thinking Outside the Text

Watch the famous video of Jon Stewart on the show Crossfire: (http:// www.youtube.com/ watch?v=vmj6JADOZ-8).

- What is Stewart's argument?
- How do the hosts of Crossfire respond to the very particular argument that Stewart makes?
- Why exactly are they missing the point?

These shallow public models can influence argumentation in the classroom. One of the ways we learn about argument is to think in terms of pro and con arguments. This replicates the liberal/ conservative dynamic we often see in the papers or on television (as if there are only two sides to health care, the economy, war, the deficit). This either/or fallacy of public argument is debilitating. You are either for or against gun control, for or against abortion,

for or against the environment, for or against everything. Put this way, the absurdity is more obvious. For example, we assume that someone who claims to be an "environmentalist" is pro every part of the green movement. However, it is quite possible to develop an environmentally sensitive argument that argues against a particular recycling program. While many pro and con arguments are valid, they can erase nuance, negate the local and particular, and shut down the very purpose of having an argument: the possibility that you might change your mind, learn something new, or solve a problem. This limited view of argument makes argumentation a shallow process. When all angles are not explored or fallacious or incorrect reasoning is used, we are left with ethically suspect public discussions that cannot possibly get at the roots of an issue or work toward solutions.

Activity: Finding Middle Ground

Outline the pro and con arguments for the following issues:

1. Gun Control
2. Cap and Trade
3. Free Universal Healthcare

In a group, develop an argument that finds a compromise or middle ground between two positions.

Rather than an either/or proposition, argument is multiple and complex. An argument can be logical, rational, emotional, fruitful,

useful, and even enjoyable. As a matter of fact, the idea that argument is necessary (and therefore not always about war or even about winning) is an important notion in a culture that values democracy and equity. In America, where nearly everyone you encounter has a different background and/or political or social view, skill in arguing seems to be paramount, whether you are inventing an argument or recognizing a good one when you see it.

The remainder of this chapter takes up this challenge—inventing and recognizing good arguments (and bad ones). From classical rhetoric, to Toulmin's model, to contemporary pragma-dialectics, this chapter presents models of argumentation beyond pro and con. Paying more addition to the details of an argument can offer a strategy for developing sound, ethically aware arguments.

What Can We Learn from Models of Argumentation?

So far, I have listed some obstacles to good argument. I would like to discuss one other. Let's call it the mystery factor. Many times I read an argument and it seems great on the surface, but I get a strange feeling that something is a bit off. Before studying argumentation, I did not have the vocabulary to name that strange feeling. Additionally, when an argument is solid, fair, and balanced, I could never quite put my finger on what distinguished it from other similar arguments. The models for argumentation below give us guidance in revealing the mystery factor and naming the qualities of a logical, ethical argument.

Classical Rhetoric

In James Murphy's translation of Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria, he

explains that "Education for Quintilian begins in the cradle, and ends only when life itself ends" (xxi). The result of a life of learning, for Quintilian, is a perfect speech where "the student is given a statement of a problem and asked to prepare an appropriate speech giving his solution" (Murphy xxiii). In this version of the world, a good citizen is always a PUBLIC participant. This forces the good citizen to know the rigors of public argumentation: "Rhetoric, or the theory of effective communication, is for Quintilian merely the tool of the broadly educated citizen who is capable of analysis, reflection, and powerful action in public affairs" (Murphy xxvii). For Quintilian, learning to argue in public is a lifelong affair. He believed that the "perfect orator . . . cannot exist unless he is above all a good man" (6). Whether we agree with this or not, the hope for ethical behavior has been a part of public argumentation from the beginning.

The ancient model of rhetoric (or public argumentation) is complex. As a matter of fact, there is no single model of ancient argumentation. Plato claimed that the Sophists, such as Gorgias, were spin doctors weaving opinion and untruth for the delight of an audience and to the detriment of their moral fiber. For Plato, at least in the Phaedrus, public conversation was only useful if one applied it to the search for truth. In the last decade, the work of the Sophists has been redeemed. Rather than spin doctors, Sophists like Isocrates and even Gorgias, to some degree, are viewed as arbiters of democracy because they believed that many people, not just male, property holding, Athenian citizens, could learn to use rhetoric effectively in public.

Aristotle gives us a slightly more systematic approach. He is very concerned with logic. For this reason, much of what I discuss below comes from his work. Aristotle explains that most men participate in public argument in some fashion. It is important to note that by "men," Aristotle means citizens of Athens: adult males with the right to vote, not including women, foreigners, or slaves. Essentially this is a homogenous group by race, gender, and religious affiliation. We

have to keep this in mind when adapting these strategies to our current heterogeneous culture. Aristotle explains,

> . . . for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and every one will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art. (Honeycutt, "Aristotle's Rhetoric" 1354a I i)

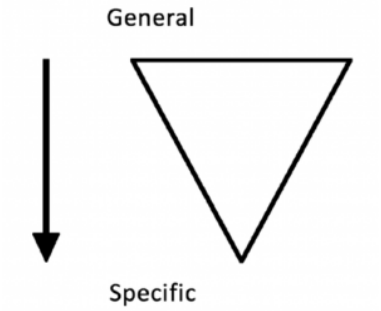
For Aristotle, inquiry into this field was artistic in nature. It required both skill and practice (some needed more of one than the other). Important here is the notion that public argument can be systematically learned.

Aristotle did not dwell on the ethics of an argument in Rhetoric (he leaves this to other texts). He argued that "things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" and finally that " . . . things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in" (Honeycutt, "Aristotle's Rhetoric" 1355a I i). As a culture, we are skeptical of this kind of position, though I think that we do often believe it on a personal level. Aristotle admits in the next line that there are people who will use their skills at rhetoric for harm. As his job in this section is to defend the use of rhetoric itself, he claims that everything good can be used for harm, so rhetoric is no different from other fields. If this is true, there is even more need to educate the citizenry so that they will not be fooled by unethical and untruthful arguments.

For many, logic simply means reasoning. To understand a person's logic, we try to find the structure of their reasoning. Logic is not synonymous with fact or truth, though facts are part of evidence in logical argumentation. You can be logical without being truthful.

This is why more logic is not the only answer to better public argument.

Our human brains are compelled to categorize the world as a survival mechanism. This survival mechanism allows for quicker thought. Two of the most basic logical strategies include inductive and deductive reasoning. **Deductive reasoning** (see Figure 3) starts from a premise that is a generalization about a large class of ideas, people, etc. and moves to a specific conclusion about a smaller category of ideas or things (All cats hate water; therefore, my neighbor's cat will not jump in our pool). While the first premise is the most general, the second premise is a more particular observation. So the argument is created through common beliefs/observations that are compared to create an argument. For example:



People who burn flags are unpatriotic. **Major Premise**

Sara burned a flag. **Minor Premise**

Sara is unpatriotic. **Conclusion**

Figure 3. Deductive Reasoning

The above is called a syllogism. As we can see in the example, the major premise offers a general belief held by some groups and the minor premise is a particular observation. The conclusion is drawn by comparing the premises and developing a conclusion. If you work hard enough, you can often take a complex argument and boil it down to a syllogism. This can reveal a great deal about the argument that is not apparent in the longer more complex version.

Stanley Fish, professor and *New York Times* columnist, offers the following syllogism in his July 22, 2007, blog entry titled "Democracy and Education": "The syllogism underlying these comments is (1)

America is a democracy (2) Schools and universities are situated within that democracy (3) Therefore schools and universities should be ordered and administrated according to democratic principles."

Fish offered the syllogism as a way to summarize the responses to his argument that students do not, in fact, have the right to free speech in a university classroom. The responses to Fish's standpoint were vehemently opposed to his understanding of free speech rights and democracy. The responses are varied and complex. However, boiling them down to a single syllogism helps to summarize the primary rebuttal so that Fish could then offer his extended version of his standpoint (see link to argument in Question #1 at the end of the text).

Inductive reasoning moves in a different direction than deductive reasoning (see Figure 4). Inductive reasoning starts with a particular or local statement and moves to a more general conclusion. I think of inductive reasoning as a stacking of evidence. The more particular examples you give, the more it seems that your conclusion is correct.

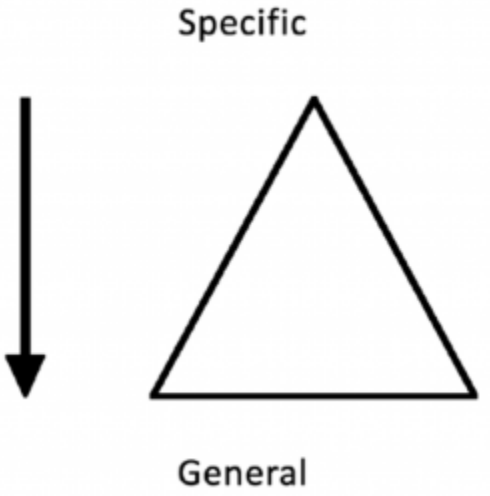


Figure 4. Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning is a common method for arguing, especially when the conclusion is an obvious probability. Inductive reasoning is the most common way that we move around in the world. If we experience something habitually, we reason that it will happen again. For example, if we walk down a city street and every person smiles, we might reason that this is a "nice town." This seems logical. We have taken many similar, particular experiences (smiles) and used them to make a general conclusion (the people in the town are nice). Most of the time, this reasoning works. However, we know that it can also lead us in the wrong direction. Perhaps the people were smiling because we were wearing inappropriate clothing (country togs in a metropolitan city), or perhaps only the people living on that particular street are "nice" and the rest of the town is unfriendly. Research papers sometimes rely too heavily on this logical method. Writers assume that finding ten versions of the same argument somehow prove that the point is true.

Here is another example. In Ann Coulter's book, *Guilty: Liberal "Victims" and Their Assault on America*, she makes her (in)famous argument that single motherhood is the cause of many of America's ills. She creates this argument through a piling of evidence. She lists statistics by sociologists, she lists all the single moms who killed their children, she lists stories of single mothers who say outrageous things about their life, children, or marriage in general, and she ends with a list of celebrity single moms that most would agree are not good examples of motherhood. Through this list, she concludes, "Look at almost any societal problem and you will find it is really a problem of single mothers" (36). While she could argue, from this evidence, that being a single mother is difficult, the generalization that single motherhood is the root of social ills in America takes the inductive reasoning too far. Despite this example, we need inductive reasoning because it is the key to analytical thought (see Activity: Applying Inductive and Deductive Reasoning). To write an "analysis paper" is to use inductive reasoning.

Activity: Applying Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

For each standpoint, create a deductive argument AND an inductive argument. When you are finished, share with your group members and decide which logical strategy offers a more successful, believable, and/or ethical argument for the particular standpoint. Feel free to modify the standpoint to find many possible arguments.

1. a. Affirmative Action should continue to be legal in the United States. b. Affirmative Action is no longer useful in the United States.
2. The arts should remain an essential part of public education.
3. Chose a very specific argument on your campus (parking, tuition, curriculum) and create deductive and inductive arguments to support the standpoint.

Most academic arguments in the humanities are inductive to some degree. When you study humanity, nothing is certain. When observing or making inductive arguments, it is important to get your evidence from many different areas, to judge it carefully, and acknowledge the flaws. Inductive arguments must be judged by the quality of the evidence since the conclusions are drawn directly from a body of compiled work.

The Appeals

"The appeals" offer a lesson in rhetoric that sticks with you long after the class has ended. Perhaps it is the rhythmic quality of the words (ethos, logos, pathos) or, simply, the usefulness of the concept. Aristotle imagined logos, ethos, and pathos as three kinds of artistic proof. Essentially, they highlight three ways to appeal to or persuade an audience: "(1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in its various forms, (3) to understand emotions" (Honeycutt, Rhetoric 1356a).

While Aristotle and others did not explicitly dismiss emotional and character appeals, they found the most value in logic. Contemporary rhetoricians and argumentation scholars, however, recognize the power of emotions to sway us. Even the most stoic individuals have some emotional threshold over which no logic can pass. For example, we can seldom be reasonable when faced with a crime against a loved one, a betrayal, or the face of an adorable baby.

The easiest way to differentiate the appeals is to imagine selling a product based on them. Until recently, car commercials offered a prolific source of logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.

Logos: Using logic as proof for an argument. For many students this takes the form of numerical evidence. But as we have discussed above, logical reasoning is a kind of argumentation.

> Car Commercial: (Syllogism) Americans love adventure—Ford Escape allows for off road adventure—Americans should buy a Ford Escape.
>
> OR
>
> The Ford Escape offers the best financial deal.

Ethos: Calling on particular shared values (patriotism), respected figures of authority (MLK), or one's own character as a method for appealing to an audience.

Car Commercial: Eco-conscious Americans drive a Ford Escape.

OR

[Insert favorite movie star] drives a Ford Escape.

Pathos: Using emotionally driven images or language to sway your audience.

Car Commercial: Images of a pregnant women being safely rushed to a hospital. Flash to two car seats in the back seat. Flash to family hopping out of their Ford Escape and witnessing the majesty of the Grand Canyon.

OR

After an image of a worried mother watching her sixteen year old daughter drive away: "Ford Escape takes the fear out of driving."

The appeals are part of everyday conversation, even if we do not use the Greek terminology (see Activity: Developing Audience Awareness). Understanding the appeals helps us to make better rhetorical choices in designing our arguments. If you think about the appeals as a choice, their value is clear.

Activity: Developing Audience Awareness

Imagine you have been commissioned by your school food service provider to create a presentation encouraging the consumption of healthier foods on campus.

1. How would you present this to your friends: consider the media you would use, how you present yourself, and how you would begin.
2. How would you present this same material to parents of incoming students?
3. Which appeal is most useful for each audience? Why?

Toulmin: Dissecting the Everyday Argument

Philosopher Stephen Toulmin studies the arguments we make in our everyday lives. He developed his method out of frustration with logicians (philosophers of argumentation) that studied argument in a vacuum or through mathematical formulations:

> All A are B. All B are C.
> Therefore, all A are C. (Eemeren, et al. 131)

Instead, Toulmin views argument as it appears in a conversation, in a letter, or some other context because real arguments are much more complex than the syllogisms that make up the bulk of Aristotle's logical program. Toulmin offers the contemporary writer/reader a way to map an argument. The result is a visualization of the argument process. This map comes complete with vocabulary for describing the parts of an argument. The vocabulary allows us to see the contours of the landscape—the winding rivers and gaping caverns. One way to think about a "good" argument is that it is a discussion that hangs together, a landscape

that is cohesive (we can't have glaciers in our desert valley). Sometimes we miss the faults of an argument because it sounds good or appears to have clear connections between the statement and the evidence, when in truth the only thing holding the argument together is a lovely sentence or an artistic flourish.

For Toulmin, argumentation is an attempt to justify a statement or a set of statements. The better the demand is met, the higher the audience's appreciation. Toulmin's vocabulary for the study of argument offers labels for the parts of the argument to help us create our map.

Claim: The basic standpoint presented by a writer/ speaker.

Data: The evidence which supports the claim.

Warrant: The justification for connecting particular data to a particular claim. The warrant also makes clear the assumptions underlying the argument.

Backing: Additional information required if the warrant is not clearly supported.

Rebuttal: Conditions or standpoints that point out flaws in the claim or alternative positions.

Qualifiers: Terminology that limits a standpoint. Examples include applying the following terms to any part of an argument: sometimes, seems, occasionally, none, always, never, etc.

The following paragraphs come from an article reprinted in *UTNE* magazine by Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith titled: "Not Everyone Is Out to Get You." Charting this excerpt helps us to understand some of the underlying assumptions found in the article.

> "Trust No One"
>
> That was the slogan of *The X-Files*, the TV drama that followed two FBI agents on a quest to uncover a vast government conspiracy. A defining cultural phenomenon during its run from 1993–2002, the

show captured a mood of growing distrust in America.

Since then, our trust in one another has declined even further. In fact, it seems that "Trust no one" could easily have been America's motto for the past 40 years—thanks to, among other things, Vietnam, Watergate, junk bonds, Monica Lewinsky, Enron, sex scandals in the Catholic Church, and the Iraq war.

The General Social Survey, a periodic assessment of Americans' moods and values, shows an 11-point decline from 1976–2008 in the number of Americans who believe other people can generally be trusted. Institutions haven't fared any better. Over the same period, trust has declined in the press (from 29 to 9 percent), education (38–29 percent), banks (41 percent to 20 percent), corporations (23–16 percent), and organized religion (33–20 percent). Gallup's 2008 governance survey showed that trust in the government was as low as it was during the Watergate era.

The news isn't all doom and gloom, however. A growing body of research hints that humans are hardwired to trust, which is why institutions, through reform and high performance, can still stoke feelings of loyalty, just as disasters and mismanagement can inhibit it. The catch is that while humans want, even need, to trust, they won't trust blindly and foolishly.

Figure 5 demonstrates one way to chart the argument that Paxton and Smith make in "Trust No One." The remainder of the article offers additional claims and data, including the final claim that there is hope for overcoming our collective trust issues. The chart helps us to see that some of the warrants, in a longer research project, might require additional support. For example, the warrant that TV

mirrors real life is an argument and not a fact that would require evidence.

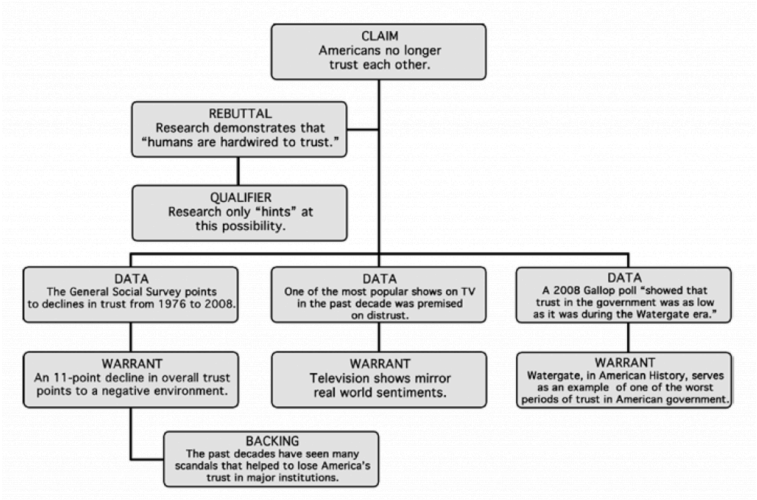


Figure 5. This chart demonstrates the utility of visualizing an argument

Charting your own arguments and others helps you to visualize the meat of your discussion. All the flourishes are gone and the bones revealed. Even if you cannot fit an argument neatly into the boxes, the attempt forces you to ask important questions about your claim, your warrant, and possible rebuttals. By charting your argument you are forced to write your claim in a succinct manner and admit, for example, what you are using for evidence. Charted, you can see if your evidence is scanty, if it relies too much on one kind of evidence over another, and if it needs additional support. This charting might also reveal a disconnect between your claim and your warrant or cause you to reevaluate your claim altogether.

Pragma-Dialectics: A Fancy Word for a Close Look at Argumentation

The field of rhetoric has always been interdisciplinary and so it has no problem including argumentation theory. Developed in the Speech Communication Department at the University of Amsterdam, pragma-dialectics is a study of argumentation that focuses on the ethics of one's logical choices in creating an argument. I*n Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory*: A *Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments*, Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst describe argumentation, simply, as "characterized by the use of language for resolving a difference of opinion" (275). While much of this work quite literally looks at actual speech situations, the work can easily be applied to the classroom and to broader political situations.

While this version of argumentation deals with everything from ethics to arrangement, what this field adds to rhetorical studies is a new approach to argument fallacies. Fallacies are often the cause of the mystery feeling we get when we come across faulty logic or missteps in an argument.

What follows is an adaptation of Frans van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francesca Snoeck Henkemans' "violations of the rules for critical engagement" from their book *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (109). Rather than discuss rhetorical fallacies in a list (ad hominem, straw man, equivocation, etc.), they argue that there should be rules for proper argument to ensure fairness, logic, and a solution to the problem being addressed. Violating these rules causes a fallacious argument and can result in a standoff rather than a solution.

While fallacious arguments, if purposeful, pose real ethical problems, most people do not realize they are committing fallacies when they create an argument. To purposely attack someone's character rather than their argument (ad hominem) is not only unethical, but demonstrates lazy argumentation. However,

confusing cause and effect might simply be a misstep that needs fixing. It is important to admit that many fallacies, though making an argument somewhat unsound, can be rhetorically savvy. While we know that appeals to pity (or going overboard on the emotional appeal) can often demonstrate a lack of knowledge or evidence, they often work. As such, these rules present argumentation as it would play out in a utopian world where everyone is calm and logical, where everyone cares about resolving the argument at hand, rather than winning the battle, and where everyone plays by the rules. Despite the utopian nature of the list, it offers valuable insight into argument flaws and offers hope for better methods of deliberation.

What follows is an adaptation of the approach to argumentation found in Chapters 7 and 8 of *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (Eemeren, et al. 109-54). The rule is listed first, followed by an example of how the rule is often violated.

1. The Freedom Rule

> "Parties must not prevent each other from putting forward standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints" (110).

There are many ways to stop an individual from giving her own argument. This can come in the form of a physical threat but most often takes the form of a misplaced critique. Instead of focusing on the argument, the focus is shifted to the character of the writer or speaker (ad hominem) or to making the argument (or author) seem absurd (straw man) rather than addressing its actual components. In the past decade, "Bush is stupid" became a common ad hominem attack that allowed policy to go unaddressed. To steer clear of the real issues of global warming, someone might claim "Only a fool would believe global warming is real" or "Trying to suck all of the CO2 out of the atmosphere with giant greenhouse gas machines is mere science fiction, so we should look at abandoning all this green house gas nonsense."

2. The Burden-of-Proof Rule

> "A party who puts forward a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked to do so" (113).

This is one of my favorites. It is clear and simple. If you make an argument, you have to provide evidence to back it up. During the 2008 Presidential debates, Americans watched as all the candidates fumbled over the following question about healthcare: "How will this plan actually work?" If you are presenting a written argument, this requirement can be accommodated through quality, researched evidence applied to your standpoint.

3. The Standpoint Rule

> "A party's attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the other party" (116).

Your standpoint is simply your claim, your basic argument in a nutshell. If you disagree with another person's argument or they disagree with yours, the actual standpoint and not some related but more easily attacked issue must be addressed. For example, one person might argue that the rhetoric of global warming has created a multi-million dollar green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. This is an argument about the effects of global warming rhetoric, not global warming itself. It would break the standpoint rule to argue that the writer/speaker does not believe in global warming. This is not the issue at hand.

4. The Relevance Rule

> "A party may defend his or her standpoint only by advancing argumentation related to that standpoint" (119).

Similar to #3, this rule assures that the evidence you use must actually relate to your standpoint. Let's stick with same argument: global warming has created a green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. Under this rule, your evidence would need to offer examples of the rhetoric and the resulting businesses that have developed since the introduction of green industries. It would

break the rules to simply offer attacks on businesses who sell "eco-friendly" products.

5. The Unexpressed Premise Rule

> "A party may not falsely present something as a premise that has been left unexpressed by the other party or deny a premise that he or she has left implicit" (121).

This one sounds a bit complex, though it happens nearly every day. If you have been talking to another person and feel the need to say, "That's NOT what I meant," then you have experienced a violation of the unexpressed premise rule. Overall, the rule attempts to keep the argument on track and not let it stray into irrelevant territory. The first violation of the rule, to falsely present what has been left unexpressed, is to rephrase someone's standpoint in a way that redirects the argument. One person might argue, "I love to go to the beach," and another might respond by saying "So you don't have any appreciation for mountain living." The other aspect of this rule is to camouflage an unpopular idea and deny that it is part of your argument. For example, you might argue that "I have nothing against my neighbors. I just think that there should be a noise ordinance in this part of town to help cut down on crime." This clearly shows that the writer does believe her neighbors to be criminals but won't admit it.

6. The Starting Point Rule

> "No party may falsely present a premise as an accepted starting point, or deny a premise representing an accepted starting point" (128).

Part of quality argumentation is to agree on the opening standpoint. According to this theory, argument is pointless without this kind of agreement. It is well known that arguing about abortion is nearly pointless as long as one side is arguing about the rights of the unborn and the other about the rights of women. These are two different starting points.

7. The Argument Scheme Rule

> "A standpoint may not be regarded as conclusively defended if the defense does not take place by means of an appropriate argument scheme that is correctly applied" (130).

This rule is about argument strategy. Argument schemes could take up another paper altogether. Suffice it to say that schemes are ways of approaching an argument, your primary strategy. For example, you might choose emotional rather than logical appeals to present your position. This rule highlights the fact that some argument strategies are simply better than others. For example, if you choose to create an argument based largely on attacking the character of your opponent rather than the issues at hand, the argument is moot.

Argument by analogy is a popular and well worn argument strategy (or scheme). Essentially, you compare your position to a more commonly known one and make your argument through the comparison. For example, in the "Trust No One" argument above, the author equates the Watergate and Monica Lewinsky scandals. Since it is common knowledge that Watergate was a serious scandal, including Monica Lewinsky in the list offers a strong argument by analogy: the Lewinsky scandal did as much damage as Watergate. To break this rule, you might make an analogy that does not hold up, such as comparing a minor scandal involving a local school board to Watergate. This would be an exaggeration, in most cases.

8. The Validity Rule

> "The reasoning in the argumentation must be logically valid or must be capable of being made valid by making explicit one or more unexpressed premises" (132).

This rule is about traditional logics. Violating this rule means that the parts of your argument do not match up. For example, your cause and effect might be off: If you swim in the ocean today you will get stung by a jelly fish and need medical care. Joe went to the

doctor today. He must have been stung by a jelly fish. While this example is obvious (we do not know that Joe went swimming), many argument problems are caused by violating this rule.

9. The Closure Rule

> "A failed defense of a standpoint must result in the protagonist retracting the standpoint, and a successful defense of a standpoint must result in the antagonist retracting his or her doubts" (134).

This seems the most obvious rule, yet it is one that most public arguments ignore. If your argument does not cut it, admit the faults and move on. If another writer/speaker offers a rebuttal and you clearly counter it, admit that the original argument is sound. Seems simple, but it's not in our public culture. This would mean that George W. Bush would have to have a press conference and say, "My apologies, I was wrong about WMD," or for someone who argued fervently that Americans want a single payer option for healthcare to instead argue something like, "The polls show that American's want to change healthcare, but not through the single payer option. My argument was based on my opinion that single payer is the best way and not on public opinion." Academics are more accustomed to retraction because our arguments are explicitly part of particular conversations. Rebuttals and renegotiations are the norm. That does not make them any easier to stomach in an "argument is war" culture.

10. The Usage Rule

> "Parties must not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous, and they must interpret the formulations of the other party as carefully and accurately as possible" (136).

While academics are perhaps the worst violators of this rule, it is an important one to discuss. Be clear. I notice in both student and professional academic writing that a confusing concept often means

confusing prose, longer sentences, and more letters in a word. If you cannot say it/write it clearly, the concept might not yet be clear to you. Keep working. Ethical violations of this rule happen when someone is purposefully ambiguous so as to confuse the issue. We can see this on all the "law" shows on television or though deliberate propaganda.

Activity: Following the Rules

Choose a topic to discuss in class or as a group (ex. organic farming, campus parking, gun control).

1. Choose one of the rules above and write a short argument (a sentence) that clearly violates the rule. Be prepared to explain WHY it violates the rule.
2. Take the fallacious argument you just created in exercise a) and correct it. Write a solid argument that conforms to the rule.

Food for thought: The above rules offer one way to think about shaping an argument paper. Imagine that the argument for your next paper is a dialogue between those who disagree about your topic. After doing research, write out the primary standpoint for your paper. For example: organic farming is a sustainable practice that should be used more broadly. Next, write out a standpoint that might offer a refutation of the argument. For example: organic farming cannot supply all of the food needed by the world's population. Once you have a sense of your own argument and possible refutations, go through the rules and imagine how you

might ethically and clearly provide arguments that support your point without ignoring the opposition.

Even though our current media and political climate do not call for good argumentation, the guidelines for finding and creating it abound. There are many organizations such as America Speaks (www. americaspeaks.org) that are attempting to revive quality, ethical deliberation. On the personal level, each writer can be more deliberate in their argumentation by choosing to follow some of these methodical approaches to ensure the soundness and general quality of their argument. The above models offer the possibility that we can imagine modes of argumentation other than war. The final model, pragma-dialectics, especially, seems to consider argument as a conversation that requires constant vigilance and interaction by participants. Argument as conversation, as new metaphor for public deliberation, has possibilities.

Additional Activities

1. Read Stanley Fish's blog entry titled "Democracy and Education" (http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/democracy-andeducation/#more-57). Choose at least two of the responses to Fish's argument that students are not entitled to free speech rights in the classroom and compare them using the different argumentation models listed above.
2. Following the pragma-dialectic rules, create a fair and balanced rebuttal to Fish's argument in his "Democracy and Education" blog entry.
3. Use Toulmin's vocabulary to build an argument. Start with a claim and then fill in the chart with your own research, warrants, qualifiers, and rebuttals.

Note

1. I would like to extend a special thanks to Nina Paley for giving permission to use this cartoon under Creative Commons licensing, free of charge. Please see Paley's great work at www.ninapaley.com.

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This essay is a chapter in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Volume 1, a peer-reviewed open textbook series for the writing classroom, and is published through Parlor Press: https://writingspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Finding-the-Good-Argument.pdf

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45. Rogerian Argument

JOSEPH M. MOXLEY

Solving Problems by Negotiating Differences

How many times have you been in an argument that you knew you couldn't win? Are you reluctant to change your mind about certain social, political, or personal issues? Do you have an unshakable faith in a particular religion or philosophy? For example, are you absolutely certain that abortion is immoral under all circumstances? Are you categorically against animal experimentation for advancements in medicine? Do you believe that criminals who have tortured and killed people should receive the death penalty? Do you believe that parents should have no more than two children because of the world population problem? Do you believe it is your patriotic duty to buy solely American products?

Some of our beliefs and arguments are based on faith, some on emotion, and some on logic alone. We all hold different religious, p olitical, and personal beliefs that largely define who we are and how we think. Within the past fifty years, as the size of our global village has appeared to shrink with the use of television, fax, and jets, we have become increasingly more sophisticated and knowledgable. As a result, most educated people now realize that few significant issues have simple solutions. Thanks to modern scholarship and research, we have come to realize that our personalities and thoughts are shaped to some degree by cultural expectations. Philosophers have challenged us to recognize that our worlviews – our assumptions about reality, what is good, what is possible – are influenced by our day-to-day experiences. We have realized that

truth is nt a fixed, static entity that can be carried into a battle like a banner.

One wonderful aspect of your college career is meeting different worldviews through books and through discussions with people whom you otherwise would not encounter. Indeed, many college campuses offer a wonderful glimpse of the diversity of modern-day life. A wide-eyed glance at students at the university center on my campus, for instance, will show you Chinese students working alongside students from Africa and South America. Young women dressed in their power suits mix freely with returning older adult students. Fraternity brothers rush from place to place, dressed in their blue blazers and short haircuts, while male musicians, dressed in the tie-dyed fashions of the 1960s and shoulder-length hair, play guitars and sing protest songs.

One result of our increasingly sophisticated world is that you cannot assume that your readers will believe or even understand everythinhg you say. On the contrary, you need to assume that your readers will doubt you. They will question the validity of your evidence and test the logic of your conclusions. Modern readers tend to be particularly contentious when you insist on assertions that they find objectionable. Because of this shift in audience attitude, writers need to develop compelling ways of organizing and presenting arguments.

When you wish to address an emotional and controversial issue and when your audience is likely to be threatened by your ideas, you will probably not be successful if you make your claim in the introduction of your essay (or verbal argument). No matter how thoroughly you go on to support your ideas with careful reasoning and to refute other claims (such as those held by your audience) respectfully, your readers have already decided to ignore you. For example, can you imagine how your roomate would respond if you remark that he or she is a terrible slob? Even if you follow up your comment with photographs of the dirty dishes, cluttered rooms, and soild carpet left in his or her wake, can you imagine that the final outcome of your detailed presentation might be resolution?

More likely you will face anger, bitterness, and denial. Watch your introductory prepositions!

Most of us tend to resist change and are threatened by ideas that challenge what we believe. Also, most of us dislike being told what to do and how to think, so even if our brains tell us to agree, our emotions (and egos) tell us to shut down and ignore what we are hearing. A male chauvinist who believes that women are intellectually inferior to men will be unlikely to listen to your argument that women are as intelligent as men. Your quotes from world-renowned educators and philosophers and your statistics from the Stanford-Blinet or SAT, GRE, and MCAT scores would probably be dismissed as inaccurate because they threaten his assumptions. Of course, you could hope that the chauvinist would change his mind over time when he wasn't being pressed, yet you couldn't bet on this outcome.

Because conflict is inevitable, we need to seek creative ways to solve complicated problems and to negotiate differences between opposing parties. Although there are no simple formulas for bringing opposing factions together, we do have a relatively new form of communication founded on Carl Rogers's client-centered therapeutic approach to one-on-one and group counseling. Essentially, the Rogerian problem-solving approach reconceptualizes our goals when we argue. Instead of assuming that an author or speaker shoudl hope to overcome an antagonistic audience with shrewd reasoning, the Rogerian approach would have the author or speaker attempt to reach some common ground with the audience. Thus, in a very real way, Rogerian "persuasion" is not a form of persuasion so much as it is a way of opening communication for negotiating common ground between divergent points of view. In terms of writing, we coud say that the Rogerian approach melds the techniques of informative analyses with those of persuasive reports. Your goal when you employ the tactics of Rogerian problem-solving is not for you to win and for your opponent to lose, a scenario that more often results in both parties

losing. Instead, you explore ways that will allow both you and your audience to win.

On Rogerian Argument

**adapted from Rhetoric Matters: Language and Argument in Context* by Megan McIntyre and Curtis Le Van

Rogerian argument is often difficult for students to understand because it asks them to think about controversial topics in a different way: from the perspective of someone they disagree with. The discussions that follow are meant to help you understand the reason for and the components of an argument in Rogerian style.

On Finding Common Ground

"On Finding Common Ground" is written by Jeffrey Spicer, *University of South Florida*

> "*It is only through the clash of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.*"
>
> – John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, 1859
>
> "*The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the other person or the other group.*"
>
> – Carl Rogers, "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation," 1951
>
> *argue (v.) – from the Greek argos, lit. "white," or arguron, lit.*

"silver," and meaning "to shine forth": in contemporary usage, to present reasons for or against.

In 1951, the psychologist Carl Rogers gave a talk at the Centennial Conference on Communications at Northwestern University that changed the way we think about argument. Psychology at that time was dominated by psychologists like B.F. Skinner, who were learning to scientifically condition thoughts and feelings in the same way that Pavlov had conditioned his dogs to salivate at the sound of their dinner bell a half-century before.

Rogers, on the other hand, was a humanist. He believed that human speech and human cognition were interrelated and that the success or failure of one was related to the success or failure of the other. In "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation," he put forward as the cornerstone of his practice the belief that "the whole task of psychotherapy is the task of dealing with a failure in communication" (330).

According to Rogers, the principle difficulty preventing people from settling their differences, indeed from communicating effectively in an everyday sense, was that people couldn't stop evaluating one another. The more important a topic was to them, the more emotional the participants in a discussion became, and the more they were apt to judge what the other person was saying rather than giving it the best hearing they could. In short, Rogers noticed that when people argue, they tend to make judgments about their opponents' positions before they really understand them.

Rogers's goal, then, was to avoid this tendency to constantly evaluate and instead to "listen with understanding." By this, he meant that people should not only try to understand that someone holds a particular viewpoint but also try to get a sense of what it's like to believe that. "What does that mean? It means to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about" (Rogers 331-32). Rogers himself acknowledged barriers to this kind of understanding. First

and foremost, you have to be willing to try it, and not many people are. Rogers's approach seems like you're giving ground to your opponents and, what's worse, sometimes you actually are. "In the first place, it takes courage [...] you run the risk of being changed yourself" (Rogers 333).

It is important to note, though, that this sort of Rogerian understanding is also itself an argumentative tactic. First, people will almost always refuse to consider something if they feel threatened by it, and Rogerian understanding reduces the threat to the opposition. Second, people reciprocate; they tend to treat others as they are treated by them.

Despite the initial difficulties, then, each new understanding of the opponent's view makes the next easier, while at the same time inviting, even obligating, the opponent to strive for a like understanding. "This procedure can dela with the insincerities, the defensive exaggerations, the lies, the 'false fronts' which characterize almost every failure in communication. These defensive distortions drop away with astonishing speed as people find that the only intent is to understand, not judge" (Rogers 336).

This Rogerian process started to make its way into textbooks in 1970. Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike's introduction of Rogerian psychology in their book *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* seeks to simplify some of Rogers's terminology and begin to present the process as a set of rhetorical objectives: "The writer who uses the Rogerian strategy attempts to do three things:

1. to convey to the reader that he is understood
2. to delineate the area within which he believes the reader's position to be valid
3. to induce him to believe that he and the writer share certain moral qualities (275)

Put like this, in such a simple and reductive way, the process of

attaining and expressing Rogerian understanding seems almost easy.

It is important to note that these are not developmental steps intended as heuristics, that indeed there are no sequential stages to a Rogerian argument. They are instead objectives to be pursued independently and recursively with the probably effect of facilitating communication. As Young, Becker, and Pike write, "Rogerian argument has no conventional structure; in fact, users of the strategy deliberately avoid conventional persuasive structures and techniques because these devices tend to produce a sense of threat." This is not to say the argument has no structure, but rather that "the structure is more directly the product of a particular writer, a particular topic, and a particular audience" (275). The danger of argumentative form becoming an exclusionary force, silencing rather than evoking discussion, is therefore greatly reduced.

At this point, then, you may be wondering what Rogerian argument might actually look like in terms of an essay for a composition class. An essay modeled on Rogers's approach should include a few particular parts:

- a discussion of the problem from both points of view that uses value-neutral language
- a discussion of the writer's opponent's point of view and a selection of facts or assertions the writer might be willing to concede to his opponent
- a discussion of the writer's point of view and a selection of facts or assertions the writer's opponent might be able to accept about his point of view
- a thesis that establishes a compromise between these two points of view and represents concessions from both the writer and his opponent

Analyzing Pertinent Conventions

Below are some of the strategies that you can use to negotiate consensus between opposing parties. As usual, you should not consider the following to be a rigid formula. Instead, pick and choose from these strategies in light of your audience, purpose, and intended voice.

Present the Problem

In the introduction, identify the issue and clarify its significance. Because you need to adopt a nonthreatening persona throughout your essay, however, avoid dogmatically presenting your view as the best or only way to solve the problem. Unlike your strategy for shaping a conventional persuasive text, at this point in your discussion you will not want to lay your cards on the table and summarize your presentation. Instead, explain the scope and complexity of the issue. You might want to mention the various approaches that people have taken to solve the problemandf perhaps even suggest that the issue is so complicated that the best you and your readers can hope for is consensus – or agreement on some aspect of the matter.

In your introduction and throughout your essay, you will want to explain the problem in ways that will make your audience say, "Yes, this author understands my position." Because the people whom you are writing for may feel stress when you confront them with an emotionally charged issue and may already have made up their minds firmly on the subject, you should try to interest such reluctant readers by suggesting that you have an innovative way of viewing the problem. Of course, this tactic is effective only when you can indeed follow through and be as original as possible in your treatment of the subject. Otherwise, your readers may reject

your ideas because they recognize that you have misrepresented yourself.

Challenge Yourself to Risk Change

Rather than masking your thoughts behind an "objective persona," the Rogerian approach allows you to express your true feelings. However, if you are to meet the ideals of Rogerian communication, you need to challenge your own beliefs; you must be so open-minded that you truly entertain the possibility that your ideas are wrong, or at least not absolutely right. According to Rogers, you must "run the risk of being changed yourself. You ... might find yourself influenced in your attitudes or your personality."

Elaborate on the Value of Opposing Positions

In this part of your argument you will want to elaborate on which of your opponent's claims about the problem are correct. For example, if your roommate's messiness is driving you crazy but you still want to live with him or her, stress that cleanliness is not the be-all-and-end-all of human life. Commend your roommate for helping you focus on your studies and express appreciation for all of the times that he or she has pitched in to clean up. And, of course, you would also want to admit to a few annoying habits of your own, such as taking thirty-minute showers or talking on your cell phone late at night while your roommate is trying to sleep! After viewing the problem from your roommate's perspective, you might even be willing to explore how your problem with compulsive neatness is itself a problem.

Show Instances When Your Assertions Are Valid

Once you have identified the problem in as nonthreatening a way as possible, established a fair-minded persona, and called for some level of consensus based on a "higher" interest, you have reached the most important stage in Rogerian negotiation: you can now present your position. At this point in your argument, you do not want to slap down a "But!" or "However!" and then come out of your corner punching. Remember the spirit of Rogerian problem solving: your ultimate goal is not to beat your audience, but to communicate with them and to promote a workable compromise. For example, in the sample argument with your roommate, rather than issuing an ultimatum such as "Unless you start picking up after yourself and doing your fair share of the housework, I'm moving out," you could say, "I realize that you view housekeeping as a less important activity than I do, but I need to let you know that I find your messiness to be highly stressful, and I'm wondering what kind of compromise we can make so we can continue living together." Yes, this statement carries an implied threat, but note how this sentence is framed positively and minimalizes the emotional intensity inherent in the situation.

To achieve the nonthreatening tone needed to diffuse emotional situations, avoid exaggerating your claims or using biased, emotional language. Also, avoid attacking your audience's claims as exaggerated. Whenever you feel angry or defensive, take a deep breath and look for points in which you can agree with or understand your opponents. When you are really emotional about an issue, try to cool off enough to recognize where your language is loaded with explosive terms. To embrace the Rogerian approach, remember that you need to defuse your temper and set your pride and ego aside.

Present Your Claim in a Nonthreatening Way

Admittedly, it is difficult to substantiate an argument while acknowledging the value of competing positions. Yet if you have done an effective job in the early part of your essay, then your audience perceives you to be a reasonable person – someone worth listening to. Consequently, you should not sell yourself short when presenting your position.

Because of the emotionally charged context of your communication situation, you still need to maintain the same open-minded persona that you established in the introductory paragraphs. Although your main focus in this section is to develop the validity of your claim, you can maintain your fair-minded persona by recalling significant counterarguments and by elaborating on a few limitations of your claim. You can also remind your readers that you are not expecting them to accept your claim completely. Instead, you are merely attempting to show that under certain circumstances your position is valid.

Search for a Compromise and Call for a Higher Interest

Near the conclusion of your essay, you may find it useful to encourage your audience to seek a compromise with you under a call for a "higher interest."

Writing Assignments

The Rogerian method of problem solving is designed for exploring controversial interpersonal, social, and political problems. You can use these techniques to help you begin or end a personal relationship or to help you effectively communicate with your professors, etc. Knowledge of the Rogerian method can help you

deal with instances of sexual discrimination in the workplace or help you encourage insecure authorities to take the action that you want. You could use Rogerian approaches to encourage your classmates and other students at your school to be more sympatheticabout social problems such as poverty and ecological issues. To select a subject for a Rogerian analysis, try reviewing your journal and freewrite about significant interpersonal problems you have dealt with in your life. Below are a few questions that may help you identify a subject:

1. Do I want to write about an interpersonal issue? For example, am I having trouble communicating with someone? Could the breakdown be linked to my failure to employ Rogerian strategies? Are there any major differences in belief that I could bridge by communicating with him or her in a Rogerian way?
2. Do I want to write about a social or political problem? Are there any on-campus or work-related problems that I wish to explore? For example, am I worried about an important national issue such as the federal deficit? Or could I promote harmony in a local or campus conflict?
3. Are there any sports-related topics that I could tackle? For example, do I want to convince skiers that short skis have carved up the mountain in an ugly way? Do I want to persuade tennis players that we need to throw away the wide-body power rackets and go back to the days of wooden rackets because power tennis is killing finesse tennis?
4. Consider playing the role of a marketing executive. Find a new product that you believe is superior to an established product and then write some advertising copy that explains why people should shirt their loyalty to the new product.

Prewriting and Drafting Strategies

Analyze Your Communication Situation

To help you get a handle on which claims you are willing to relinquish and which you wish to negotiate, write a profile of your anticipated audience. Because awareness of the opinions and fears of your audience is so crucial to successfully negotiating differences among competing positions, you need to try to "become" your audience. As usual, this process involves asking, "What do my readers believe and know about the subject? Why do they think and feel my position is wrong?" Ideally, this process extends beyond merely considering your audience's needs to seting aside your thoughts and feelings and embracing the opposition's notions about the subject.

After you have gotten "under the skin" of your audience, freewrite an essay about your subject from their perspective. Doing this in a Rogerian way means that you truly challenge your own beliefs and present your opponent's viewpoints as strongly as you would your own. If you find yourself unwilling to explore the strengths of your opponent's position, then you should select a new subject.

Write an Outline

After freewriting about your opponent's positions as if they were your own, you will probably have excellent ideas about how best to shape your essay. Youmay find it useful to jot down your objectives as suggested in the following outline. Remember, though, don't let the outline control your thoughts. If insights occur while you are writing, experiment with them.

1. Explain the issue's significance and scope
2. In what ways are the major assumptions of the opposing position valid?

3. In what ways are your assumptions invalid and valid?
4. What consensus can your establish?

Revising and Editing Strategies

By analyzing the strengths and weaknesses that your classmates and instructor have identified in past papers, you can know what special problems you shoud look for when evaluating your persuasive essay. As always, give yourself as much time as possible between drafts. Below I have listed some questions that highlight special concerns you will need to address when writing your Rogerian essay.

Is the Subject Appropriate for a Rogerian Approach?

A day or so after you have completed the first draft of your essay, reread it from the perspective of your intended audience. To conduct an honest self-evaluation, try to answer the following questions:

1. In the introduction, have I truly been open-minded? Have I thoroughly reviewed the strengths of my opponent's counterarguments? Have I honestly challenged the weaknesses of my own position?
2. How could I change the essay to make it less emotionally charged?
3. Are the transitions from the opposing position to my position as smooth as possible?
4. When I present my claims, do I sound informed, intelligent, compassionate? What additional data would help my readers better understand my position? Do I need more facts and figures? Can I incorporate more outside quotations to

substantiate my argument?
5. Have I successfully limited my analysis and elaborated on one specific, significant claim? Have I presented my position clearly and accurately?
6. Is the compromise I have suggested reasonable? Can I be more original in my call for a higher interest?

Read Your Work Aloud

Before submitting your essay to your peers or teacher, read it aloud to yourself several times. As you read, make a note of passages that seem difficult to read or sound awkward. Question whether the tone in the paragraphs is appropriate, given your audience and purpose. For example, can you find any passages that sound insincere or condescending?

Share Your Work with People Who Disagree with You

Ask people with different viewpoints from yours to critique your work. Let them know that you are attempting to seek a compromise between your position and theirs and that you welcome their suggestions.

Do a Criteria-Based Evaluation

In addition to making notes on criticisms of your text and ideas for improving it, you may find the following criteria-based format a useful way of identifying and correcting any weaknesses in your peers' drafts or your own.

1. Rogerian Appeals

- Author establishes an emphatic persona and avoid threatening challenges
- Author clarifies instances in which opposing assertions are valid
- Author show instances when assertions are valid
- Author develops claim in as nonthreatening way as possible
- Author seeks compromise and calls for an higher interest

(Low) (Middle) (High)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
II. Substantive Revision

- The document is reader-based
- The tone is appropriate given the audience and purpose
- The document is organized and formatted effectively
- The paragraphs are coherent and cohesive

(Low) (Middle) (High)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
III. Edited Document

- Unnecessary jargon and awkward abstractions have been edited
- *To be* verbs have been eliminiated
- A high verb-to-noun ration has been established
- Strings of prepositions have been avoided
- The document has been edited for economy
- The document has been copyedited for grammatical, mechanical, and formatting errors

Evaluating Criticism

When your professor returns your Rogerian report to you, take a few moments to reflect on your growth as a writer. To help put

your role as "apprentice" in perspective, you may find it useful to consider the following questions in your Writing and Research Notebook:

1. What have you learned about yourself as a writer as a result of writing your Rogerian essay?
2. In what ways has your knowledge of Rogerian negotiation and problem solving influenced how you will make oral and written arguments in the future? When writing this report, did you find your original point of view softening?
3. Based on your peers' and teacher's responses to your work, what goals will you set for your next writing assignment?

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PART XI

PUBLIC & MULTIMEDIA WRITING

46. Digital Footprints: Public Writing and Social Identities

CASSANDRA BRANHAM AND DANIELLE FARRAR

Mark Zuckerberg claimed in a 2010 interview that we all only have "one identity" (as cited in Mainwaring, 2010). But as we have witnessed social networking sites (SNSs) set up shop across vastly different communities for vastly different purposes, it has become clear that Zuckerberg cannot be right. While there may be similarities found in an individual's Facebook, LinkedIn, and Ravelry profiles, the differing target audiences, interfaces, and SNS purposes make it easy for an individual to create and express a plurality of social identities.

Though the concept of social identity is not new, social networking and new media technologies have extended our understanding of social identities. Furthermore, writing plays a significant role in the various online spaces we use to create our individualized digital footprints, that is, the digital trail of data that we leave behind when interacting in or with online technologies Whether we write on Facebook to share with friends or families or on LinkedIn to connect with other professionals, the act of public writing should be executed with thought and critical consideration. With employers regularly looking to SNSs to tell them whether or not to hire prospective employees, it is crucial for individuals to be aware of not only what their social identities reveal about themselves but also how this information can be interpreted. A 2011 survey of hiring professionals reveals that 91% of employers do active screening of potential employees through social network sites, and 76% of the time they screen through Facebook, 48% through LinkedIn, and 53% with Twitter (Swallow, 2011). Additionally, "In June 2013, a nationwide survey by CareerBuilder found that more than two in five hiring managers (43 percent) who

vetted applicants online did not hire an applicant based on information found online" (Jodka, 2013). Research shows that employers are intently looking at prospective employees' social identities, but even if what they discover is not necessarily bad, employers may misinterpret what they find.

Likewise, a study on online relationships between employers and employees points out that "companies that screen applicants via social media may misunderstand online behavior, causing them to eliminate good candidates" (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013, p. 648; Jodka, 2013). Hiring managers may misinterpret information found online because this information is often decontextualized. It is already clear that maintaining privacy in online spaces is highly difficult, if at all possible, to effectively manage. Thus, when hiring managers or other people in positions of power access digitally archived information (as in a Facebook timeline or Tumblr feed), this information is not contextualized for the viewer/reader, so they interpret that information in accordance with their own experiences. Because this information is not "tailored to the particular relationship or situation, [. . .] its original context and meaning may be skewed" (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013, p. 648).

Despite the fact that public writing has become popular in the creation and performance of social identities, some people think little about what they write online. It is clear that poor choices in public writing influence employers in their hiring decisions. As this infographic shows, decisions to not hire have been made because prospective employees "posted inappropriate comments," "demonstrated poor communication skills," or "made discriminatory comments," among doing other things (Swallow, 2011).

Employers scrutinize social identities for information related to their applicants. But employers are not the only ones using SNS as vetting tools. Bill Greenwood draws attention to the fact that "21% [of the 243] college and universities surveyed stated that they research and recruit potential students on social networking sites" (2009, p. 1). Then, when thinking about what digital footprints you

want to leave behind, your choices when writing publicly should be carefully designed and executed.

Some public writing spaces on which students are active include the following:

- Learning Management Systems (LMSs), such as Blackboard and Canvas
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Academia.edu
- Blogging sites (e.g., WordPress, Blogger, or Tumblr)
- Discussion forums or wikis

The approach to public writing and the creation of social identities is no different than traditional approaches to writing: the writer should be aware of their audience, the publication venue (e.g., a newspaper, online blog, or academic journal), and purpose (i.e., why am I writing this?). When an individual creates a digital footprint (or regularly updates it), they need to be fully aware of these same things. However, regardless of these differences in SNSs, information posted is generally made available to the public, and "private" information can be accessed if an employer wants it.

With the rapidly growing number of SNSs, Internet privacy has become a contested area, and more and more SNSs are offering levels of privacy. Private or password-protected blogs have become more common, and some sites like Google+ and Facebook have made it possible for you to tailor and share information with specific groups of people. Furthermore, LMS blogs like those on Blackboard and Canvas are heavily secured sites, and what you write publicly in these spaces will only be visible to your instructor and classmates. In this way, Blackboard and Canvas writing are semi-public. The advantage to using the Blackboard and Canvas blog function is that while they work like other blog spaces, they provide more privacy.

Similarly, professional SNSs like LinkedIn and Academia.edu have

gained popularity. The goal of these sites is to professionally network and share ideas, documents, or articles specific to professional identities. LinkedIn's interface resembles a digitized version of a résumé or CV where users can list their educational and professional experience in addition to professionally relevant skills. Academia.edu is the academic version of LinkedIn and allows people working in academia to list their research interests and upload publications and current works-in-progress, as well as network similarly to LinkedIn.

Public Writing Etiquette

Many of us have sent a text message, email, or Facebook message that unintentionally offended someone because digital writing disallows the reader access to social cues, such as bodily and facial expressions and vocal tone. Before undertaking any type of digital writing, a writer should be aware of the way readers may perceive their words by taking precautions to avoid sounding offensive. These precautions are especially important when considering digital footprints and social identities because of the longevity of information posted on the Internet: some online writing spaces continue to exist years after the original posting date. When writing publicly, always ask yourself if your words reflect the person you want to be in ten, or even twenty, years. Even if you write something that you later delete, you should be aware that your posts can often be retrieved by archiving sites such as www.archive.org. Be aware of Internet etiquette and norms—especially those particular to individual online writing spaces—and writing with those norms in mind will help you avoid publishing something online that you may regret and a troublesome digital footprint. Some general norms regarding Internet etiquette include:

1. Respect the community. Interact with members of the online

community in question in a way that reflects the treatment you would expect to receive. In other words, be nice.

2. Listen to others. When someone presents an opinion that is different from your own, make an effort to understand that person's perspective on the topic. Resist the urge to immediately tell someone they are wrong simply because their opinion differs from yours. Remember that many employers made the decision not to hire because a prospective employee may have made personal comments that the employer interpreted as objectionable.
3. Be accountable for your actions. The perceived anonymity of online interactions causes some users to feel comfortable writing things they would not say in a face-to-face situation. Take responsibility for your actions and never write something online that you would not feel comfortable saying in person (Brantner, 2011). The Internet Protection Act, which requires web administrators to eliminate anonymous postings, is aimed at increasing accountability in online interactions.

Therefore, while there are many benefits to public writing, students must do so responsibly. Consider, for example, whether or not a specific form of electronic discourse (text speak, colloquial language, Internet jargon, etc.) is a viable and effective form of writing for a particular online forum. Remember that different target audiences prefer different forms of written expression, which is the benefit to having several social identities. Also, be sure not to include any material that would be considered unacceptable in the space in which you are composing. This does not mean that you cannot express your opinions within your own writing or in response to others, but you should express your opinions in a caring way that shows respect for those opinions that differ from your own.

Public Writing in Practice

Now that you have read about digital footprints and the potential negative implications of public writing in digital spaces, let's practice applying what you've learned to two scenarios that you may have already encountered within Facebook and Twitter.

Scenario 1: Imagine that you are perusing your Facebook page around the time of an upcoming presidential election. You see that someone in your network has posted a comment in support of their favorite candidate, but you notice that the content of their post is biased and, in your opinion, misinformed. You are upset by the content of this post, and you aren't sure how to proceed. Which of the following actions do you perform and why? Think about the potential implications of each action.

1. Unfriend this person.
2. Hide this person from your newsfeed.
3. Ignore this post and move on with your day.
4. Comment on this person's post.
5. Send this person a private message.
6. Other.

Scenario 2: Imagine that you are on Twitter, reading through tweets that contain hashtags associated with trending topics. One of the trending topics deals with a recent news story that has gained international attention and you come across a tweet that uses racial epithets to describe the persons involved in the case. While you agree with the content of the tweet, you don't agree with the language used to describe those involved in the case. Which of the following actions do you perform, and why? Think about the potential implications of each action.

1. Favorite it.
2. Retweet it.

3. Do nothing.
4. Write your own tweet.
5. Other.

Conclusion

When publishing online, be sure that you are respecting yourself, the members of your online community, others who may read your posts, and the writing space itself. Even though you create your own digital footprints and social identities, "Social media profiles [. . .] are not a reflection of one's identity, as Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg wants us to believe, but are part and parcel of a power struggle between users, employers/employees and platform owners to steer online information and behavior" (van Dijck 212). Remember that identities are created both inwardly and outwardly: while you maintain your own understanding of who you are, as identity research explains, your identities are also created by how others perceive and interpret you. In short, you should always strive to represent yourself professionally when publicly writing to critically control your digital footprints.

Exercises

1. Visit your Facebook profile page and locate a post, composed or shared by you, that you think might be potentially upsetting to either existing

members of your social network or to secondary connections who might see your post. Write a short paragraph describing your initial intentions when composing or sharing the post. Additionally, reflect on how members of your audience might have interpreted your post in a way that you did not intend.

2. Visit Twitter and examine the current trending topics. Within one of the trending topics, locate a tweet that you find offensive or that you think could be offensive to certain audiences. Write a short paragraphs describing your interpretation of the initial intentions of the tweeter. Additionally, revise the tweet to be more appropriate for Twitter's audience, and justify your choices.

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47. Navigating Genres

KERRY DIRK

There's a joke that's been floating around some time now that you've likely already heard. It goes something like the following:

> Q: What do you get when you rewind a country song?
> A: You get your wife back, your job back, your dog back . . .

Maybe this joke makes you laugh. Or groan. Or tilt your head to the side in confusion. Because it just so happens that in order to get this joke, you must know a little something about country music in general and in particular country music lyrics. You must, in other words, be familiar with the country music genre.

Let's look into country music lyrics a bit more. Bear with me on this is if you're not a fan. Assuming I want to write lyrics to a country song, how would I figure out what lyrics are acceptable in terms of country songs? Listening to any country station for a short period of time might leave one with the following conclusions about country songs:

- Country songs tend to tell stories. They often have characters who are developed throughout the song.
- Country songs often have choruses that are broad enough to apply to a variety of verses.
- Country songs are often depressing; people lose jobs, lovers, and friends.
- Country songs express pride for the country style and way of life.
- Country songs are often political, responding to wars and economic crises, for example.

Given these characteristics, I would feel prepared to write some new country lyrics. But what would happen if I wanted to write a

country song that didn't do any of the above things? Would it still be a country song?

You are probably already familiar with many genres, although you may not know them as such; perhaps your knowledge of genres is limited to types of books, whether mystery, horror, action, etc. Now I'm going to ask you to stick with me while I show you how knowledge of genres goes far beyond a simple discussion of types. My purposes are to expand your definition of genre (or to introduce you to a definition for the first time) and to help you start thinking about how genres might apply to your own writing endeavors. But above all, I hope to give you an awareness of how genres function by taking what is often quite theoretical in the field of rhetoric and composition and making it a bit more tangible. So why was I talking about country songs? I think that using such references can help you to see, in a quite concrete way, how genres function.

When I started writing this essay, I had some ideas of what I wanted to say. But first, I had to determine what this essay might look like. I've written a lot—letters, nonfiction pieces, scholarly articles, rants—but this was my first time writing an essay to you, a composition student. What features, I asked myself, should go into this essay? How personal could I get? What rhetorical moves might I use, effectively or ineffectively? I hoped that a similar type of essay already existed so that I would have something to guide my own writing. I knew I was looking for other essays written directly to students, and after finding many examples, I looked for common features. In particular, I noted the warm, personal style that was prevalent through every essay; the tone was primarily conversational. And more importantly, I noticed that the writer did not talk as an authoritative figure but as a coach. Some writers admitted that they did not know everything (we don't), and others even went so far as to admit ignorance. I found myself doing what Mary Jo Reiff, a professor who studies rhetoric and composition, did when she was asked to write about her experience of writing an essay about teaching for those new to the field of composition. She writes, "I immediately called on my genre knowledge—my past

experience with reading and writing similar texts in similar situations—to orient me to the expectations of this genre" (157).

I further acknowledged that it is quite rare that teachers of writing get to write so directly to students in such an informal manner. Although textbooks are directed at students, they are often more formal affairs meant to serve a different purpose than this essay. And because the genre of this essay is still developing, there are no formal expectations for what this paper might look like. In my excitement, I realized that perhaps I had been granted more freedom in writing this essay than is typical of an already established, although never static, genre. As a result, I decided to make this essay a mix of personal anecdotes, examples, and voices from teachers of writing. Such an essay seems to be the most fitting response to this situation, as I hope to come across as someone both informative and friendly. Why am I telling you this? Because it seems only appropriate that given the fact that I am talking about genre awareness, I should make you aware of my own struggles with writing in a new genre.

I will admit that the word genre used to have a bad reputation and may still make some people cringe. Genre used to refer primarily to form, which meant that writing in a particular genre was seen as simply a matter of filling in the blanks. Anne Freadman, a specialist in genre theory, points out that "it is this kind of genre theory with its failures that has caused the discredit of the very notion of genre, bringing about in turn its disuse and the disrepair many of us found it in" (46). But genre theory has come a long way since then. Perhaps the shift started when the rhetorician Lloyd Bitzer wrote the following:

> Due to either the nature of things or convention, or both, some situations recur. The courtroom is the locus for several kinds of situations generating the speech of accusation, the speech of defense, the charge to the jury. From day to day, year to year, comparable situations occur, prompting

> comparable responses; hence rhetorical forms are born and a special vocabulary, grammar, and style are established. (13)

In other words, Bitzer is saying that when something new happens that requires a response, someone must create that first response. Then when that situation happens again, another person uses the first response as a basis for the second, and eventually everyone who encounters this situation is basing his/her response on the previous ones, resulting in the creation of a new genre. Think about George Washington giving the first State of the Union Address. Because this genre was completely new, he had complete freedom to pick its form and content. All presidents following him now have these former addresses to help guide their response because the situation is now a reoccurring one. Amy Devitt, a professor who specializes in the study of genre theory, points out that "genres develop, then, because they respond appropriately to situations that writers encounter repeatedly" ("Generalizing" 576) and because "if each writing problem were to require a completely new assessment of how to respond, writing would be slowed considerably. But once we recognize a recurring situation, a situation that we or others have responded to in the past, our response to that situation can be guided by past responses" ("Generalizing" 576). As such, we can see how a genre like the State of the Union Address helps for more effective communication between the president and citizens because the president already has a genre with which to work; he/she doesn't have to create a new one, and citizens know what to expect from such an address.

The definition of genre has changed even more since Bitzer's article was written; genres are now viewed as even more than repeating rhetorical situations. Carolyn Miller, a leading professor in the field of technical communication, argues that "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered . . . on the action it is used to accomplish" (151). How might this look? These actions don't have to be complex; many genres are a part of our daily lives.

Think about genres as tools to help people to get things done. Devitt writes that:

> genres have the power to help or hurt human interaction, to ease communication or to deceive, to enable someone to speak or to discourage someone from saying something different. People learn how to do small talk to ease the social discomfort of large group gatherings and meeting new people, but advertisers learn how to disguise *sales letters as winning sweepstakes entries*. (*Writing* 1)

In other words, knowing what a genre is used for can help people to accomplish goals, whether that goal be getting a job by knowing how to write a stellar resume, winning a person's heart by writing a romantic love letter, or getting into college by writing an effective personal statement.

By this point you might realize that you have been participating in many different genres—whether you are telling a joke, writing an email, or uploading a witty status on Facebook. Because you know how these genres function as social actions, you can quite accurately predict how they function rhetorically; your joke should generate a laugh, your email should elicit a response, and your updated Facebook status should generate comments from your online friends. But you have done more than simply filled in the blanks. Possibly without even thinking about it, you were recognizing the rhetorical situation of your action and choosing to act in a manner that would result in the outcome you desired. I imagine that you would probably not share a risqué joke with your mom, send a "Hey Buddy" email to your professor, or update your Facebook status as "X has a huge wart on his foot." We can see that more than form matters here, as knowing what is appropriate in these situations obviously requires more rhetorical knowledge than does filling out a credit card form. Devitt argues that "people do not label a particular story as a joke solely because of formal features but rather because of their perception of the rhetorical action that is occurring" (Writing 11). True, genres often have formulaic

features, but these features can change even as the nature of the genre remains (Devitt, Writing, 48). What is important to consider here is that if mastering a form were simply a matter of plugging in content, we would all be capable of successfully writing anything when we are given a formula. By now you likely know that writing is not that easy.

Fortunately, even if you have been taught to write in a formulaic way, you probably don't treat texts in such a manner. When approaching a genre for a the first time, you likely view it as more than a simple form: "Picking up a text, readers not only classify it and expect a certain form, but also make assumptions about the text's purposes, its subject matter, its writer, and its expected reader" (Devitt, Writing 12). We treat texts that we encounter as rhetorical objects; we choose between horror movies and chick flicks not only because we are familiar with their forms but because we know what response they will elicit from us (nail-biting fear and dreamy sighs, respectively). Why am I picking popular genres to discuss? I think I agree with Miller when she argues the following:

> To consider as potential genres such homely discourse as the letter of recommendation, the user manual, the progress report, the ransom note, the lecture, and the white paper, as well as the eulogy, the apologia, the inaugural, the public proceeding, and the sermon, is not to trivialize the study of genres; it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which we are immersed and the situations in which we find ourselves. (155)

In other words, Miller is saying that all genres matter because they shape our everyday lives. And by studying the genres that we find familiar, we can start to see how specific choices that writers make result in specific actions on the part of readers; it only follows that our own writing must too be purposefully written.

I like examples, so here is one more. Many of you may be familiar with *The Onion*, a fictitious newspaper that uses real world examples to create humorous situations. Perhaps the most notable

genre of *The Onion* is its headlines. The purpose of these headlines is simple: to make the reader respond by laughing. While many of the articles are also entertaining, the majority of the humor is produced through the headlines. In fact, the headlines are so important to the success of the newspaper that they are tested on volunteers to see the readers' immediate responses. There are no formal features of these headlines besides the fact that they are all quite brief; they share no specific style. But they are a rhetorical action meant to bring about a specific response, which is why I see them as being their own genre. A few examples for those of you unfamiliar with this newspaper would help to explain what I'm saying. Here are a few of my personal favorites (politically charged or other possibly offensive headlines purposefully avoided):

- "Archaeological Dig Uncovers Ancient Race of Skeleton People"
- "Don't Run Away, I'm Not the Flesh-Eating Kind of Zombie"
- "Time Traveler: Everyone In The Future Eats Dippin' Dots"
- "'I Am Under 18' Button Clicked For First Time In History Of Internet"
- "Commas, Turning Up, Everywhere"
- "Myspace Outage Leaves Millions Friendless."
- "Amazon.com Recommendations Understand Area Woman Better Than Husband"
- "Study: Dolphins Not So Intelligent On Land"
- "Beaver Overthinking Dam"
- "Study: Alligators Dangerous No Matter How Drunk You Are"
- "Child In Corner To Exact Revenge As Soon As He Gets Out" (*The Onion*)

I would surmise with near certainty that at least one of these headlines made you laugh. Why? I think the success lies in the fact that the writers of these headlines are rhetorically aware of whom these headlines are directed toward—college students like you, and more specifically, educated college students who know

enough about politics, culture, and U.S. and world events to "get" these headlines.

And now for some bad news: figuring out a genre is tricky already, but this process is further complicated by the fact that two texts that might fit into the same genre might also look extremely different. But let's think about why this might be the case. Devitt points out, "different grocery stores make for different grocery lists. Different law courts make for different legal briefs. And different college classes make for different research papers. Location may not be the first, second, and third most important qualities of writing, as it is for real estate, but location is surely among the situational elements that lead to expected genres and to adaptations of those genres in particular situations" ("Transferability" 218). Think about a time when you were asked to write a research paper. You probably had an idea of what that paper should look like, but you also needed to consider the location of the assignment. In other words, you needed to consider how your particular teacher's expectations would help to shape your assignment. This makes knowing a genre about much more than simply knowing its form. You also need to consider the context in which it is being used. As such, it's important to be aware that the research paper you might be required to write in freshman composition might be completely different than the research paper you might be asked to write for an introductory psychology class. Your goal is to recognize these shifts in location and to be aware of how such shifts might affect your writing. Let's consider a genre with which you are surely familiar: the thesis statement. Stop for a moment and consider what this term means to you. Ask your classmates. It's likely that you each have your own definition of what a thesis statement should and should not look like. You may have heard never to start a thesis statement with a phrase like "In this essay." Or you might have been taught that a thesis statement should have three parts, each of which will be discussed in one paragraph of the essay. I learned that many good thesis statements follow the formula "X because Y," where "X" refers to a specific

stance, and "Y" refers to a specific reason for taking that stance. For example, I could argue "School uniforms should be required because they will help students to focus more on academics and less on fashion." Now, whether or not this is a good thesis statement is irrelevant, but you can see how following the "X because Y" formula would produce a nicely structured statement. Take this a step further and research "thesis statements" on the Internet, and you'll find that there are endless suggestions. And despite their vast differences, they all fit under the genre of thesis statement. How is this possible? Because it comes back to the particular situation in which that thesis statement is being used.

Again, location is everything.

I think it's time to try our hand at approaching a genre with which I hope all of you are only vaguely familiar and completely unpracticed: the ransom note.

A Scenario

I've decided to kidnap Bob's daughter Susie for ransom. I'm behind on the mortgage payments, my yacht payments are also overdue, and I desperately need money. It is well known that Bob is one of the wealthiest people in Cash City, so I've targeted him as my future source of money. I've never met Bob, although one time his Mercedes cut me off in traffic, causing me to hit the brakes and spill my drink; the stain still glares at me from the floor of the car. The kidnapping part has been completed; now I need to leave Bob a ransom note. Let's look at a few drafts I've completed to decide which one would be most appropriate.

> *Ransom Letter 1:*
>
> If you ever want to see your daughter alive again, leave 1 million dollars by the blue garbage can at 123 Ransom Rd. at Midnight. Come alone and do not call the police.

Ransom Letter 2:

Hav daughter. Million $. Blu grbg can 123 Ransom Rd. 12AM. No poliz.

Ransom Letter 3:

Dear Bob,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. You have a lovely house, and I very much enjoyed my recent visit while you were out of town. Unfortunately, I have kidnapped your daughter. As I am currently unable to meet several financial demands, I am graciously turning to you for help in this matter. I am sure that we will be able to come to some mutually beneficial agreement that results in the return of your daughter and the padding of my wallet. Please meet with me at the Grounds Coffee House on First Street so that we may discuss what price is most fitting. Your daughter, meanwhile, remains in safe and competent hands. She is presently playing pool with my son Matt (a possible love connection?), and she says to tell you "Hi."

Yours truly, Jim

P.S. Please order me a skim vanilla latte, should you arrive before I do.

Immediately, you can probably determine that ransom letter one is the best choice. But have you considered why? What does the first letter have that the other two are lacking? Let's first eliminate the most obvious dud—letter number three. Not only does it mimic the friendly, familiar manner of two friends rather than the threatening note of a deranged kidnapper, but it also suggests both that there is no rush in the matter and that the price is negotiable. Letters one and two are closer; they both contain the same information, but letter two fails to be as rhetorically strong as number one. The spelling errors and choppy feel might suggest that the writer of the note is not intelligent enough to get away with the kidnapping. The first letter is the most rhetorically strong because it

is well written and direct. All of these letters would qualify as fitting the genre of ransom letter, but the first one most obviously fits the rhetorical situation.

It may be worthwhile to note some particular challenges you might have to approaching your writing genres as rhetorical situations. Perhaps you have come from a writing background where you learned that certain rules apply to all writing. Just nod if these sound familiar:

- You must have a thesis statement at the end of the introduction.
- Every thesis statement should introduce three points of discussion.
- You cannot use "I" in writing.
- You cannot begin a sentence with a coordinating conjunction.
- Every paragraph should start with a topic sentence.

You get the point. These rules are appealing; they tell us exactly what to do and not to do with regard to writing. I remember happily creating introductions that moved from broad to specific (often starting with "In our world"), constructing three point thesis statements, and beginning paragraphs with "first," "second," and "third." I didn't have to think about audience, or purpose, or even much about content for that matter. All that really mattered was that essay followed a certain formula that was called good writing. But looking back, what resulted from such formulas was not very good; actually, it was quite bad.

That is, of course, not to say that there aren't rules that come with genres; the difference is that the rules change as the genre changes, that no rules apply to all genres, and that genres require more effort than simply following the rules. Because genres usually come with established conventions, it is risky to choose not to follow such conventions. These similarities within genres help us to communicate successfully; imagine the chaos that would ensue if news broadcasts were done in raps, if all legal briefs were written in

couplets, or if your teacher handed you a syllabus and told you that it must first be decoded. In sum, "too much choice is as debilitating of meaning as is too little choice. In language, too much variation results eventually in lack of meaning: mutual unintelligibility" (Devitt, "Genre" 53).

But on a brighter note, genres also help us to make more efficient decisions when writing, as we can see how people have approached similar situations. Creating a new genre each time that writing was required would make the writing process much longer, as we would not have past responses to help us with present ones (Devitt, "Generalizing" 576). As a result, the more you are able to master particular genres, the better equipped you may be to master genres that you later encounter:

> When people write, they draw on the genres they know, their own context of genres, to help construct their rhetorical action. If they encounter a situation new to them, it is the genres they have acquired in the past that they can use to shape their new action. Every genre they acquire, then, expands their genre repertoire and simultaneously shapes how they might view new situations. (Devitt, Writing 203)

Taking what Devitt says into account, think back to the previous discussion of the research paper. If you already have some idea of what a research paper looks like, you do not have to learn an entirely new genre. Instead, you just have to figure out how to change that particular genre to fit with the situation, even if that change just comes from having a different teacher.

Learning about genres and how they function is more important than mastering one particular genre; it is this knowledge that helps us to recognize and to determine appropriate responses to different situations—that is, knowing what particular genre is called for in a particular situation. And learning every genre would be impossible anyway, as Devitt notes that "no writing class could possibly teach students all the genres they will need to succeed even in school,

much less in the workplace or in their civic lives. Hence the value of teaching genre awareness rather than acquisition of particular genres" (Writing 205). This approach helps to make you a more effective writer as well, as knowing about genres will make you more prepared to use genres that you won't learn in college. For example, I recently needed to write a letter about removing a late fee on a credit card. I had never written this particular type of letter before, but I knew what action I was trying to accomplish. As a result, I did some research on writing letters and determined that I should make it as formal and polite as possible. The body of the letter ended up as follows:

> I have very much enjoyed being a card carrier with this bank for many years. However, I recently had a late fee charged to my account. As you will note from my previous statements, this is the first late fee I have ever acquired. I do remember making this payment on time, as I have all of my previous payments. I hope to remain a loyal customer of this bank for many years to come, so I would very much appreciate it if you would remove this charge from my account.

You can see that this letter does several things. First, I build credibility for myself by reminding them that I have used their card for many years. Second, I ask them to check my records to show further that I am typically a responsible card carrier. And third, I hint that if they do not remove the late fee, I might decide to change to a different bank. This letter is effective because it considers how the situation affects the genre. And yes, the late fee was removed.

Chances are that I have left you more confused than you were before you began this essay. Actually, I hope that I have left you frustrated; this means that the next time you write, you will have to consider not only form but also audience, purpose, and genre; you will, in other words, have to consider the rhetorical effectiveness of your writing. Luckily, I can leave you with a few suggestions:

- First, determine what action you are trying to accomplish. Are

you trying to receive an A on a paper? Convince a credit card company to remove a late fee? Get into graduate school? If you don't know what your goal is for a particular writing situation, you'll have a difficult time figuring out what genre to use.

- Second, learn as much as you can about the situation for which you are writing. What is the purpose? Who is the audience? How much freedom do you have? How does the location affect the genre?
- Third, research how others have responded to similar situations. Talk to people who have written what you are trying to write. If you are asked to write a biology research paper, ask your instructor for examples. If you need to write a cover letter for a summer internship, take the time to find out about the location of that internship.
- And finally, ask questions.

Discussion

1. What are some genres that you feel you know well? How did you learn them? What are their common rhetorical features?
2. What rules have you been told to follow in the past? How did they shape what you were writing?
3. How much freedom do you enjoy when writing? Does it help to have a form to follow, or do you find it to be limiting?

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This essay is a chapter in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Volume 1, a peer-reviewed open textbook series for the writing classroom, and is published through Parlor Press: https://writingspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Navigating-Genres.pdf

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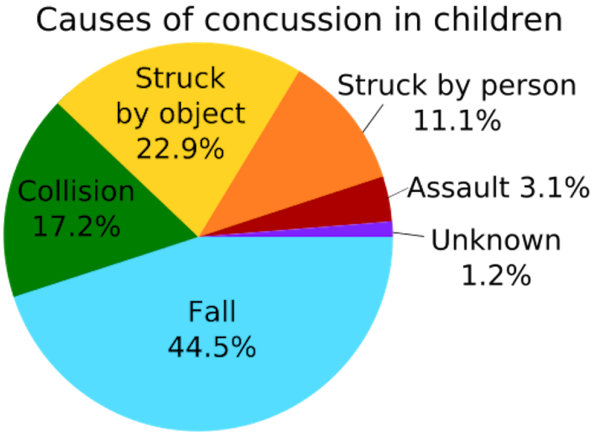
48. Visuals Help You Communicate

ROBIN JEFFREY

PIE CHART

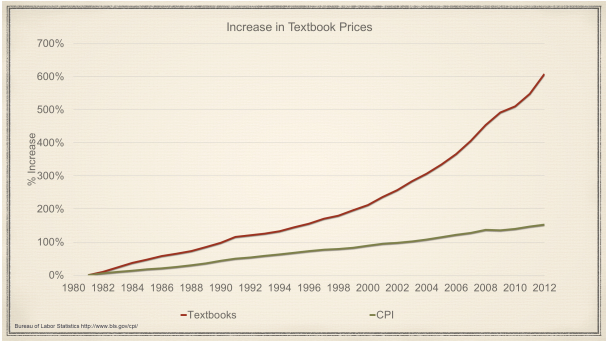
Pie charts are great for illustrating comparisons between a part and the whole. Segments of the chart represent percentages of the whole.



"Causes of concussion" by delldot is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

LINE GRAPH

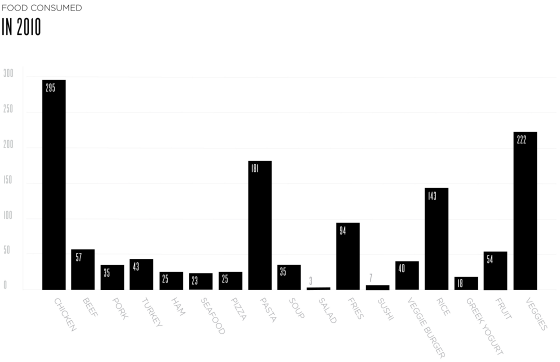
Line graphs help you emphasize a particular trend over time.



"Increase in Textbook Prices" by David Ernst, Open Textbook Network is licensed under CC BY 4.0

BAR GRAPH

Bar graphs serve basically the same purpose as line graphs, emphasizing trends over a particular period of time.



"Single Bar Graph" by Lauren Manning is licensed under CC BY 2.0

TABLE

Tables are a good way to visually organize complex numerical information, especially if you have a lot of data.

Bookstore Weekly Schedule Week of May 1-7

	Sun 5/1	Mon 5/2	Tue 5/3	Wed 5/4	Thu 5/5	Fri 5/6	Sat 5/7
Brown, M.	9am-6pm	9am-6pm	9am-1pm				
Gordon, A.	11am-8pm	11am-8pm	7am-11am		9am-6pm	9am-6pm	
Lawton, N.		11am-8pm	11am-8pm	7am-11am			
Shiro, I.					9am-6pm	9am-6pm	9am-1p
Vasquez, A.	11am-8pm					11am-8pm	7am-11a

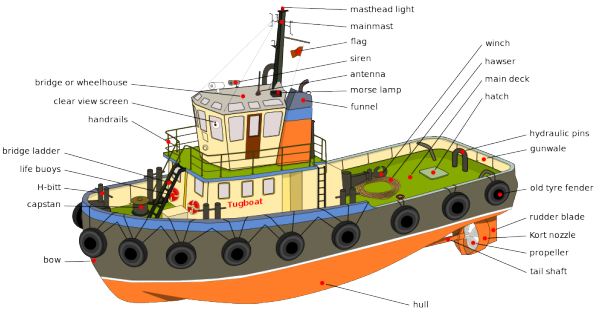
PHOTOGRAPH

Photographs depict people, situations, or ideas that might be discussed in your text.

"College" by univfajar is in the Public Domain, CC0

DIAGRAM

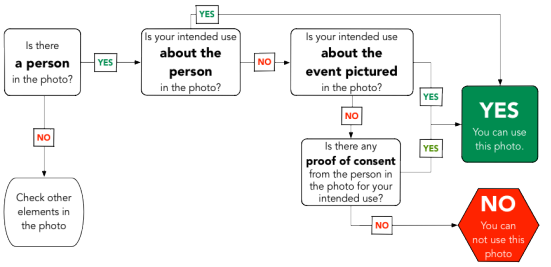
Diagrams are used most often in scientific or technical writing because of their ability to convey complex processes and structures simply.



"Tugboat diagram" by Al2 with minor modifications by Lycaon – Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons.

FLOWCHART

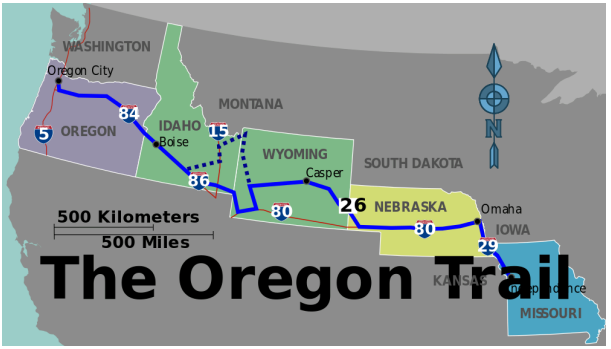
Flowcharts are great for showing structure as well as steps in a linear process.



"Flow chart determining reusability of a portrait photo" by Sebastiaan ter Burg is licensed under CC BY 4.0

MAP

Maps are the perfect choice for illustrating geographical distances, demographics, or other data that is at least partially dependent on place.



"Oregon Trail wikivoyage map" by Gorilla Jones is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

This chapter originally appeared in *About Writing: A Guide*: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/aboutwriting/chapter/visuals-help-you-communicate/

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https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/aboutwriting/front-matter/introduction/

PART XII

SAMPLE ESSAYS

49. About the CU Composition Essay Contest

CARIE SCHNEIDER

About the Contest:

Cameron's English Composition program, in the Department of Communication, English and Foreign Languages, is once again awarding prizes for the best work in some of the major assignment categories in Comp I (ENGL 1113) and Comp II (ENGL 1213). Winners receive cash prizes and the opportunity to have their work published in future editions of *CU Write, the Cameron Composition Textbook*.

Prize Categories for 2023:

- Critical Thinking Essay – especially Compare and Contrast
- Rhetorical Analysis
- Comp I Reflection
- Comp II Reflection

Submitted work must have been written for a CU composition course (ENGL 1113 or ENGL 1213) during the 2022 calendar year (Spring 2022, Summer 2022, or Fall 2022 semesters).

Students may only submit work in one category; one entry per person.

For more information, contact Dr. Carie Schneider, Director of Composition, at cschneid@cameron.edu.

To Enter the Contest:

Submissions for the 2022 contest cycle are due by February 17, 2023.

To submit an essay, send the entry form (English Composition Essay Contest Form 22-23) and your essay to Cameron.essay.contest@gmail.com

Submit your essay in Word document format (.DOC or .DOCX); submissions *must* also include a signed and completed entry form in PDF format, submitted either typed with digital signature or as a scan of a printed and handwritten form.

You should read your instructor's feedback on your essay and make revisions before submitting it to the contest. Proofread and edit your work carefully. Winning submissions will be copyedited before publication.

Awards & Ceremonies:

First place winners in each category will receive a $100 prize; Second place winners will receive $50. All winners will also receive a certificate and recognition at one of the following awards ceremonies in Spring 2023:

Winners will be announced at the English Composition Awards Ceremony, 3:30-5pm, Tuesday, April 11, 2023, in the Shepler Ballroom.

Winners from CU-Duncan or the Stephens County area can receive their prize at the Duncan Awards Ceremony, 3:30-5pm, Tuesday, April 18th, 2023, in Duncan 116.

About the Author

Carie Schneider
DIRECTOR OF COMPOSITION, CAMERON UNIVERSITY

50. Narrative 1 - "The Cantankerously Cruel and Contemporaneously Crude Cameron Catastrophe"

MICHAEL CLARK

The Cantankerously Cruel and Contemporaneously Crude Cameron Catastrophe

I found myself running full sprint down Cameron campus, holding a plastic fork in one hand and a plate of chicken alfredo in the other. There were not one, but four parking lots in the area I was in. I picked a random one and ran as fast as I could towards it. At this time, a group of people were taking graduation photos together. Unfortunately, their moment of triumph was foiled by a strange curly-haired kid dashing behind them. I spent 10 to 15 minutes running full sprint in aimless directions. My terminus was nowhere in sight, and a school bus full of angry teenagers were waiting on me.

Yup. That's me! Chances are, you are probably wondering how I got into this situation. It's a funny story, really. It's the story of the worst day of my life. The worst days of your life tend to be the days you least expect to suck. The days you walk into with poor expectations can't possibly match the days you face with high hopes. Why? With an expectedly bad day, every punch is expected. However, with an expectedly good day gone bad, it's just an

onslaught of one crushing blow after another. I've had plenty of days like these, days where I go into a disastrous experience with my best foot forward, thinking "Today is gonna be a great day!" I end up walking out of those days significantly disappointed at best. This was one of those days. A 12-hour ordeal with each hour posing a new, significantly more ridiculous challenge. As the curtains open on the travesty-tragedy that has befallen me, the story begins as all good stories should: with an alarm clock blasting noise directly into my inner ear.

05:00 MY HOUSE [3 HOURS BEFORE THE INCIDENT]

Thus begins the Critically Crumbling and Centrally Calamitous Cameron Catastrophe

If I have one forte, it's certainly not waking up at 5 am. As most nights tend to be, they're always cold, pitch black, and never pleasant. This night was, predictably, no different. After I got dressed and walked out the front door, I found myself sitting on the side of the road waiting for my friend to pick me up. I looked around, taking a deep breath of that uncomfortably cold spring air. All that surrounded me was a cold, starry sky, a thick impenetrable fog, and the foreboding aura that precedes a terrible day.

I felt the unmistakable breeze of a car speeding past my house, my friend's car. It seems he was unable to see me due to the fog. This was the first of many punches that would dislocate my metaphorical jaw. I, being a freshman, assumed he was just going to give up and leave. I panicked and reached towards my phone to call him. As I stared down at my phone, the only light in the shroud of darkness enveloping me, I was faced with the worst two letter phrase a modern teenager could see: NO SERVICE. (On the other hand, "It's scurvy" is the worst for a 15th century teenager.) To this day I have no idea how I had no service so close to a cell tower, right next to my house in fact. My family believes it's secretly a government-issued

missile silo disguised as a cell tower. I disagree, so I can only assume the gods were just glaring down at me that day.

Using critical thinking skills, something I normally lack, I quickly turned my phone's flashlight on and began waving it in the air. Surely, he would turn around and see my light pierce the fog. Sure enough, this is precisely what happened. He came screeching to a halt right next to me. A close call, and an unfortunate omen about this cursed day. The sharp light of my phone's flashlight was my only saving grace. *Because of that, this college narrative essay is sponsored by Apple's iPhone XR. Using the promo code* "CAMERON" *will get you 0 percent off any chosen Apple product. Terms and conditions may apply.*

> "Hey buddy, looks like I almost missed you!" My friend said in the thickest southern accent imaginable
>
> "Oh, yeah, sure, I guess." I replied, somehow fitting in 3 lackluster responses into the same sentence.

We drove to where the bus picked us up, I vividly remember the disgusting, old man cologne scent of that pickup truck. I remember thinking, "This day can't possibly be good if it starts off smelling like a funeral home!"

As a wise man once said, this is where the fun begins.

08:00 CAMERON CAMPUS [THE INCIDENT BEGINS]

Cameron's Cathartic, Clean Campus Cleanses my Callow Character

Looking back, the highlight of this day was probably the smoothies. I have no idea if Cameron still has that amazing smoothie stand, but I'd consider enrolling full time in Cameron for another one. I spent two of the three hours waiting for the impromptu speaking competition to start by drinking those darn smoothies. Yes, you hear that right: two whole hours! Enough time to watch a major

motion picture. Afterwards, I finally found the emotional strength to jump up and head to the building I could find my competition in. It didn't help that I was wearing my late grandfather's dress shoes, which are NOT meant for exercise like this. My late grandfather isn't late as in dead! He is quite literally late, as in he never shows up on time. I sat on a weird couch-like object for another hour. After some time had passed, a strange old man, dressed like the mentor of the protagonist of a mediocre 1980's fantasy novel, approached me. I vividly remember every word of the following conversation:

> *You doin' the improv?* He asked, unintelligibly.
>
> *Y-y-Yes Sir*! I said, because being a high school freshman in a college setting was too much for me.
>
> *Canceled.* He grumbled and walked off.
>
> *What?*
>
> *Teacher quit.* This was the last thing he said before he left my life forever.

I knew this strange man for a matter of minutes, and he only choked out seven words. Despite this, I still think about that odd encounter every day of my life. I hope he's doing okay. I like to imagine he was some kind of apparition or ghost, roaming the halls of Cameron University to alert small high school students that their events are cancelled.

I spent two more hours wandering aimlessly. My next competition, which was allegedly for creative writing, was at 1pm. By the time I reached the room where creative writing would take place, I soon realized I had made a terrible mistake. The quiz in question was for newspapers and broadcasting, not creative writing. I texted the teacher who signed me up for this without skipping a beat.

> "Mrs. Miller, I thought you signed me up for Creative Writing. This is Newspaper and Broadcasting. I think you made a mistake"
>
> 'Oh, I knew." She replied, making my blood go cold.

"What?!"

"April Fools, Michael. Good luck." 3 years later, this chilling text still haunts me.

My teacher signed me up for a different event I knew nothing about as a cruel prank. It was too late now: I was locked in this room. My eyes darted around the room and my body quivered. I had been duped, tricked, schemed, maybe even tricked. Everyone in this room was my enemy, out for my soul. I felt red all over, unlike the newspapers I was about to take a test on. The supervisor entered the room, forcing me to face the event with minimal knowledge.

I placed so poorly that they didn't even bother putting me on the results page. I was humiliated, my legs hurt, and I didn't even get an award. I walked through Cameron's campus one last time, more downtrodden than ever. So, I returned to the object of my desires, the cruel mistress that haunted my temptations every hour: I returned to get one last smoothie. I needed the endorphins, even if it only lasted a fleeting second. I purchased chicken alfredo from Pizza Hut to "enjoy" with the smoothie. Two minutes into my Pizza Hut Pity Party, I received a most unfortunate phone call.

"Hello?" I said, as one would say at the start of most phone calls. At this point, I really would've preferred that phone call to be anything in the world other than what I was about to hear. I would've preferred an unfortunate diagnosis, loss of a loved one, or even the police telling me that I'm suspected of a cold case arson from the summer of 1969. What I heard haunted my soul: "Michael, where are you? The bus is about to leave." I darted out of my seat, threw the smoothie into the trash on my way out, and ran as fast as I could.

We are finally caught up now, and back to my dead sprint across Cameron campus, holding a plastic fork in one hand and a plate of chicken alfredo in the other. There were not one, but four parking lots in the area I was in. I picked a random one and ran as fast as I could towards it. At this time, a group of people were taking graduation photos together. Unfortunately, their moment of triumph was foiled by a strange curly-haired kid dashing behind

them. I spent 10 to 15 minutes running full sprint in aimless directions. My terminus was nowhere in sight, and a school bus full of angry teenagers were waiting on me. I turned one last corner and saw my school bus; I nearly fell onto my knees when I was presented with its glory. Wait, no, that's the wrong school bus. Thus began another 10-minute run to the other side of campus. I ran faster, faster, a bit slower, and then faster again. Before I knew it, I nearly ran face first into the actual school bus. I stumbled onto the bus and finally collapsed. Everyone else was tired, too tired to ask any questions.

Thus concludes the crazy, careless, climactic ceremoniousness of the Cameron catastrophe. Calmly, coyly covert any contiguous commiseration you could cage. Cathartically, we have reached the conclusion.

Works Consulted

Merriam-Webster Dictionary for helping me find so many words that start with a C

Michael Clark's essay, written in Prof. Leannan's class, won first place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest

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51. Narrative 2 - "A Place Like Pelham"

TDOHASAN SUNRAY

A Place Like Pelham

This place was unlike any place on the planet. At first glance, the neighborhood mimicked that of any cookie cutter, middle-class, suburban community; however, there was one street that reversed this lame idea of a neighborhood and abounded in diversity and acceptance: Pelham Circle, a cul-de-sac that bound unity between people of all walks of life. There were whites, Jamaicans, American Indians, Jordanians, Pakistanis. A place like this screams New York City, but it really took root in Oklahoma. Pelham was a place where political ideology succumbed to respect for others. It was what America always wished it could be: a little slice of heaven where Muslims and Christians not only tolerated but rejoiced with one another. When the Ramadan season came around, we provided gifts, and when Christmas rolled around, they catered us with Middle Eastern food. The smell cascaded and enveloped our home in its sweet waft. On the other hand, there was the ever-present, ripe scent of sweaty kids that had just finished playing basketball, and it, too, permeated whatever home they managed to infiltrate. We kids dreamed of magical lands, but what we failed to realize was that we were already in one of our own.

Pelham Circle broke down walls. No, really – our home did not have a fence. Oklahoma's tornadoes were the main reasons why, but after seeing the fences gone we decided it better to relinquish them altogether. That choice to lose our fence led to competitive games of football and soccer in our backyard, but more importantly it led

to sunny memories. Being outside and playing summed up a day in the life of a Pelham kid. News of our fiery games spread throughout, and suddenly kids from other parts of the neighborhood flocked to our fenceless field to get a taste of the action. Every home on our street had an open-door policy that allowed kids to come and go as they pleased, which consequently led to a shortage of our food supplies. We didn't care. "What's ours is yours," my parents would tell the rowdy neighborhood kids. They expressed the Choctaw idea of "Iyikowa" to my siblings and I from an early age. In English, the phrase literally means "broken-foot." It speaks of how when others are bogged down by the struggles of life, we should be there to revive their spirits. The other definition is "generosity." Generosity was our family; it was our cul-de-sac.

Even amidst the perpetual activity brought about by the cul-de-sac kids, I found time to myself. I wrote in my journal and tucked myself into the few nooks of our otherwise noisy home. In the summertime, we would bask like lizards in the sun until our scalps turned a little too red; the only thing providing relief was hose water and cantaloupe. Honeysuckles grew on our neighbor's fence, and for a week or so, their home was what the kids called, "The Spot." Those minuscule drips of nectar were just as quickly there as they were gone. In another way, so too was our time in Pelham Circle. The stressors of reality never fully reached us kids in Pelham. We were guarded by our creativity and protective community. All we worried about was if our parents would let us have a sleepover or where we were going to camouflage in a game of hide-and-seek. Having fun was our purpose. Then, it all changed. My parents called us into their room and told us to close the door. We knew their news was bad. Their expressions exuded dismay. The inflections in their voices were unsettling. Their words shook my world. "We are moving."

Pelham Circle was not created by the stars aligning, but it was instead nurtured by my parents' intentionality. They thought it best to have relationships with those we lived next to, an idea that has disturbingly shrunk over the decades. Pelham was a place that

seemed endless to us, but the way we lived and played in Pelham was a dying way of life. Technology has forever altered what play looked like. Back in Pelham Circle I anxiously waited for quiet, but after moving, the absence of noise in our new home made me long for the kids' exclamations more than ever before.

Tdohasan Sunray's essay, written in Dr. Carney's class, won 2nd place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest.

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52. Critical Thinking Essay 1 - (contextual analysis) - "The American Contradiction"

ANGIE DANIELA BRICENO

The American Contradiction

In July 2013, President Barack Obama held a speech regarding the trial of George Zimmerman, a man who shot and killed Trayvon Martin, an African American teenager. As expected, many citizens, especially African American people, were showing their discontent: Zimmerman was declared not guilty of murder after following, in a vehicle, and shooting, allegedly in self-defense, an unarmed teenager. On top of this tragedy, while Zimmerman started being scrutinized by the media, school suspensions and evidence of traces of THC in Martin's body were brought up in order to vilify Martin. These events generated nationwide protests, making this case one of the most notorious and racially polarizing cases of the century, which would eventually lead to the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Obama, who did not usually speak about issues of race, decided to speak this time. Following his role as President, Obama neutrally addresses the issue. Besides offering his condolences and acknowledging the anger and discontent from the African American community, he remarks on the importance of focusing on the preventive actions that the country can carry out from this tragedy (Obama 298). As the first African-American president who comes from a middle-class family, Obama relates to the wide variety of daily situations in which the Black community is treated differently

and is even represented as a threat to white people. He recognizes going through similar experiences back in the day, such as being feared by women and hearing the car doors click while walking by (Obama 298). The Florida case is an example of this situation: Zimmerman noticed a person of color in his predominantly white neighborhood, and immediately called 911, referring to Martin as "a real suspicious guy" who "is up to no good," and taking that as a reason to follow the teenager even after the officer told him that he did not need to do that (Capehart). Obama accurately states "Somebody like Trayvon Martin was statistically more likely to be shot by a peer than he was by somebody else" (298). However, why was a Black teenager, wearing a hoodie and carrying skittles in his pocket, seen as a threat?

After slavery was abolished, most Black people were indeed condemned to segregation and poverty. *De facto* segregation is currently happening as a result of this legacy, and many African Americans are still trapped in neighborhoods characterized by crime, violence, lack of opportunities and low life expectancy (Krutz and Waskiewicz 156). As a result, people have, subconsciously, linked violence and crime with race. Racial bias is the outcome of the stereotype caused by the environment that was unfairly forced upon the African American community. In 2013, Black people represented almost twice the amount among the poor population than they did in the total U.S population (Gabe 6). Also, 38% of African American children were poor (Gabe 7). One of the suggestions made by Obama in his speech is to help African American children who, to change these racial issues, need to feel like they are a part of the society, and that they have multiple opportunities to succeed (299).

Racial bias has been a significant issue within the justice system. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery are just a few examples of Black people who have been murdered unjustifiably in the last two years due to the stereotype given to African Americans. As a first way to address the problem, Obama recommends training law enforcement to reduce the racial bias and professionalize their job to decrease the mistrust in the system (298). Lamentably, events

like the murder of George Floyd demonstrate that these tragedies are still occurring. Although Obama expresses that in this case, the justice system did its job, he recognizes that racial bias still operates in the application of criminal laws. Obama specifies the importance of the examination of state and local laws that can potentially motivate conflicts and calamities like the Martin case (299). As an example, Obama mentions the stand your ground laws, which authorize the use of deadly force in self-defense even if the person can avoid the situation. These laws also protect individuals from being convicted of homicide for shooting in self-defense, such as in the Florida case. It is worth wondering whether these laws are serving as a reason to get away with murder. Multiple studies revealed that after the implementation of Florida's stand your ground law both firearm homicide rates and overall homicide rates increased significantly, as well as justifiable and unlawful homicide rates ("Stand Your Ground"). Additionally, in the majority of these cases, the assailant could have avoided the confrontation, and in most of the cases, the person killed was unarmed ("Stand Your Ground").

Obama's speech properly addressed a situation that, to this day, is still active. African American communities have been marginalized, often represented as dangerous individuals, condemned to a lack of opportunities, poverty, segregation, and stereotyping, all ironically as a result of the historical abuses committed against them. Racial bias and disparities are a current problem in U.S. society, which is encouraged by laws like the stand your ground laws. Obama notes his faith in the youth, expressing that "kids these days, I think, have more sense than we did back then" (299). Although Obama believes that there has been progress on race issues, he supports the need to keep working on these. A significant part of human behavior is learned, therefore, setting an example is crucial for the nation to finally become a post-racial civilization. Obama's last recommendation is for people to do some soul-searching. Not all people are conscious of their bias, and to achieve a more equal and peaceful society, people need to ponder at what level the skin

color of a person affects their opinion or judgment about this individual. The adjustment of people's mindset along with the government's support and intervention in creating laws that promote peace among citizens and prevent any type of violence will confidently make the "more perfect union" that Obama wishes us to become.

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Angie Daniela Briceno's essay, written in Prof. Godwin's class, won first place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest.

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53. Critical Thinking Essay 2 - (cultural analysis) - "Critical Analysis of the Marvel Cinematic Universe"

GRACE MCMULLEN

Critical Analysis of the Marvel Cinematic Universe

The Marvel Cinematic Universe consists of the set of movies based on Marvel Comics characters and narratives. This sequence of movies started with the release of the first *Iron Man* film in 2008. Since then, there have been so many movies released that the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has grown to become a popular movie franchise. The MCU includes the expected action films but also movies with sad scenes, similar to the ones in *Avengers: Endgame*. The Marvel Cinematic Universe is one of the more popular movie franchises in the world today. When the movies come out a large number of fans will go and watch the movies. The franchise seems to make a great deal of money off these movies. They seem to know how to construct a movie that will captivate the audience and keep them on the edge of their seats. In this essay, I will be analyzing the MCU and how this franchise makes movies for the whole family.

This series of Marvel films is considered a “cinematic universe” because the movies are “set primarily in a shared universe designated as the reality Earth-199999 within Marvel’s multiverse

system, with some installments also set in adjacent or branching realities" ("Marvel Cinematic Universe"). The "shared universe" means the films are connected, and many of the same characters appear in multiple films. Most of these films are action type movies. The most recently released film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe is *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*.

Most MCU films feature characters who have already appeared in previous films in the franchise. But Adam B. Vary points out that "*Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* is something of an anomaly within the Marvel Cinematic Universe, in that when the title character makes his debut in theaters on Sept. 3 it will be with zero preamble from the world that's been established by Marvel's previous 24 features." Vary is voicing how he feels about the release of this new film which may seem disconnected from the franchise at first. *Shang-Chi* is a fairly newly released Marvel movie, but it already has quite a large amount of reviews on social media. The movie producers pay attention to the feedback of the public after seeing the movies, who may post about it on their social media accounts. This is what decides if they should release a sequel of the movie or develop a film for a popular character.

"In just a decade Marvel Studios has redefined the franchise movie," Spencer Harrison, Arne Carlsen, and Miha Škerlavaj assert. These reviewers point out just how successful the MCU franchise has been:

> Its 22 films have grossed some $17 billion—more than any other movie franchise in history. At the same time, they average an impressive 84% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes (the average for the 15 top-grossing franchises is 68%) and receive an average of 64 nominations and awards per movie. *Avengers: Endgame*, released in the spring, has won rave reviews and generated so much demand that online movie ticket retailers had to overhaul their systems to manage the number of requests. (Harrison et al.)

The number of positive reviews and awards nominations listed here

shows that these films do not just bring money into the production company, but also bring prestige. It's no surprise why they ended up deciding to continue their release of the Marvel films.

Marvel Studios is working full time to keep filming and producing their upcoming films and releasing them to theaters. The production team is made up of "the producers, writers, directors, concept artists, VFX artists, cast, and crew who brought [the MCU] to life" ("The Story of Marvel Studios"). But the production team is only one side of the story. There are plenty of Marvel fans who love the movies that Marvel Studios makes. These fans are excited to see the new Marvel movies trailers and films when they come out. The franchise would not be successful without the contributions of both the production team and the dedicated fans.

In conclusion, while there are a great number of movie critics in the world, there seem to be more movie fans to support the movies and the franchise. These are the fans that movie producers seem to look for after the movie is released to the public. The producers have a good understanding of what the fans like to see. The MCU is rapidly progressing through the phases of their plans. I decided to write about the Marvel Cinematic Universe to show my support for the MCU fans and production teams.

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Grace McMullen's essay, written in Dr. Carney's class, won 2nd place in this category in the 2021-2022 CU Write Essay Contest

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54. Critical Thinking Essay 3 - (textual analysis) - "Creative and Engaging: An Analysis of Manuel Muñoz's Essay"

GIDEON GISH

Creative and Engaging: An Analysis of Manuel Muñoz's Essay

We have all seen performances where the entertainers interact with their audience. Whether it is a comedian doing crowd work, or a musician at a concert bringing someone up on stage, it is a creative way to keep the audience engaged. In his essay "Leave Your Name at the Border," Manuel Muñoz keeps his audience engaged by communicating his point to the reader in different ways. From his perspective as a Mexican-American, Muñoz displays what it is like to live in America with a Mexican name and to speak Spanish. This essay, originally published in the New York Times, was written for an audience of ordinary people of all races and backgrounds. Throughout the essay, Muñoz communicates to readers the idea that American citizens who have Mexican names or speak Spanish are viewed with distrust by other American citizens. He suggests that this is because Spanish is perceived as the language of the illegal immigrant (Muñoz 90). He communicates this point by using a specific example, creative word choices, comparisons between his experiences in his hometown and at college, and comparisons of his family members.

Muñoz introduces his essay with a specific example, which catches the attention of the reader. He describes a Mexican woman who works as a gate attendant at the Fresno airport. As she announces a name over the loudspeaker, Eugenio Reyes, he notices that despite her ethnicity she pronounces an anglicized version of the name. In addition, he notes that she is trying to cover up her heritage by wearing "[makeup] that was several shades lighter than the rest of her skin" (Muñoz 90). He uses this example to display how Mexican-Americans feel the need to cover up their heritage and conform to more Anglo-American ways of life. He reasons that Mexican-Americans do this to avoid being viewed negatively by those around them. At the end of the essay Muñoz comes back to this situation once again, yet this time focuses on the customer, Eugenio Reyes. Although Muñoz never sees Reyes, he builds a mental image of this unseen figure based on his Spanish name, imagining him as an older Mexican man holding a cowboy hat (92-93). Muñoz later rebukes himself because this assumption of the man's identity based on his name is the same faulty way of thinking he is working to call out. He connects this interaction to his thesis by pondering the privilege difference between the gate agent and Eugenio Reyes. He concludes that she views herself as more successful based on her more "American" way of presenting herself. This example helps give readers a feel for how Mexican-Americans are pressured to conform to more Anglo-American ways of life.

In addition to the specific example of the airport, Muñoz also uses creative word choices to communicate his point in interesting ways. He describes how non Spanish-speaking Americans view the language negatively by saying: "Spanish was and still is viewed with suspicion: Always the language of the vilified illegal immigrant" (Muñoz 90). The phrase 'illegal immigrant' denotatively means only those who have immigrated into America illegally. However, Muñoz shows the connotative meaning of the phrase: any immigrant who has not conformed enough to fit in to American standards. One way he keeps his audience engaged is by stating ambiguous phrases, and letting the readers figure out the meanings for themselves. Even

though this is confusing for a reader who might not understand at first, this strategy helps the audience better interact with the text. One example of this strategy is when Muñoz describes how people usually pronounce his name, Manuel, incorrectly. He says, "I didn't have a Mexican name either: I was an instruction guide" (Muñoz 90). Instead of just telling the audience that people pronounce his name with a hard 'U' sound, he says it in a creative way. This gets readers thinking as they are forced to make the conclusions for themselves, finally figuring out that he is referring to the word "manual." Another example of this strategy occurs when he describes which of his family members speak Spanish and which ones cannot follow the Spanish conversations: "You can tell who falls into which group: Estella, Eric, Dubina, Melanie" (Muñoz 90). Again, instead of telling the reader which ones are in which category, he forces the readers to deduce the answer for themselves based on their names. It is a bit ironic that he has the reader assume someone's actions solely based on their Anglo or Spanish names, considering his overall message against making assumptions. Nevertheless, it is an effective strategy, which he pairs with creative word choices to better make his point by forcing the reader to interact with his essay.

Muñoz also contrasts two different environments in which he lived to help convey his point to the reader. One was his hometown of Dinuba, California, and the other was college on the East Coast. He showcases Dinuba as an example of what an environment should not look like for Mexican people like himself. He explains that in Dinuba everyone is reduced either to white or Mexican. He also makes it clear that Mexican names were rarely pronounced correctly by saying, "When you hear a Mexican name spoken in [this town], regardless of the speaker's background, it's no wonder that there's an 'English way of pronouncing it'" (Muñoz 90). He shows his frustration with the people in Dinuba by stating that it is difficult for him to hear his name said incorrectly (Muñoz 92). By doing so, he shows the audience that the environment in Dinuba is not respectful towards Mexican people. He compares that negative experience with a positive one: his college on the East

Coast. He presents the atmosphere at college as a considerate one for people with Mexican names. At college he interacts with people who say his name correctly for the first time, and if they do not, they quickly apologize and ask for his help with the pronunciation (Muñoz 92). Even though his experience there was positive, it is apparent that he still feels shame when it comes to his name and his culture: "I avoided meeting people because I didn't want to say my name, felt burdened by my own history" (Muñoz 92). He says this last to show the reader that even though some people may respect Mexican culture, Mexican-Americans still feel ashamed because many Americans view them in a negative way.

Muñoz recognizes this shame in his own family's Anglicization of the names of those close to him because of pressure to fit in to American culture. Despite his family's Mexican background, he is used to English names appearing more often: "I am not surprised to meet 5-year-old Brandon or Kaitlyn" (Muñoz 90). He goes on to explain that Americans look down on people with Spanish names. As an example, he describes the Anglicization of his Mexican stepfather's name; his name, Antonio, had been changed to Tony. Muñoz expresses that even though he did not welcome the change, his stepfather knew it would make his life in America easier if he did: "Becoming Tony gave him a measure of access as he struggled to learn English and get more fieldwork" (91). He shows the discrimination towards people of Mexican backgrounds by adding "Not changing put him at risk of being passed over for work" (Muñoz 91). Muñoz uses the examples of people in his family who feel pressure to change their name to a more English one as further evidence of the suspicion that Americans have towards people who have Spanish names.

Throughout his essay, Muñoz uses creative tools and examples to communicate that Mexican people are often looked down upon and even vilified by Americans because of their names and language. Overall, Muñoz's writing is creative and engaging. By making the readers think for themselves, Muñoz encourages deeper reflection

on his subject matter. The effective strategies he uses cause the readers to listen, evaluate, and better understand his ideas.

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Gideon Gish's critical thinking essay, written for Dr. Morris's class, won first place in its category in the 2022-2023 CU Write Essay Contest

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55. Critical Thinking Essay 4 - (compare and contrast) - "Janet Jackson vs. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter: Voices of a Generation of Minorities in America"

DEROIN MOTAH

Janet Jackson vs. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter: Voices of a Generation of Minorities in America

What does it take to become the voice of a generation in America? A multi-million-dollar record contract; a catalog of number-one hit records and albums spanning decades on the Billboard music charts; a trophy case full of Grammys, Black Entertainment Television (BET), and Music Television (MTV) Awards; or a front-page news headline exposing the latest celebrity scandal such as #Nipplegate or #ABillionDollarsOnAnElevator? Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, two reigning queens of American popular culture from the 1980s to the present day, have become the voices of a generation of minorities in America. The minorities they represent include feminists, the LGBTQ+ community, underprivileged black Americans (aka the “ghetto fabulous”), uneducated and poor Americans, and victims of hate crimes and racial profiling, to name

a few. To answer this question of what it takes to become the voice of a generation, one can compare the work of Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, similar yet different, and examine how each gives rise to the unheard voices and untold stories of minorities across America as they contribute to the Modern Civil Rights, LGTBQ+ Equal Rights, and Women's Rights Movements.

One need not look that far back in U.S. history to remember the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, black, brown, and transgendered (trans) Americans today are still fighting for equal rights in the modern civil rights movement. Comparing Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation 1814* album to Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's call for justice for George Floyd, one can identify similarities between the ways these artists call out socio-cultural and economic injustices prevalent in U.S. society. Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation 1814* album, released in 1989, begins with a pledge: "We are a nation with no geographic boundaries, bound together through our beliefs. We are like-minded individuals, sharing a common vision, pushing toward a world rid of color lines." *Rhythm Nation 1814* addressed homelessness, a growing crack cocaine epidemic, poverty, education, and gang violence killing the youth of America. In *The Atlantic*, Joseph Vogel references a 1990's *Rolling Stone* interview of Jackson by journalist David Ritz that said, "It was these voices, these struggles, these ongoing divides and injustices that Janet Jackson wanted to represent in Rhythm Nation 1814." "We have so little time to solve these problems," Janet Jackson told journalist Ritz (Vogel). She elaborated: "I want people to realize the urgency. I want to grab their attention. Music is my way of doing that" (Vogel). "I wanted to reflect, not just react," Jackson said in this interview (Vogel). "I re-listened to those artists who moved me most when I was younger," she explained, "Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell, Marvin Gaye. These were the people who woke me up to the responsibility of music. They were beautiful singers and writers who felt for others. They understood suffering" (Vogel). Pop stars, Jackson recognized, had unprecedented multimedia platforms. Like

the influential stars who inspired her in her youth, Jackson was determined to use her platform to do more than simply entertain.

In 2016, the Black Lives Matter Movement began demanding change from U.S. government officials in protest against the civil injustices caused by racial profiling, police brutality, and hundreds of unsolved murders of black and trans people by police and law enforcement authorities across America. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's call for justice for George Floyd via an Instagram post on 30 May 2020 responded to this moment of civil unrest. In an article published in *People Magazine*, journalist Georgia Slater reports on Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's personal video message in this Instagram post:

> We need justice for George Floyd. We all witnessed his murder in broad daylight. We can not normalize this pain. I'm not only speaking to people of color, if you're white, black, brown, or anything in between, I'm sure you feel hopeless about the racism going on in America right now. No more senseless killings of human beings. No more seeing people of color as less than human. We can no longer look away. George is all of our family and humanity. He is our family because he is a fellow American, and there have been too many times that we've seen these violent killings with no consequences. (Slater)

In this message, Beyoncé went on to acknowledge that , "Yes, someone's been charged, but justice is far from being achieved" (Slater). Like Janet Jackson before her, Beyoncé used her platform as a pop star to engage in important commentary on social justice. In reviewing these examples, one can compare how Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter use their passion for calling out social injustices through their music and social media platforms to vocalize the modern civil rights movement.

Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter embrace and express their compassion for their LGBTQ+ audiences by writing and producing record albums dedicated to their LGBTQ+ family, friends, and fans. Both stars also raise awareness for causes affecting the

LGBTQ+ community. In 1997, Janet Jackson released *The Velvet Rope* album, in which she dipped into LGBTQ+ themes for the first time. Janet Jackson interludes her hit single "Together Again" with "You don't have to hold onto the pain, to hold on to the memory," a reference to the millions of young men and women lost to the 1990s AIDS epidemic. In a 2020 article from the *South China Morning Post*, Andre Neverling identifies Jackson as a "Gay Icon" and "LGBTQ+ Ally." Neverling reiterates that "Janet's hit single "Together Again" was a homage to her gay dancers and friends who succumbed to the AIDS pandemic in the early 1990s. With a portion of the single's sales donated to The American Foundation for Aids Research (AMFAR), she was awarded Outstanding Music Album at the 9th Annual Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Media Awards in 1998 for her efforts." Through this song and her donation of the proceeds, Jackson provided both moral and material support to the LGBTQ+ community.

It's important to note that this level of support for the LGBTQ+ community was not common or mainstream in the 1990s. In an article from *The Reckoning* magazine, Darian Aaron points out that "In 1997, an album like The Velvet Rope, with its progressive content and lyrical plea for LGBTQ+ equality, was considered extremely risky for a black mainstream artist, but Jackson had just secured an $80 million contract renewal with Virgin Records and was in the driver's seat." Aaron also explains the importance of Jackson's action to her legacy and the future of pop music: "Power moves like this ultimately paved the way for other boundary-pushing projects from black artists like Beyoncé's *Lemonade* and Lil Nas X's *Montero*, two deeply personal and introspective albums. Janet Jackson's open support for LGBTQ+ people and those living with HIV through her music was a natural progression for an artist whose work reflected her life." Jackson's activism proved that it was possible and powerful to use the leverage of pop music stardom to make a positive impact for marginalized communities.

Like Janet Jackson, Beyoncé Knowles-Carter uses her platform to share her love for LGBTQ+ audiences and issues affecting the

LGBTQ+ community. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter begins her hit single "Formation" with the iconic sound clip of Messy Mya, a murdered black trans woman from New Orleans, placing a spotlight on the unsolved murder of Messy Mya in 2017. Writing for *The Advocate*, Reverend Irene Monroe explains the importance of this queer inclusion in Beyoncé's hit single:

> "Formation" is both a personal and political statement about repression and a celebration of black life in America.... As a meditation on the intersections of place, class, and gender identity, past and present, "Formation" is also unashamedly queer. That queerness is front and center—from its signature hypersexual "ass-shaking" gender-bending hip-hop music and dance form (reminiscent of "Bama's Prancing Elites"), appropriation of gay expressions, to the words of local hero Messy Mya and the genderqueer local voice of royal "Queen of Bounce" diva Big Freedia, who's heard speaking in the song. That's why their inclusion in Beyoncé's "Formation" was not a stretch but a shout-out. (Monroe)

Beyoncé Knowles-Carter also produced and dedicated her Renaissance album to her late gay uncle, who died of an AIDS-related illness. An article on Pridesource.com, titled "Why We're Not Surprised Beyoncé Has Lovingly Dedicated Her New Album to Her Late Gay Uncle," by Sarah Bricker Hunt quotes Beyoncé's album notes: "A big thank you to my Uncle Jonny. He was my godmother and the first person to expose me to a lot of the music and culture that served as inspiration for this album," she wrote. In these notes, Beyoncé made clear the importance of the queer community's contributions to American culture: "Thank you to all of the pioneers who originated culture, to all of the fallen angels whose contributions have gone unrecognized for far too long. This is a celebration for you" (qtd. in Hunt). In comparing the amount of love and support that Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter give to their LGBTQ+ audiences, one can identify the influence and impact of LGBTQ+ people in their lives. Both artists unapologetically

amplify the LGBTQ+ community's voice and pay homage to those lost to AIDS-related illnesses.

Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter have respectfully accepted or claimed the title of "modern feminists," setting their agenda by pushing for women's equal rights. Janet Jackson's music has been fighting for equality and sexual liberation since she announced she was "in Control" in 1986. In a *Fader* article from 2015, Aimee Cliff highlights Janet Jackson's struggles with sexism during her career: "It's an old story: female artists somehow get less credit for their own work than the men they work with and associate with. But Janet's breakthrough was an album called *Control*, which detailed her struggle to emancipate herself from her family and be the creative director of her own career. True to her word, she's had co-production and writing credits on every one of her albums since 1986." Cliff goes on to review how Jackson's music emphasized female agency and sexual empowerment:

> In 1993, [Jackson] announced herself as a sexual agent with the infectious single "If," fantasizing about all the things she'd like to do to a man; by 2001, on "Would You Mind," she was demanding oral sex and orgasms. On one of her most experimental albums, 1997's *The Velvet Rope*, she explored everything from bondage and masturbation to bisexuality and threesomes. Just like that, Janet proved that "control" can also mean empowered female sexuality. In one of her most close-to-the-bone records, Janet mimics the vicious cycle of an abusive relationship in the aggressive push-and-pull of her 1997 album track "What About," in which she demands to know, "What about the times you hit my face? / What about the times you kept on when I said no more, please?" Janet told MTV at the time, "I think it's important to let others know… that they're not alone and that you understand what they're going through and that they can make it through." (Cliff)

Jackson's lyrics, as well as her statements in interviews, clarify her approach to modern feminism: embracing sexual autonomy while

also being willing to stand up against abuse and stand in solidarity with other women in similar situations.

Comparably, Beyoncé Knowles Carter embodies modern feminism by becoming the biggest female pop star in the world while nurturing her marriage, mothering three children, and expressing her sexuality through music and live performances. In a *Time Magazine* article from 2015, Eliana Dockterman highlights the innovative feminist message of Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's self-titled fifth album, *Beyoncé*:

> She does something new on *Beyoncé* — a collection of music and videos. Men and love are a focus, but she reminds us that those songs are also about empowerment. There's even a spoken word passage in "Flawless" from Nigerian-born writer and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie that calls for young girls to "lean in" and be more than someone's wife. She sings about love and sex more boldly than ever, peppering those songs with messages about independence and motherhood.

This album was of course not the first time Beyoncé's music emphasized women's empowerment. One cannot forget Beyoncé Knowles Carter's role as the lead singer of Destiny's Child, the powerhouse girl group with number-one hit singles and anthems for women, including "Independent Women," "Survivor," "Bills, Bills, Bills," and "Girl." Through their music and message, both Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter have been paving the way and fighting for women's equal rights for decades.

When comparing Janet Jackson to Beyoncé Knowles-Carter as voices of a generation, one can associate both as powerhouse writers, producers, and mainstream artists with a history of defining, shaping, and vocalizing the untold stories of minorities in America. However, one cannot compare Janet Jackson to Beyoncé Knowles-Carter without acknowledging the struggles both artists faced as black female artists in their journeys to becoming the mega-celebrities of today. One does not become a top-selling U.S. recording artist without relating to and touching the soul of

America. The ability to express the pain of racial injustice, oppression, unfair treatment, ungiven acknowledgment, and losing loved ones to AIDS comes from first-hand experience. Janet Jackson and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter are embodiments of the voices of minorities in America.

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56. Rhetorical Analysis 1 - "Use of Rhetoric in Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Lecture"

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Use of Rhetoric in Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Lecture

"I am Malala. But I am also Shazia. I am Kainat. I am Kainat Soomro. I am Amina," Malala Yousafzai said at age 17 to a crowd at the event in which she and fellow children's education rights activist, Kailash Satyarthi, were named winners of the Nobel Peace Prize (Yousafzai). In a metaphorical and literal way, Malala Yousafzai is everyone she mentions as well as herself because she is their voice: a voice that amplifies individual children's thoughts to the world. The power of Yousafzai's voice is evident through her use of rhetorical devices such as anadiplosis, anastrophe, antithesis, aposiopesis, and anaphora. These devices uplift and bring fervor to her 2014 Nobel Peace Prize lecture Rhetorical devices are known for providing speeches with qualities that draw attention from the audience or reach them in a way speeches void of these techniques do not. The use of rhetoric comes from a background of developing strong speaking skills for the purpose of influence in civics. Following that, the art of rhetoric became a commonality among universities in the Medieval and Renaissance Ages ("Rhetoric"). People use rhetoric in both speaking and writing today for similar purposes. Yousafzai

achieves the greatness of her speech through her masterful use of rhetorical devices throughout it.

The occasion of Yousafzai's lecture is that of a Nobel Peace Prize acceptance ceremony. Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi were declared winners of the Nobel Peace Prize for "their [international] struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education" ("Malala Yousafzai – Facts"). Yousafzai delivered her lecture on the tenth of December 2014 at the Oslo City Hall, Norway. She was introduced by Thorbjörn Jagland, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee before prompted to begin her performance. The social climate was that characteristic of 2014. The attendees to the lecture included "members of the Norwegian royal family, and perhaps members of royal families from other countries, as well as those who have chosen her for the award," her family, friends, supporters, and teachers ("Audience"). Malala Yousafzai begins her address in the name of God, and addresses those granting her the prize: "Today is a day of great happiness for me. I am humbled" (Yousafzai). Emphasizing this feeling of being "humbled," she thanks those who have helped her to this moment, including a special note to her parents and teachers. Yousafzai recognizes that she has not received this award alone, but with Kailash Satyarthi. She says she is proud of what they have done, and what they vow to accomplish.

She uses her name as an icebreaker and proceeds to speak on who she is here for and why. In every corner of the world, education is a blessing and a necessity. Yousafzai explains how she and her friends got involved in their desire for education, believing they could do anything others thought only boys could, and how the ability to pursue that was revoked from them. In her speech, she emphasizes how this was a collective struggle: education has been denied to others; their home was a beautiful place, now reduced to a wasteland by war. Terrorists attacked her school bus, but their goal was ill achieved. Yousafzai and her brave sisters have not stopped learning or living. Facing these struggles, Yousafzai cites the Holy Quran to emphasize why injustice to some is a threat to the global

community, quoting the passage, “do you not know, if you kill one person, you kill a whole humanity?” (Yousafzai). In the same way, one person can stand up for all of humanity. Yousafzai made a choice. She chose to speak up rather than be silent. She and others could not stand by in the face of injustice. She represents these girls and children and their right to education. Why shouldn’t they have it?

Yousafzai points out that there have been many improvements already in education, then speaks on bureaucracy and demands further change in action for the bettering of quality worldwide education. She uses the rhetorical device of anadiplosis to emphasize that the struggle for education is ongoing. Anadiplosis is “the rhetorical repetition of one or several words; specifically, the repetition of a word that ends one clause at the beginning of the next” (“Glossary of Rhetorical Terms”). This device is used to link ideas together, and is described as when “the second clause starts with the same word which marks the end of the previous clause” (“Anadiplosis”). Yousafzai uses this rhetorical device when she states, “I will continue this fight until I see every child, every child — in school,” and also where she says, “And as I said we still see, we still see girls who have no freedom to go to school in the north of Nigeria” (Yousafzai). This form of repetition, using anadiplosis to link one clause to the next, emphasizes continuity over time. In doing so, Yousafzai shows the need for continued action in this cause.

Not much later in this Nobel Peace Prize lecture, Yousafzai uses anastrophe. Anastrophe, the transposition of normal word order, is important here because the speech is nearing its end (“Glossary of Rhetorical Terms”). She says, “Me. You. We. It is our duty” (Yousafzai). Yousafzai draws the audience’s attention through this uncommon word order. This technique has the potential to leave the listeners of her speech with a clear goal: to decide to act as Yousafzai and others have. Yousafzai’s distinct performance of this device, with pauses that imply the existence of full stops, catches the audience’s attention and prepares them to receive the unique delivery of her next sentence.

Yousafzai's bold use of antithesis in this next line emphasizes the next sentence's verbs: 'becoming' the first and 'letting' this be the last time. She declares, "Let us become the first generation that decides to be the last that sees empty classrooms, lost childhoods and wasted potentials" (Yousafzai). Antithesis is defined as "opposition, or contrast of ideas or words in a balanced or parallel construction" by the "Glossary of Rhetorical Terms" ("Glossary of Rhetorical Terms"). With a strong antonymic relationship, "first" and "last" are words that could hardly have more contrast. Yousafzai put a heavy emphasis on the end of her speech by using antithesis, and she goes on to use phrases with antithetical pairings such as 'girl or boy,' and 'begin this ending.' She continues with this pattern of pairings in phrases such as 'years ago' and 'soon,' along with "sisters and brothers, dear fellow children" (Yousafzai). With these numerous pairs of words using antithesis, Yousafzai puts emphasis on the end of her speech especially. With so many pairs of words representing the device called antithesis, most people who have listened to this lecture must have walked away with Yousafzai's final words lingering, resonating in their minds. Both antithesis and aposiopesis are devices that encourage a magnified response of empathy and sympathy to the speaker's cause of address, and encourage readers to notice the atmosphere this emphasis creates.

Aposiopesis is defined by the pausing or abrupt ellipses of or in speaking where the speaker is seemingly unable to continue due to the presence of passion ("Glossary of Rhetorical Terms"). Malala Yousafzai's speech includes many examples of this device. She says once, "I'm proud — that we can work together," and it is evident that in saying this she takes an aposiopesis pause which emphasizes her emotion. There is also aposiopesis when she says, "I want — there to be peace everywhere," in which case the pause both catches the listeners' attention and additionally demonstrates her passion for peace. Listeners may notice her use of aposiopesis again when she says "The first place this funding will go to is where my heart is, to build schools in Pakistan — especially in my home of Swat and Shangla," and when she speaks of officials who already incorporate

quality education into their kids lives but not the general public's. Both these uses of the technique call attention to her passion and care for her home and for her cause. As she begins her lecture's conclusion, she uses aposiopesis again, adding emotional pauses to her sequence of repeated phrases: "Let this be the last time — that... let this be the last time — that... let this be the last time — that . . . let this be the last time —" (Yousafzai). One may notice that there is another pattern in this section, a repeated phrase.

The name of this rhetorical device is anaphora. Anaphora, according to *Essential Literary Terms*, "is the intentional repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of successive lines, stanzas, sentences, or paragraphs" (Hamilton 69). This is not the subtle kind of repetition seen in other devices like assonance, so the "pleasure of recognition" may or may not be Yousafzai's purpose of using this device ("Assonance"). It most certainly does draw attention to the speaker and puts an emphasis on the words repeated. Yousafzai uses assonance at the very start of her lecture in giving thanks, thanking each individual or group beginning with the same, repetitious 'thank you to.' She utilizes it in the phrases, "it is for those . . . children," then using 'we,' and on another occasion 'we see.' The anaphora in the conclusion of her lecture, repeating "let this be the last time," emphasizes her call to action and helps make her claims more memorable to the listeners.

Yousafzai began her lecture with a sentence listing the many names of other children for whom she speaks; she returns to that message later in her speech, saying, "This award is not just for me — it is for those forgotten children who want education. It is for those frightened children — who want peace. It is for those voiceless children who want change" (Yousafzai). The way she states these sentences combines the emotional pauses of aposiopesis with the repeated words at the beginning of successive phrases of anaphora ("Anaphora"). Yousafzai reiterates her commitment to amplifying the voices of the voiceless when she says "I am here to stand up for their rights, to raise their voice" (Yousafzai). In this active sentence, she uses asyndeton, which is a lack of conjunctions between

coordinating phrases, clauses, or words. In this case asyndeton is utilized to place more emphasis on the verbs and objects of the sentence by removing the conjunction and its distracting continuance ("Glossary of Rhetorical Terms"). This shows that the main five rhetorical devices, anadiplosis, anastrophe, antithesis, aposiopesis, and assonance are not the only ones in this lecture. Yousafzai expertly combines careful rhetorical choices for the delivery of her passionate content to emphasize the purpose and impact of her lecture. To the listener, a considerable number of sections in this speech stand out from the others. The emphasis and efficacy of her Nobel Peace Prize lecture is in respective part due to the rhetorical devices Malala Yousafzai chose to use.

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57. Rhetorical Analysis 2 - "Limitations on Imagination"

ALLYSON TAYLOR

Limitations on Imagination

Stereotypes of women have existed since the beginning of time. The creation of movies and television has increased the likelihood of more women encountering such stereotypes in media, which limits their imagination. Deborah Ross, the author of "Escape from Wonderland: Disney and the Female Imagination," is an English Professor who teaches writing, literature, and humanities, but her primary focus of study is popular culture and more specifically the views of gender in popular culture. "Escape from Wonderland: Disney and the Female Imagination" portrays how Disney movies are limiting women's imagination by only showing one option for the heroine in Disney movies: the helpless maiden.

Disney movies are creating an environment for women that gives them the idea that they will never be happy unless they give into gender stereotypes. Forming this idea in a young girl's head is limiting their imagination because they only see one path to the future. As Ross points out, "The fact that many Disney movies implant seeds of guilt and fear to spring up along with children's developing imaginations is a serious problem" (61). This is the main reason why Ross created this article: she wanted to address and fix the problem of limits to the female imagination. Ross wants girls to know that they have more than just marriage to look forward to in life, that there is "more than one girl's story out there" (58). The sooner girls realize they can be whatever they put their minds to, the better lives they will create for themselves.

Ross builds on her argument that Disney movies are limiting female imagination by applying logic, credibility/ethics, and emotion; these strategies are the rhetorical appeals known as logos, ethos, and pathos. Ross builds upon logos by supporting her argument with the specific examples of three different Disney movies: "*Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, re-released 2001)" (54). She compares these films to an old novel created in 1759 called *The Female Quixote*, by comparing how women act in these Disney films to how the woman in *The Female Quixote* acts. Ross also deploys logos by analyzing well-chosen examples from the different movies she discusses. In one such example, Ross uses the logic of analogy to explain that "[Ariel] fantasizes about becoming human partly because… she is curious about a world she has only glimpsed… But that world interests her mainly because in it dwells a man who resembles a handsome statue she already adores" (57). This analysis of *The Little Mermaid* strengthens Ross's argument by showing why Ariel wants to have legs: for a man, not for herself. This line of reasoning is not only logical, but it also emphasizes Ross's overall argument that Disney movies problematically depict women as only living for men, not for themselves.

Ross's article has a strong impact on her readers because of her background; she specializes in popular culture and more commonly from the perspective of gender (53). Ross's experience with this topic shows her readers she knows what she is talking about, which displays credibility. Ross develops ethos not only through her scholarly expertise on the subject, but also in the way she uses quotes and information from the movies to acknowledge the opposing side of the argument. For instance, Ross points out how in the Disney version of this classic fairy tale "instead of making [Ariel] love the human because she loves a human, the movie has Ariel love a human mainly because she is already curious enough about his world to have collected a cave full of human souvenirs" (57). While this may sound like it gives more agency to Ariel than the non-Disney version, the ending is the same. Ariel is still trapped in

a marriage with a man instead of free to explore the human world. Yet again, Ross's argument proves how gender stereotypes in Disney films limit young girls' imaginations.

While Ross builds her argument on both logos and ethos, she emphasizes pathos more than the other rhetorical appeals by making the reader feel frightened in some ways, but also happy in others. Ross uses words like "attack," "burst," "lavish," and "dwindle" to create more emotional impact for the reader. Using the word "attack" in the sentence "Giroux's attack on Disney…" creates a more aggressive feeling for the reader than writing "Giroux confronts Disney…" which would have created a different tone for the audience (Ross 54). Another example of emotionally powerful diction is when Ross uses "lavish" in the sentence, "He provides lavish descriptions of the shore as well as the sea" (58). By using the word "lavish" she is creating a more exaggerated sense of beauty in the world, rather than putting "pretty descriptions," which does not create that sense of beauty the author wants to portray (Ross 58). Ross also uses imagery to create more emotion in the reader. For example, she writes,"[Ariel] is willing to spend all she has: her voice, her health, and eventually her life. She buys her new legs, from which blood oozes with every agonizing step, by letting the sea witch cut out her tongue" (Ross 57). This gruesome description of body horror creates an unpleasant feeling in her readers. Ross uses imagery not just to inspire fear and displeasure in the reader but also to provoke feelings of happiness. For instance, Ross uses florid description with more positive feelings when she describes how "Belle waltzes with her Prince around that gorgeous marble hall, the title tune welling up around them, one may see as well as feel that she's getting not just a husband, but more books than she can read in a lifetime, and a home as big and beautiful as her imagination" (61). Ross's appeal to pathos strengthens her argument because she was able to connect with her readers on an emotional level to persuade them to believe her side.

For all the strengths of her argument, there are also some weaknesses in Ross's rhetoric here. Ross makes the argument that

Disney is taking away female imagination, but she is also assuming that all girls who grew up watching Disney feel the same way because of how she feels now. She argues that "Neither age, divorce, nor parenthood has yet made me cynical enough to see the ending of [*Beauty and the Beast*] without a sob of satisfaction. But then Disney did begin training me to react in just that way from a very early age" (Ross 61). With this claim, Ross seems to be assuming all girls are experiencing the same outcome as her. However, this might not be the case. Ross's article also includes a few different logical fallacies, such as faulty causality, hasty generalization, and slippery slope. For instance, Ross uses hasty generalization when she states, "I have chosen to examine the way various elements of image, story, and dialogue interact to influence the valuation of imagination in three of Disney's girls' movies" (54). This is a hasty generalization because Ross is arguing that all Disney movies are bad even though she is only evaluating three Disney movies in her article. Readers are asked to generalize Ross's claim about these three films to the rest of the Disney catalog. An example of faulty causality would be Ross assuming that every girl feels the same way as her. Ross uses a slippery slope by implying that children watching Disney movies today will inevitably be led to believe they have one path in life in the future. While it's clear there are some problematic gender stereotypes in the Disney films, Ross's argument might be overstating the problems.

Even though there are some weaknesses to her argument, it is clear that Ross successfully builds upon ethos, pathos, and logos. Within those appeals, she uses diction, syntax, imagery, and facts to get her point across to the audience. She could have made this article more appealing to the reader by applying more imagery, so the reader would have been more engaged, but it's possible the constraints of the academic journal limited the length of her article. To strengthen her argument even more she could have included more examples of different Disney movies and how those specific movies affect female imagination. However, there are only so many examples that could be discussed in a ten page academic article.

With all that said, Ross wrote an article that holds its own and accomplishes her goal of analyzing how gender stereotypes in Disney movies can limit the imagination of young girls.

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58. Controversy Analysis 1 - "Sex Education in Schools"

LAUREN BUBEN

Sex Education in Schools

There is a lack of sex education in schools across the nation. This has caused great controversy over whether sex education has proven effective or if it should even be a part of a child's education curriculum in school. Sex education teaches kids what sex is, how to protect themselves, and what can come from having sex. Children today can be confused as to how to have safe sex and keep themselves healthy. One argument states that teenagers must be taught sex education in schools to eliminate the negative stigma of sex and to keep themselves safe and healthy. People supporting this argument claim that kids are not getting proper sex education in school. The other side claims that sex education encourages sexual activity or that parents should be the ones to teach their children about sex. To understand why there is so much controversy over sex education in schools, one should learn the history of sex education in schools.

Sex education was not originally set in place to teach people about how to have sex or prevent pregnancy, but rather to eliminate sexually transmitted diseases and infections, prostitution, masturbation, and to save oneself for marriage. This strategy highly discouraged sexual activity. Then, in the 1960s, the implementation of sex education in schools began to receive support. Later, in the 1980s, debates started to arise regarding if schools should be more descriptive in the education provided, "including information about contraception — and abstinence only programs" (Planned

Parenthood). This separated schools into two different types of sex education: comprehensive and abstinence-only. The newer, comprehensive version of sex education provided medically accurate information, while abstinence-only education taught from moral standards put upon students. In 1990, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) released guidelines and standards for proper sex education. Since the release of these guidelines, more schools have implemented non-abstinence-only education programs. Today, studies show that "a comprehensive approach to sex education promotes sexual health among young people by reducing sexual risk-taking behavior. The abstinence-only approach has not shown these results" (Planned Parenthood). Sex education has evolved immensely since the 20th century.

Sex education is quality instruction and learning on a wide range of topics relating to sex and sexuality; it also involves discussing principles and attitudes about those topics and acquiring the skills required to handle relationships and manage one's own sexual wellbeing. (Planned Parenthood). In 1975, the World Health Organization released a definition of sexual health. This states that "Sexual health is the integration of the somatic, emotional, intellectual, and social aspects of sexual being, in ways that are positively enriching and that enhance personality, communication, and love" (Planned Parenthood). This helped to trigger the beginning of comprehensive sex education. Soon after this was published, some schools began to teach their students about living a healthy sex life.

Some individuals that believe abstinence-only education is the best form of sex education. Many people that share this viewpoint also agree with the fact that parents should teach their own children about sex. Many people, "particularly parents and religious groups, take issue with comprehensive sex ed because they believe it goes against their cultural or religious values, and think that it can have a corrupting influence on kids" (Farrar). This argument assumes that

comprehensive, detailed programs could encourage kids to engage in sexual activities.

The other standpoint in the sex education debate holds that comprehensive and accurate sex education that gives a total understanding of sex and sexuality will keep kids healthy and aware. People who support this viewpoint have provided evidence that comprehensive sexual education can "reduce teen pregnancies, delay when teens become sexually active and reduce the number of sexual partners teens have" (Farrar). Today, many individuals that support this viewpoint share the idea that sex education should include information about LGBTQ+ sex, abortion, consent, and gender identity. In modern society, this standpoint is heavily supported. Proponents of this standpoint strongly disagree with abstinence-only education and claim that it leaves children clueless as to how to have safe sex and keep themselves healthy.

There are many advantages and disadvantages to abstinence-only education. Abstinence *is* the most effective contraception. Abstinence-only education is put in effect mostly to encourage children to follow good morals. Instead of overwhelming kids with options for safe sex, "Abstinence education proponents seek consistency when it comes to an adolescent's health and well-being" ("Abstinence Education"). However, this type of education fails to provide enough information for kids to make proper decisions about sex. Religion is an unavoidable aspect when talking about sex education. Many people agree that "teaching chastity in the classroom for moral reasons is a violation of the separation of church and state" ("Abstinence Education"). The greatest complaint of abstinence-only education is that it is simply unrealistic. To expect every kid to save themselves until marriage is not probable. According to the National Survey of Family Growth from 2006 to 2008, 13% of teenagers have had sex with another person by the age of 15, and a higher majority of people initiating intercourse in their late adolescent years ("Abstinence Education"). Abstinence-only education might have some benefits, but it also has many problems.

Comprehensive sex education also provides numerous advantages and disadvantages for children. Comprehensive sex education provides real, accurate information for students to make their own decisions about their sex life and teaches kids to become comfortable with their own bodies. This approach primarily focuses on sexual health and how to keep oneself healthy. According to David Mandigo, "Many sex-ed programs include discussion of various types of contraception including condoms used to prevent STDs and offer lower pregnancy risks" (Mandigo). It delivers reduced teen pregnancy rates because it also educates kids about both male and female contraceptives. On the other hand, comprehensive sex education can be seen as an attack on someone's religious beliefs. Often, sex education "goes against an individual's morals and beliefs. Also, most schools do not teach 'abstinence'. Instead, they focus on having safe intercourse, which many religions and family values object before marriage" (Mandigo). Finally, in many cases, the people that teach sex education are not qualified to do so. It is not uncommon to find physical education teachers assigned to teach their students sex education. The best people to teach sex education are nurses and doctors. Overall, comprehensive sex education has many advantages and disadvantages, especially regarding the religious beliefs of students.

The lack of proper sexual education in schools has caused lots of controversy attempting to figure out which approach to sex education is effective or if sex education should even be a part of school curriculum. In the past, sex education discouraged sex before marriage and was mostly to teach about keeping oneself healthy. One side of the argument claims that sex education is morally wrong and that it should be expected that children wait until marriage to have sex. The other viewpoint states that teenagers must be taught proper sex education in order to keep themselves healthy and to explore their options. The support for comprehensive sex education is much higher than the support for abstinence-only education. This controversy has been an issue in

America for hundreds of years and will surely continue into the future.

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Lauren Buben's essay, written in Prof. Hurst's class, won first place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest.

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59. Controversy Analysis 2 - "Compulsory Military Service in the United States"

ZANDEN DYKE

Compulsory Military Service in the United States

The purpose of the United States military is to protect the security and interests of the nation (United States, Department of Defense). The U.S. military currently relies on voluntary enlistment to maintain its population. Conversely, many countries around the world employ the method of compulsory military service, also known as conscription, in order to consistently populate their armed forces. The details of compulsory military service can vary depending on the country; however, the concept of compulsory military service is that all able-bodied citizens of the country will be required to serve in the military for a certain amount of time after turning 18. Although the United States has experienced conscription in times of war, it has never been permanent like it is in China where the law states that is mandatory to perform military service (People's Republic of China). The question is: Should military service in the United States be compulsory?

It is no surprise that a topic such as compulsory military service is controversial because it has the potential to affect the lives of nearly every U.S. citizen in some way. Most of the controversy caused by this topic comes from two main disagreements: whether or not it is logical, and whether or not it is

constitutional. There are not two distinct sides to this argument. In fact, there are likely countless opinions on the matter, but it would be impractical—regardless of the length of this paper—to attempt to cover every single possible opinion. The most noteworthy stakeholders of this controversy include the general public (which can be divided into at least two sides) and the U.S. government.

The portion of the general population that is in favor of compulsory military service in the United States argue that not only is it constitutional, but it would be beneficial to the entire nation. The claim that conscription is constitutional can be supported by the statement: "The Congress shall have Power…. To raise and support Armies" (*Constitution*). It can be argued that since Congress has the power "to raise and support armies," they have the power to mandate military service. Additionally, some people claim that the benefits of compulsory military service outweigh the disadvantages. For example, advocates of conscription claim that it would ensure the protection of the nation by guaranteeing that the amount of people in the military is consistently adequate to defend against threats of any kind. Along with serving the best interests of the nation as a whole, compulsory military service could benefit U.S. citizens individually by increasing fitness and discipline.

The portion of the general population that is against compulsory military service argue nearly the exact opposite as those in favor of it. Opponents argue that not only is conscription unconstitutional, but it would also cause more harm than good. This side argues that conscription is unconstitutional due to the statement: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude… shall exist within the United States" (*Constitution*). Those against compulsory military service point in particular to the term "involuntary servitude" to make their argument that conscription violates the Constitution. Moreover, they claim that compulsory military service could actually hurt the United States through issues such as economic loss and disruptions in education and career paths. Considering that people would lose roughly two years—which is about the typical amount of time for mandatory military

service—due to conscription, the economy would suffer the losses of two years of economic contributions per person. Similarly, conscription could put people into a position where their education or career path is interrupted due to loss of time and availability. Both of these things have the potential to harm not only the current state of the nation, but its future as well.

The government—although not completely unified on an argument—has suggested that compulsory military service does not violate the Constitution. In the year 1917, the Supreme Court ruled that the draft, or conscription, was constitutional:

> The law imposes neither slavery nor involuntary servitude. The Thirteenth Amendment was intended to abolish only the well-known forms of slavery and involuntary servitude akin thereto, and not to destroy the power of the Government to compel a citizen to render public service. (White and Supreme Court).

Although this Supreme Court ruling took place when conscription was being considered during a time of war, the government could still argue that this ruling assures that conscription can be justified as constitutional.

In short, due to strong arguments from the opposing sides of the debate, the topic of compulsory military service in the United States will likely remain controversial for a long time. Whether or not conscription is constitutional can be argued both ways. Regardless of future Supreme Court rulings, it is unlikely that people will ever be willing to agree on the matter. Personally, I believe that based on the words of the Constitution and the ruling of the Supreme Court, compulsory military service does not violate the Constitution. However, I also believe that considering the educational and economic loss that would likely be suffered, it would be in the best interest of the nation for the military to remain as an all-volunteer force until it is absolutely necessary that military service be made compulsory.

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Zanden Dyke's essay, written in Dr. Tyrrell's class, won 2nd place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest.

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60. Annotated Bibliography 1 - The American Dream

EMMA ENGLEFIELD

To view this annotated bibliography as properly formatted, download the PDF: PDF Example Annotated Bibliography – Englefield

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Annotated Bibliography

Del Cid, Jessica. *The American Dream: An Illusion or Reality for Latino Immigrants*. 2011, Liberty University Senior Thesis. *Liberty University Research Digital Commons*, digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1238&context=honors.

This report over the American Dream for Latino Immigrants contains first-hand accounts of what the transition from Mexico to The United States is truly like. Jessica Del Cid interviewed several Latino immigrants as well as several American citizens in order to research whether the American Dream is an illusion or a reality for newcomers. Her research purpose was to comprehend the immigrant view of beliefs and experiences of the American Dream, and then compare it to some American citizens' perspectives. Research included asking the individuals about their job, their feelings, and different aspects of their idea of the American Dream. When she obtained the information she was searching for, she used it to reach a conclusion on the attainability of the American Dream

for Latino immigrants. Although this report was written in 2011, the issue of reaching the American Dream still exists for Latino immigrants. The content of the article directly supports my argument because it illustrates the skewed image of the American Dream in the eyes of immigrants. As an Honors Program graduate of Liberty University, Jessica Del Cid wrote this senior thesis keeping her research professional and credible; even though the author was a student at the time, her research is still valid and well-supported. Information shared by Del Cid is accurate as it matches up with her reference page that she included. I plan on utilizing some of the author's main points to support my argument, especially the first-hand details of immigrants' feelings about the American Dream. Accounts that she obtained from these immigrants are still accurate and they give a developed background as to where their opinions may have come from. From the interviews, Del Cid concluded that "migration is not always easy or legal due to the exclusive immigration laws of the U.S. and the lack of opportunity for certain countries to obtain legal access" (5). In conclusion, this article will help me in building my assertion on how Latino immigrants feel about pursuing the American Dream.

Levitz, Eric. "These 3 Policy Failures Are Killing the American Dream." *Intelligencer*, Vox Media, LLC., 7 Oct. 2019, nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/10/these-3-policy-failures-are-killing-the-american-dream.html.

In this account of the factors that are "killing the American Dream", Eric Levitz emphasizes three major reasons as to why the American Dream is faltering (1). The three main policy failures that he highlights are falling wages, rising costs of housing, health care, and education, and outdated social-welfare institutions. Levitz's purpose is to explain to readers how the American Dream is being affected by governmental and economic factors. Levitz is an Associate Editor for *the Intelligencer*, a vertical of *New York Magazine*, which itself is a well-respected source. He has written several articles about tumultuous topics relating to this one, which

demonstrates his expertise on the subject. Written in 2019, this article presents accurate and up-to-date information about the current policies in America. This editorial supports my argument because it points out aspects that prevent an individual from attaining the American Dream. The source's purpose is evident: to list failures at the fault of the government and other political powers that are "killing the American Dream." In my argument, I will use the three main failures outlined in this article in order to provide more support for elements that I include about the government laws and regulations. While reading through Levitz's account, it was clear that the American Dream's lack of attainability is "due to our central government's exceptional refusal to combat rent-seeking in the medical sector through price controls" (6). This article will be beneficial to supporting my assertion about the inaccessibility of the American Dream.

Just, Aida, and Christopher J Anderson. "Dual Allegiances? Immigrants' Attitudes Toward Immigration." *London School of Economics Research Online*, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015, eprints.lse.ac.uk/101876/1/Dual_Allegiances_JoP_for_LSERO.pdf.

This thorough report over immigrant attitudes includes three hypotheses and a great deal of research on the temperament of immigrants throughout their entire journey of migration. These two scholars monitored and evaluated immigrants' attitudes from the initial decision to migrate, to packing up and making the move, to settling down and making a living in their newfound home. Additionally, they asked individuals about their personal experiences in their migration process. Published in 2015, the attitudes of immigrants about migrating have generally stayed the same, so I can consider this source recent and accurate. I view this source as a great support to my argument because it discusses immigrants' perspectives on migration, which is a close match to my research question that I developed. Both authors are credible because they are both professors of subjects related to immigration

matters. Moreover, Chris Anderson has taught in another country, so he has a substantial amount of experience with moving between different cultures. All the information that Aida Just and Chris Anderson obtained from their research is accurate, and it is supported by an abundance of references. The fundamental goal of their report is "to contribute to research on political incorporation and public opinion on immigration in several ways" (4). A research article like this will provide me with adequate information and points that can be made about the picture that America paints for immigrants. By utilizing the results from this research about immigrants' attitudes, my argument will be made stronger because it will be directly answering the question of whether or not the governmental legislations skew the image of the American Dream in the eyes of immigrants.

Lopez, Mark Hugo, et al. "Most Latinos Believe in the American Dream but Say It's Hard to Reach." *Pew Research Center*, 27 July 2020, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/11/latinos-are-more-likely-to-believe-in-the-american-dream-but-most-say-it-is-hard-to-achieve/.

Written by Mark Lopez, Ana Gonzales-Barrera, and Jens Krogstad, this report gives insight to the difficulties that Latino immigrants face when hoping to achieve the American Dream. There is a decent amount of numerical evidence and examples of what the standard of living is for these immigrants. Graphics are included throughout the article that provide visuals about the belief in the American Dream and reaching the American Dream. A primary point that the report aims to cover is that Latino immigrants travel to America in order to achieve a desired standard of living, but often find it challenging to accomplish that goal. Some of the achievements that Latinos migrate to America for are "being a good parent,...provid[ing] for their family,...owning a home,...having a successful marriage,...and being successful in a high-paying career or profession" (4). The writers of this article have strong credibility when it comes to this topic because Mark Hugo Lopez is the Director of Hispanic

Research and has written several other accounts over Hispanic attitudes and opinions. Ana Gonzales-Barrera and Jens Krogstad are two of his colleagues who are senior writers and editors at the same research institution as Lopez, which is generally a well-respected source. All three scholars wrote the column in 2018 and included the statistics from 2016. Circumstances have most likely fluctuated over the years between then and now but are probably more or less the same, so I can consider this information recent and accurate. Statistical evidence of the achievement and non-achievement of the American Dream directly supports my argument that I am trying to convey. Incorporating this piece into my argument will help in proving that the American Dream is more difficult to achieve for individuals that are not citizens of America, and that individuals find it hard enough getting to America in the first place. Evaluating how easily or difficult goals are reached will assist my assertion of how the American Dream is perceived in the eyes of migrants.

Stoll, David. "Which American Dream Do You Mean?" *Society*, vol. 46, 7 July 2009, pp. 398-402. link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12115-009-9245-2.

This article written by Professor David Stoll of Middlebury College conveys that the idea of the American Dream to immigrants can easily be skewed due to political aspects that they are unaware of. He explains that there is a "long conversation" that needs to be held with different immigratory countries about the Dream itself (2). Stoll fills the article with viewpoints of foreigners that have the desire to migrate because they "want to come to the U.S." to "[earn] higher wages here than they can at home" (2). Additionally, he includes four alternatives of "moral community" that may solve the issue of immigrants not realizing their illegal status that they are bound to have in America. Above all, Stoll emphasizes what the American Dream will mean for immigrants. This article points out that an idea in most immigrants' minds is that "no matter how poor you start out; you can build a better life for yourself and your children" (5). David Stoll is well versed in this topic as he

teaches Anthropology at Middlebury College in Vermont. He is also the author of a couple books that relate to the same matter as the article, so he clearly has expertise in the subject. The article was published in 2009, but the ideas presented are still relevant to the circumstances that hold today. Support is evident as opinions of immigrants are discussed throughout the passage. References provided prove to be accurate and verifiable to the content. The article provides numerous examples of perspectives of the American Dream from immigrants that have potential to be skewed by the U.S government, which will provide accurate support to what I am arguing. By comparing expectation to reality and evaluating what immigrants expected versus what immigrants experienced, I can prove my main point about the ways the "American Dream" can be misleading.

Emma Englefield's annotated bibliography, written in Dr. Schneider's class, won first place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest.

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61. Annotated Bibliography 2 - "Are Serial Killers Born or Created?"

SCOTLYN KOEHLER

What does this annotated bibliography look like when formatted as a document? Download the PDF to see: PDF Example Annotated Bibliography – Koehler – Serial Killers – 2

Are serial killers born or created?

Knight, Zelda G. "Some Thoughts on the Psychological Roots of the Behavior of Serial Killers as Narcissists: An Object Relations Perspective." *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, vol. 34, no. 10, Dec. 2006, pp. 1189–1206. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.2224/sbp.2006.34.10.1189.

The article talks about the different psychological reasoning behind certain behaviors of serial killers. It explains the main characteristics of sexually motivated serial killers. The author explores the relationship between "pathological" and "destructive" narcissism as well as the psychological roots and the behaviors of male serial killers, explaining how early developmental deficiencies, childhood abuse, sexual sadism, and fantasies contribute to the development of serial killers.

This article is useful because it gives examples of environmental factors that may push someone to become a serial killer. It provides insight into the family-dynamic

aspects of creating a serial killer, which is one of the points I want to talk about. The author elaborates on the sexual abuse that often happens to people who become serial killers, ultimately supporting my stance that they are created, not born.

The author, Zelda Knight, is a professor of Psychology at the University of Johannesburg. She has a PhD in Psychology and is a registered counseling psychologist. She is the vice president of the World Council for psychotherapy African chapter as well as a member of the 'International Association for Psychoanalytic and Self Psychology.' She is a credible source because of her numerous qualifications and years of experience in the Psychology field. This article appears in a peer reviewed academic journal, which makes it a reliable source.

Miller, Laurence. "Serial Killers: I. Subtypes, Patterns, and Motives." *Aggression & Violent Behavior*, vol. 19, no. 1, Jan. 2014, pp. 1–11. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1016/j.avb.2013.11.002.

This article explores the history and behavioral patterns of serial killers, examining the definition, description, and characteristics of a serial killer in detail. The author classifies various subtypes of serial killers and assesses the different categories found by researchers. The article also discusses the context of special populations of serial killers such as sadist-masochists, females, couples, and professionals.

This source would be beneficial to my essay because it elaborates on the effects of physical and mental abuse on children who eventually become serial killers. One of my supporting paragraphs talks about trauma, and this would be beneficial to explaining my stance. The author explores different patterns that form the dynamic of a serial killer; the helpful insight that is provided throughout this article will help my argument.

The article is in a peer-reviewed academic journal. The author is Laurence Miller, a university professor with a PhD

in psychology. He has been practicing psychology for 25 years, specializing in psychotherapy, neuropsychology, and business psychology. He has written several books and has over 200 publications related to psychology. His level and years of experience make him a credible author who provides reliable information.

Pakhomou, Serge-Moses. "Serial Killers: Offender's Relationship to the Victim and Selected Demographics." *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, vol. 6, no. 4, Winter 2004, pp. 219–233. EBSCO*host*, doi:10.1350/ijps.6.4.219.54138.

This article deals with the current generalization of serial killers as white males between twenty and thirty years old. It follows a study of 21 serial killers to test the hypothesis of the generalization, thoroughly discussing statistical data relating to the serial killer demographic and particular groups within it. The article explores offenders' relationship to their victims through prior experiences such as marital status, education, military service, psychiatric diagnosis, and prior criminal charges.

The article also discusses the role parents play in a child's life: this is a point I want to use to support my argument that serial killers are made, not born. This study asserts that absent or divorced parents play a part in the emergence of a serial killer; the relationship with their parents has a significant effect on children during their developmental stages. This information clarifies a powerful subpoint that can be used to aid my argument.

Serge-Moses Pakhomou is involved in the 'research in violent behavior' program at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. According to his bio, he specializes in the methodology of mental activity, competency, and crimes of sexual motivation (Pakhomou 219). This academic journal article has been peer-reviewed and revised by other scholars in the same profession. The author's qualifications, along

with the fact the article was reviewed by other professionals, makes this a reliable source.

Spence, Sean. "Bad or Mad?" *New Scientist*, vol. 181, no. 2439, Mar. 2004, pp. 38–41. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx direct=true&db=aph&AN=12648026&site=ehost-live.

This article discusses how neuroscience is being used to examine different functions of the brain that do not work properly in severely antisocial people. The frontal cortex of the brain shows low activity in impulsive killers; however, in serial killers it does not. This study asserts that the defect lies in the amygdala in serial killers, which is the region of the brain that processes emotional cues.

I plan on using this source as a counterargument. The author talks about how serial killers have brain issues that play a role in their impulses to kill. This article presents a stance in viewing the possibility that serial killers are people who have natural problems that cause them to act in violence. However, this is a weak concept that I will be able to argue against to further prove my point that serial killers are created, not born.

Sean Spence is a Professor of General Adult Psychiatry. His main research focus is on neuroscience and exploring different regions of the brain. He is the author of several books and research articles that deal with these topics, showing that he is an expert on the subject. *New Scientist* is a periodical with good quality controls and a reputation for trustworthiness, making this a credible source.

Ürmösné Simon, Gabriella. "The portrayal and the attributes of serial killers and some of the most notorious ones." *Internal Security*, vol. 10, 2018, pp. 1-12.

This article discusses the general attributes, key traits, and clusters of serial killers, examining core classifications of organized and disorganized serial killers. The author examines the evolutionary aspects of some of the most notorious serial killers, explaining how elements such as

childhood trauma, superiority, humiliation, neglect, and family history can be crucial factors in the development of a serial killer.

I anticipate using this source in one of my body paragraphs. It talks about how, if a child is bullied for their appearance or a disability, it could push them into becoming a serial killer later in life. One of my main points is how early childhood environment shapes a future serial killer and this is a perfect example of that.

This source is from an academic journal and the author, Gabriella Ürmösné, has a PhD in Linguistics. She attends the National University of Public Service in Budapest and is the Head of Department of Foreign and Technical Languages. She is a part of the Law Enforcement Faculty and an assistant professor. The credentials of the author support that her article is a reliable source.

Scotlyn Koehler's annotated bibliography, written in Dr. Tyrrell's class, won 2nd place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest.

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62. Research-Supported Argument 1 - "Paper or Plastic? Neither."

AUBREY HEWITT

Paper or Plastic? Neither.

It has become increasingly obvious over the years that the world has a plastic problem. There is plastic floating in the ocean, layering the ground, and even drifting through the sky. These plastics are polluting the environment, essentially destroying habitats for an abundance of animals and humans. This pollution is often blamed on the retail plastic bag. Plastic bags are commonly used and easily spotted among the litter. It is no wonder these bags have earned a poor reputation. Plastic bags contribute to environmental problems, yet some believe plastic bags should remain a common practice in American stores.

After all, the typical single-use plastic bag may not be the biggest contributor to plastic pollution. There is no actual way to find how much of the litter is a particular type of trash; however, many of the statistics out there are found using unreliable methods. For example, the California Coastal Commission said plastic bags were making up 3.8-8 percent of the litter on beaches, but this data was “collected by volunteers on one day each year, and is not a scientific assessment” (qtd. in Mangu-Ward). More reliable numbers come in the form of “the 2009 Keep America Beautiful Survey… [which] shows that all plastic bags, of which plastic retail bags are only a subset, are just 0.6 percent of visible litter nationwide”

(Mangu-Ward). Of course, these numbers are still up for discussion, but it is clear that plastic bags only make up a small portion of litter.

These people also argue that, as unlikely as it seems, reusable or alternative grocery bags may leave a bigger environmental footprint in production than the average plastic bag. While it takes resources to make anything, the free plastic bags in stores take less to make than a paper bag, a plastic reusable bag, and a cotton tote bag. To offset the environmental impact of each of these types of bags, they must be used and re-used quite a lot. Take paper bags and plastic reusable bags, for example: they have to be used between thirty-four and eighty-four times before their impact cancels out to the same as a traditional plastic bag (Funk). Unsurprisingly, cotton bags are worse. They must be used at least 7,100 times to offset their impact (Funk). If the cotton is organic, then the number shoots up to 20,000 re-uses (Funk). While reusable bags have their appeal, they may not be the best option for many people. If they are not used enough, they are not worthy competitors to the plastic bag in terms of their production's impact on the environment.

All in all, plastic bags may not be the Earth's arch-nemesis like previously thought. They serve their purpose as the strongest, thinnest, and cheapest option at the supermarket (Mangu-Ward). When choosing between paper and plastic, the latter may seem the best at face value; however, how they are used after leaving the store is the big issue. Plastic bags may make up a small portion of the planet's pollution, but they are still polluting it. In the same way, plastic bags may take less from the environment to make, but they remain to be the worst option for the environment when they are no longer in service. When examining the long-lasting effects of plastic bags on the environment, I believe they should be banned from use in stores.

For starters, plastic bags do not really decompose once discarded. Plastics are known to be extremely difficult to get rid of once they are made. Once discarded, they "degrade at a very slow pace in any given environment" (Akan). In addition, what does

degrade often produces toxic remains (Akan). This is alarming when "more than 380 billion plastic bags are used in the U.S. each year" (Bednar 22). On top of all of this, most of these bags either cannot be recycled through traditional means or will not even be considered for recycling by their consumers (Funk). This means nearly every single one of those billions of bags still exist either in use, in landfills, or in the large amount of trash that litters Earth. That is a lot of harmful material to leave sitting on the planet. There is no way to win here. All these bags are being made for single-use purposes, and there is no way to truly dispose of them. On the other hand, reusable bags are designed for prolonged use, so they remain useful longer than normal plastic bags. This creates less demand for bags, so they will make fewer bags in the first place– meaning they take less from the environment. Then, once these bags are used beyond repair, the environmentally friendly materials would not be nearly as bad going back into the environment. But there are still more issues with plastic bags beyond their poor decomposition.

In addition to taking a long time to decay, plastic bags pose a great threat to life. With the sheer amount of plastic waste in the environment, it is no surprise that it is affecting animals. There are many ways these bags can be harmful. For example, plastic bags can be responsible for "choking the animal," "artificially filling the stomach so that the animal cannot consume food," "infecting them with harmful toxins," and "entangling the animal, leading to choking, cuts, and even restricting growth" ("About the Bag…"). They are also seen smothering coral and plants they become entangled with ("About the Bag…"). Not only do these plastic bags harm wildlife, but they are also dangerous to humans. Plastic bags are the culprit of many accidental suffocations. Because of their nature, plastic bags can easily become trapped over the nose and mouth of children. Unfortunately, a lot of these incidents lead to death. Out of 471 child suffocation cases observed in California, 109 cases, or twenty-three percent of them were caused by plastic bags (Kraus 234). This is a sad reality: one of the most used conveniences of modern life is so heavily connected with death, not only of ecosystems and of wildlife

but of children, too. If plastic bags were not so commonplace in American homes, deaths like these would not be either.

Now, it is impractical to assume everyone can switch to reusable bags, but there was a time before plastic bags and there will be a time after them. The good news is– reusable bags can be anything. Any bag can carry groceries and other goods, not just the ones being sold at supermarket registers. In fact, to ensure the problem is truly solved, people should use the bags they already have or buy bags second-hand (Funk). There is no point in buying new ones when there are already so many bags in the world. Beyond bags, there are so many things out there that can carry things out of stores. Boxes, buckets, and baskets are just a few examples of the many household items that can be used instead of single-use plastic bags. One last solution is to simply say no to a bag. If the purchase is only a few items, then they can be carried in hand rather than wasting a plastic bag. There are many ways to substitute plastic bags if banned.

Regardless of whether plastic bags are bad, one thing is for certain: a cleaner Earth is a good thing. There are no downsides to being a more environmentally conscious person. At the end of the day, any effort made to make the world a better place makes the world a better place. After all, if preventing all plastics will not save the world, at least some plastics were prevented. There are no outright bad reasons to be good to the Earth. Even if one day everything that is known about plastic's influence on the environment is proven to be false, at least the world became a cleaner place all the while. Banning plastic bags can finally be the beginning of a clean plastic-free planet once again.

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Aubrey Hewitt's Rogerian Argument, written in Dr. Liu's class, won first place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest.

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63. Research-Supported Argument 2 - "Teaching the Next Generation"

SARAH NICOLE BASHAW

Teaching the Next Generation

Parents and teachers are responsible for leading the next generation of humanity. Raising children involves punishment and redirection of behavior, which sometimes includes the widely debated topic of corporal punishment. Most states have outlawed the use of corporal punishment in schools, yet several still permit this practice. Louisiana house bill 324 was recently rejected in court (Hilburn). This bill proposed a ban on corporal punishment in Louisiana public schools. Evidence condemning the use of physical punishment methods was presented, including research supported by reputable organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as the American Psychological Association (Larzelere 7). It is important to consider how physical punishment impacts children across their lifetime. My family lives in a state that allows corporal punishment, and my own children could be subjected to it. Corporal punishment should not be considered acceptable in the school setting.

Parents are the first to determine how to redirect their children, and many consider corporal punishment necessary. It is important to recognize that corporal punishment has the potential to have a negative impact. In an article that opposes corporal punishment, Elizabeth Gershoff states that if parents hope that corporal punishment can provide positive responses in behavior,

one must also consider a possibility of negative or neutral outcomes (Gershoff 628). Gershoff supports this by citing studies of children who are subject to corporal punishment, in which 71% showed statistically significant negative outcomes (Gershoff 629). Gershoff explains how corporal punishment can negatively impact children:

> Spanking has been significantly correlated with the following child outcomes, almost all in a detrimental direction: lower long-term compliance; more aggression; more behavior problems, … more mental health problems; lower cognitive performance; lower parent–child relationship quality; and higher risk for physical injury or abuse. (Gershoff 629)

This study suggests that corporal punishment is likely a poor choice for redirecting behavior. An essential goal for a parent is to minimize bad behavior and facilitate good behavior. Note that corporal punishment is innately aggressive: a caregiver enacts aggressive punishment to redirect unwanted behavior. Using physical hitting to change a child's conduct has the potential to show them that aggression is an acceptable way to achieve desired change. Corporal punishment may impact children socially and emotionally. They may question their safety and their trust between the child and authority figure can be damaged, thus creating issues in the child's attachments. Additionally, we can consider other studies that show hitting has proven detrimental, such as in cases of bullying and domestic abuse (Gershoff 628). The relationship of a teacher and student could be damaged and impact the child's view of school and learning if corporal punishment is allowed in schools.

While studies on corporal punishment are difficult to perform due to ethical consideration, available information can be used to deduce that it poses a threat to child development. This issue is an urgent and time sensitive matter. Corporal punishment is still accepted in many states by parents and schools. In a book about corporal punishment in schools, Gershoff mentions that 19 states utilize corporal punishment in their teaching, and over 100,000

children are subjected to it each year (Gershoff 46). Gershoff cites a study of young adults who experienced corporal punishment in which "a majority of students who experienced school corporal punishment said it was painful, was linked with lower GPA and school belonging, more depressive symptoms, and favorable attitudes about corporal punishment" (Gershoff 70). These studies also reveal that black, disabled, and male students are at significantly higher risk to receive corporal punishment in school (Gershoff 70). This unsettling information begs the question of what benefit corporal punishment is providing. It is not achieving the results that are desired. We do know that children who are exposed to it have negative outcomes. If students who experienced corporal punishment were shown to achieve higher GPA, positive attitudes, and other good outcomes, debate would cease. Statistics show what is happening with students in a longitudinal fashion. The current studies available suggest risks to both mental health and academic performance of students who receive corporal punishment in school. Bill 324 in Louisiana needs to be retried with more discussion of this evidence; so should similar bills being proposed in the other states that permit corporal punishment in schools.

Corporal punishment has the potential to impact a child's health as well. Depending on the frequency and severity, one could consider corporal punishment a traumatic experience. Some may paddle until there are marks or bruises on the child's body, and some may not. What matters most is the function of a child's brain when they are being spanked. Dr. Nancy Henderson published a PowerPoint for the Greenville Health System of South Carolina. This presentation examined findings that children who are subject to corporal punishment are at increased risk of child abuse, aggression and juvenile justice system involvement, impaired mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and increased risk for future domestic abuse (Henderson 27). Henderson identifies corporal punishment as an Adverse Childhood Experience [ACE]. The studies she mentions show that children who are subject to maltreatment have disrupted neurodevelopment, which causes social, emotional, and cognitive

impairment (Henderson 46). This impairment is followed by the adoption of health-risk behaviors such as smoking, lack of physical activity, alcoholism, drug use, and missed work. The possible physical and mental health impacts are severe obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, and broken bones (Henderson 47). Henderson indicates that all forms of hitting for punishment contribute to ACEs. ACEs are characterized by abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. In 2010 it was reported that 69% of adults in the US believe that hard spanking is necessary (Henderson 34). This is less than the 94% of adults reported in 1960 but is still well over half of the population (Henderson 34). Children who are spanked are 2.8 times more likely to hit or kick than those who are not (Henderson 35). America is experiencing a health crisis, both physical and psychological. With solid research such as the impacts of ACEs available, we must question the benefit-to-risk ratio of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is not worth the increased risk of grave health impacts to our population. Teachers should not have the authority to impart negative health impacts on a child. The removal of the practice of corporal punishment in school would prevent teachers from bearing the responsibility of those potentially harmful decisions.

Specific instances of corporal punishment impacts are available to the public. These are easy to find and have scientific merit due to the method of these studies. They account for the consistent findings that are replicated in multiple cultures. A study of Japanese children performed by Sakurako Okuzono displays such impacts. A longitudinal study of 29,182 Japanese children at 3.5 years old and again at 5.5 years old was performed in order to determine how the frequency of spanking impacts behavior outcomes of children over time (Okuzono 63). Okuzono reports that “spanking of any self-reported frequency was associated with an increased risk for later behavioral problems in children” (Okuzono 62). The frequency of spanking studied was “never”, “sometimes”, and “always.” Children who were spanked “sometimes” and “always” displayed similar results, while children who were “always” spanked displayed a larger

number of behavioral problems (Okuzono 62). Both had a significantly higher number of behavioral problems such as disobedience, social impediments, poor focus, and inability to express emotions when compared to children who were “never” spanked (Okuzono 68). Okuzono’s study was adjusted for socioeconomic status, child temperament, and parenting behaviors. It is likely that toddlers are unable to understand the intent behind spanking due to their lack of cognition at a young age. It is believed that they experience spanking as traumatic, regardless of frequency (Okuzono 68). This is further supported by examining child attachment, which is characterized by a sense of safety and security with the adults on whom they rely. Mistreatment during this stage impacts a child’s sense of security, which could lead to behavioral issues. Children that experience spanking may associate it with frustration or anger, and potentially lead to aggressive, impulsive, and disobedient behaviors (Okuzono 68). This reinforces the notion that children who are subject to corporal punishment are in worse positions over time. These results demonstrate that regardless of the frequency, corporal punishment is not a good choice for caregivers.

We must also look at those who are in favor of corporal punishment and examine their reasoning. Robert Larzelere is one of the leading proponents in favor of conditional spanking. He refutes data given by Gershoff and regards her research as insufficient on the grounds that 55% of her studies were not longitudinal, this means that the 55% of studies in question were only done at one point in time rather than repeated studies on the same participants later (Larzelere 1). It is understandable that Gershoff’s cross-sectional studies could be questioned as to whether the children had the negative behaviors before or after the spanking, but we can assume two things. Firstly, it is unlikely that it is the child’s first time being spanked. Secondly, regardless of which came first, the child is likely to have negative health outcomes. Now examine the other 45% of Gershoff’s studies that are not cross-sectional, which show a strong relationship between physical punishment and

subsequent negative outcomes (Gershoff 629-630). All but one of Gershoff's studies link physical punishment with negative outcomes in children. While neutrality of physical punishment exists in one of the studies examined by Gershoff when compared with other forms of punishment, spanking does not show any benefit (Gershoff 632).

Furthermore, the only evidence that Larzelere provides to support corporal punishment are two studies, one of which he conducted himself. The first study displays negative impact at a minimal level on participants, and the other shows a low benefit or low risk on participants depending on the adjustments made. Even at low levels, it is questionable why one would support something that is maladaptive to children rather than rule it out. Larzelere criticizes the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association for siding with Gershoff in opposition of all spanking and instead supports his own studies and experience with spanking (Larzelere 7). Larzelere fails to acknowledge the 45% of studies that are not cross-sectional. He also provides no evidence as to why spanking should be accepted other than for an immediate cessation of unwanted behavior, neglecting to discuss the potential impacts on the child through their lifetime. Evidence in favor of corporal punishment is insufficient to support the continuation of the practice, especially regarding its use in education. Supporters have shown no factual evidence to claim it is beneficial for students, while opponents provide evidence of hindered performance and social functioning.

As previously stated, Louisiana is among the 19 states that allow corporal punishment in schools. With the risks that have been outlined, this poses a threat to children in Louisiana. Bill 324 was denied in a vote 48-49, which needed 53 votes to pass (Hilburn). This bill would have banned the use of corporal punishment in Louisiana schools. Opposition of the bill included former teachers who claimed the decision should be kept local (Hilburn). This included the notion that bill 324 could set a precedent that could lead to the removal of parental rights to use corporal punishment (Hilburn). Stephanie Hilferty was the main proponent of the bill

(Hilburn). Hilferty described corporal punishment as child abuse, which was an unpopular and emotional approach to legislators (Hilburn). The information available is not being fully utilized in the states that still allow this practice in schools. Evidence of negative outcomes was brought up during proceedings, but the focus of child abuse in reference to spanking was rejected and bill 324 failed (Hilburn). This ruling is concerning, considering the lack of acknowledgment of negative the impact on children regardless of Hilferty's radical approach. While the focus should be on facts, the evidence that was presented shouldn't be overlooked. Teachers and caregivers are responsible for the wellness of children in their care. While some caregivers are unaware of the research available, those who have been presented the data have a duty to protect children they are responsible for. That makes the communication of this information imperative.

There is a substantial amount of research that displays negative outcomes in children who are subjected to corporal punishment, and it is our responsibility to do something about it. There is a link between spanking and aggressive behavior. Corporal punishment may potentially link to many other issues, such as bullying, juvenile violence, future family dysfunction, and countless unknown outcomes that could have a lasting impact for generations. Even with the limited ways that we can ethically study and learn about corporal punishment, the current evidence is enough to do away with the practice. There are resources available to help caregivers learn effective forms of discipline that do not involve corporal punishment. It provides children with no academic benefit. The bottom line is that children should not be subjected to any form of corporal punishment in their educational environment.

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Sarah Nicole Bashaw's essay, written in Dr. Hodgson's class, won 2nd place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest

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64. Comp II Reflection 1 - "Remix Reflection"

SKYLAR RAMSEY

Remix Reflection

Capital Punishment was not a subject that was on the forefront of my mind before this semester began. I'd always felt ambivalent about the death penalty; I didn't like the idea of it, but I couldn't bring myself to argue against it. I believed that the punishment could help those close to the victims of such odious crimes feel some sense of closure. Honestly, my initial essay was going to place capital punishment in a more favorable light, but then I remembered a certain phrase that I'd heard many years ago. It was from one of the victims of Ariel Castro— a horrid man who was responsible for the kidnapping and torture of three young girls. She'd said something along the lines of how she wanted him to stay alive so he could suffer the same way that she did, and those words truly resonated within me. I thought about her words carefully before delving into the topic, researching everything I could. There were many things that made me turn my indifference into disgust. Why should perpetrators of crimes be allowed the peacefulness of death? Why can't those who've been falsely accused get a chance to prove their innocence? Why is death row overwhelmingly Black and Latino? All of these questions and more prompted me to write my essay, and I'm glad that I can explore this topic once again by creating an infographic using the information within it.

My remix was going to be a petition at first. I wanted to see capital punishment come to an end in our state of Oklahoma, but I quickly learned that getting signatures was going to be an immensely

difficult task. I'd asked my Oklahoman family members and friends about their thoughts on capital punishment, and the majority of them were in favor of it. A petition with no signatures is essentially a written complaint, so I knew that I'd have to change my genre. That's why I'm making an infographic for Oklahomans that are pro-death penalty and Oklahomans that have equivocating thoughts on the issue. Infographics present information in small, digestible chunks, which makes them very social media-friendly. That's great for larger audiences like mine; though having a good percentage of Oklahoma's population as my target audience is slightly daunting, they are the only people that can make this movement possible.

I can't fit my entire argument into one small infographic, so I decided to make some cuts. My goal is to educate fellow Oklahomans, and people are more likely to listen when the topic is relatable. That's why I'm only keeping the numerical data from my essay; capital punishment raises both humanitarian and economic concerns, and many Oklahomans can relate to at least one of these issues. I also left out information pertaining to the history of the death penalty. This is an infographic, not a classroom— the information should be easy to follow. The history of the death penalty would be too long to put into a small, informative poster, and I doubt that most people would concern themselves with things that happened in the distant past. In the age of social media, an eye-catching, brightly colored infographic with modest chunks of information is a great way to present my cause. I've experimented with many persuasion strategies for this assignment, and I'm satisfied with the choices I've made.

All things considered, I'm glad that I got the chance to explore this topic once again. It kept me on my toes, trying to understand my audience and the assignment at hand. My inceptive goal was to get others to see why I didn't like the idea of capital punishment and why I believe we should abolish it, but then my goal eventually evolved into educating people on what capital punishment is and how it affects all of us. The project I started on three weeks ago was much different from the one that I have now— but now I know that

this version of my project is both effective and persuasive. I'm eager to create the final version of my assignment and demonstrate just how much time and effort I poured into this endeavor.

Skylar Ramsey's Comp II reflection, written in Dr. Schneider's class, won first place in its category in the 2021-2022 CU Write essay contest

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65. Comp II Reflection 3 - "Reflection on an Instagram Post about the Abolition of the Pledge of Allegiance"

ISABELLE TEAGUE

Reflection on an Instagram Post about the Abolition of the Pledge of Allegiance

I had initially chosen a different topic for my research-supported essay but changed my subject to why the Pledge of Allegiance should be removed from public schools. This change stemmed from my wanting to rebut a nationalistic family member after having a political “discussion” with them. As I thought more about the subject, I recalled instances in high school where I got in trouble for not standing for the Pledge due to being tired in the morning. At first, the whole process of writing my research essay was motivated by getting a grade and looking for legal justifications for why the teachers who scolded me were in the wrong and I wasn’t. However, as I did further research, I read some articles discussing instances in which other students around the US have gotten into legal conflict with their schools for refusing to stand for the Pledge for reasons more noble than mine. These injustices cemented my opinion that the Pledge should be abolished and spurred me to complete the essay. To persuade others of this position, I made my remix an Instagram post focusing on the religious violations of the Pledge with secondary school students being my target audience.

For the remix project, I chose middle and high-school-age students for my audience. I chose this age group because they are the most affected when it comes to the Pledge of Allegiance in schools. For many students, standing for the Pledge is a practice of compulsion, not one of their own volition. Students in this age group are also more likely to question the systems in place, making them the prime audience to convince whether the Pledge should remain or be removed. My audience choice also ties in with my choice of genre, Instagram. Instagram is a popular social media outlet that is widely used by my target audience. Due to Instagram's popularity, I feel my remix would be more successful than on any other social media site.

For the format of the remix, I focus more on how the Pledge of Allegiance violates the First Amendment regarding religion. I decided to focus on the religious aspect because there was too much information to cover in the original essay. I attempt to appeal to the audience's pathos and logos in the remix. For pathos, I begin the remix with a controversial title to garner attention. I then end the remix with an emotionally based statement. Everything else in the remix was done to appeal to logos by attempting to format the information simply and cohesively. I ended the remix with a reference slide, providing the links to where I got my information and how I came to my conclusion. I felt that adding a reference slide would make the remix more trustworthy. The reference slide also serves to encourage the curiosity of my audience and to entice further reading on the subject.

My overall goal with the remix was to bring attention to and encourage students to stand up for their rights. Hopefully, as students become more aware, the Pledge of Allegiance will be removed from schools. The first step to removing the Pledge from schools is to eliminate the policies in school districts that mandate that students must participate in the Pledge and to notify school administration that they cannot make a student participate if that student refuses to. I think the students themselves would be capable of taking that first step. If a significant portion of the student body

protested the Pledge, the change would commence. Schools cannot suspend everybody.

Isabelle Teague's essay, written in Dr. Schneider's class, tied for second place in its category in the 2022-2023 CU Write essay contest.

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66. Comp II Reflection 4 - "Reflecting on Promoting Safe Pageantry"

TRAN YENNHI

Reflecting on Promoting Safe Pageantry

Safe pageantry is a subject that has been heavy on my heart since the suicide of Miss USA 2019, Chelsie Kryst, at the beginning of this year. I feel like this subject is so important when you look at how pageantry is viewed in the world. Pageantry affects so many young girls and women and has the capacity to either build stronger women or tear down their confidence. Because of this, creating different types of infographics to cater to young girls and all women to promote safe pageantry was important to me. I chose to do multiple infographics for different age groups and audiences. I chose to do this because I knew that one infographic wouldn't draw the attention of all the different audiences in pageantry. I also figured that I would make multiple infographics that appealed to each different audience so that each audience would be more likely to reshare or post the infographic that resonated with their age group. Personally, I would likely not share a infographic unless it was aesthetically pleasing, which is why it was important to me to make different infographics tailored to the aesthetics of each demographic.

The first infographic I made was for moms wanting to sign their daughters up for pageants. I used the words "mom, mommy, mama, and mother" to grab the attention of moms. I used a picture of a woman holding a baby for an emotional appeal. I used a crown to

symbolize pageants, which helped emphasize that this was about pageants. The font I selected for this post was used because I felt it was more mature and appropriate for moms. I included simple informational statements to keep the post short to ensure I could keep the reader's attention. The information I included was specifically chosen to appeal more to a mom's senses.

The second infographic I made was for girls competing in pageants ages nine through thirteen. I again used three informational statements to keep the post concise and maintain my audience's attention. In this post, I added a pink crown to symbolize pageantry because I believe pink is a popular little girl color. Next, I added splattered paint to the pink background to make it more eye-catching for girls that age that might be into painting. I also added some sketch art and what looks like a notebook because I knew that would draw girls of that age's attention because it resembles a diary. All of these visual choices are very age appropriate for girls nine through thirteen.

The third infographic I made was for girls competing in pageants who are ages fourteen to nineteen. I once again included three informational statements , but this time I added information that was more appropriate for their age and the more significant issues they might be dealing with. I chose a light purple background with pink squiggles because I knew that color scheme was more popular with the age group right now, so that it would be trendier for them to post or re-share. I also added a question and gave two options of response to encourage interaction in the comments. By making this post interactive, the audience for this post might feel more inclined to join the movement. I did this because I believe this age group is at the age where you start getting the freedom to make your own decisions. I know that older teenagers are the age group most at risk for potential harms like eating disorders and body image issues, and so they're the age group most in need of safe pageantry.

The fourth infographic I made was for older women, between the ages of twenty and fifty, also competing in pageants. I chose a background of a woman's silhouette to draw attention to the fact

that post is made for women, and which could also draw more attention from other women. I also believe that women were more likely to repost this because of the brown background since brown is a trendy color right now. I chose a trendy cursive font to draw the reader in and put the font in bold to show that it is an important message at the same time. I included three informational statements once again because I figured nobody would want to read a long infographic, and three points seems to be the perfect number. My intention was to capture the audience's attention and make them want to read a little more about it themselves. I also included specific information about the more important issues for adult women competing in pageantry at that age.

I'm glad I got to make multiple infographics and not just cater to one part of pageantry because these problems can affect girls and women at all ages. By adapting my argument for multiple audiences, this project helped me understand the multiple demographics involved in pageantry. My goal is to get the different girls in pageantry and the moms enrolling the little girls in pageantry to see the reasons why safe pageantry is important, and how the consequences of unsafe pageantry can affect all of us. I now know my efforts in this project will be persuasive to all girls and women in pageantry because I did my best to cater to each specific age group and demographic.

Tran Yennhi's essay, written in Dr. Schneider's class, tied for second place in its category in the 2022-2023 CU Write essay contest.

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67. Comp II Reflection 2 - "Reflection on Rogerian Essay and Proposal Letter"

BLAKE HOWARD

Reflection on Rogerian Essay and Proposal Letter

For the final essay, I wish to reflect on the Rogerian essay that I had written earlier this semester to address the issue of plastic bag bans in supermarkets and how I adapted this analysis to the format of the problem/solution letter. Although the Hegelian dialectic is often simplified in terms that Hegel had never used himself, the philosophical triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is frequently attributed to his work, and therefore he is credited with revolutionizing the rhetorical landscape of western philosophy. In the Rogerian argument, this dialectical methodology is adopted to an exemplary degree. The writer is expected to provide a reasonable analysis on the argument which acts in opposition to his or her own views, followed by an argument in favor of the writer's position, and finally the proposal of a solution that may adequately reconcile both opposing interests. This approach follows a highly structured format and is intended for an academic audience. However, after adapting the Rogerian essay to the problem/solution format, the result was a call for action that was more accessible to a wider audience, a more concise analysis of the both the problem and the solution, and a more practical application to the real world.

For instance, one of the most difficult aspects of writing the

problem/solution letter was that I was restricted to using language that is not commonly characteristic of my own style as an author. Due to myriad postmodern literary influences, I prefer long run-on sentences, grammatical complexity, precise diction, and loose structure. However, my letter was being addressed to the president of Homeland Grocery, a practical businessman concerned with the bottom line, whose level of education was unknown to me at the time of writing. To successfully convey my message, I needed to tailor my words according to the expectation that the audience may feel bored, frustrated, or even patronized by a bunch of big words assembled in a way that resembled a jigsaw puzzle more than a traditional email. I had to maintain interest by rendering my analysis comprehensible, my solution practical, and his first impression of the sender agreeable. Sentences had to be re-written, phrases had to be shortened considerably, and the vocabulary was frequently exchanged for words more commonly used in day-to-day conversation. I had to approach this proposal in a conversational manner rather than through the lens of an academic analysis. The result of all these changes was not only that a wider audience could understand my proposal, but also more people might actually wish to take the time to understand it.

Secondly, to adequately address the format of the problem/solution letter, fourteen pages worth of content had to be reduced to two pages worth of a proposal. I remember when I had first started as a police officer, I worked under the watchful eye of a supervisor who would often become incensed by what he characterized as wasteful blather during high stress situations. Rather than summarizing a sequence of events in a sentence or two that adequately addressed the who, what, when, and where I would often provide background, explanation, and detailed descriptions of my actions that were not necessary for a supervisor to decide how to proceed. After carefully honing this skill for several years, I gained perspective when I became acquainted with another supervisor who had to know every insignificant detail, regardless of how tied up everyone was as soon as he arrived. Needless to say, more isn't

always better. Our attention spans may vary, but if someone has successfully climbed to the top of the corporate ladder in a multi-million-dollar company, it is safe to assume that he or she does not wish to read page after page of depressing descriptions detailing how plastic is affecting aquatic wildlife or how the Vietnamese went about studying consumer behavior to influence public policy. By reducing the length of the proposal, the audience is afforded the opportunity to absorb the material without getting bogged down in the details.

Finally, the Rogerian argument may well have provided solutions that could theoretically reduce plastic pollution in the environment, but the problem/solution letter took inspiration from these ideas and grounded them in a real-world setting. CEOs, such as President Marc Jones, have a fiduciary responsible to ensure steady returns for their investors, job security for their employees, and a positive image for the brands they represent. All three of these factors are addressed by the problem/solution letter in detail. Offering a variety of reusable non-plastic bags, while marketing this merchandise in ways that encourage changes in consumer behavior, can effectively reduce overhead costs, enhance brand recognition, and provide a new source of revenue for Homeland Grocery stores nationwide. The Rogerian argument suggests the idea of encouraging the use of reusable bags through advertising, but the question of who is going to foot the bill is left unanswered. In the problem/solution letter, we have the answer. Homeland Grocery will take the first step in initiating a revolution in consumer behavior that can substantially reduce the level of plastic pollution in the environment, while netting considerable profits in the long-term. Thus, an academic argument in favor of broad lofty goals can be exchanged for a proposal that can be implemented as soon as the audience is swayed in the author's favor.

Overall, in adapting the ideas expressed in the Rogerian argument to the new format, the result is a work that can more effectively accomplish its intended purpose of reducing the accumulation of plastic in the environment from plastic bags. By using language that

is more accessible to a wider audience, reducing the overall length of the text, and providing a practical solution tailor fitted to the recipient, the author can more effectively advocate for his or her own proposals. Professional growth is vital in producing desirable outcomes. While these projects were completed in an academic setting, the skills that I have gained from these experiences will certainly prove invaluable in the years that follow. Moving forward, I will be better suited to face new challenges and to effect the changes in this world that it so desperately needs.

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Links to Additional Readings

Additional Readings

Your instructor might assign some of these selected readings, linked below, or other additional readings like current events news stories, web articles, photocopies, or handouts. Under fair use for classroom purposes within US copyright law (the TEACH Act), faculty can print handouts of copyrighted material for classroom instructional purposes.

- Narrative Essays & Literacy Narratives
- Critical Thinking & Creative Writing
- Argument & Rhetorical Analysis
- Videos & Multimedia

Narrative Essays & Literacy Narratives

"In Praise of the Sentence" – Adrian Blevins

"Why I Hunt" – Rick Bass

"Self-Regulation: Nine Moments in Life as a Mammal" – Erica Watson

"Mother Tongue" – Amy Tan

"The Coat" – E. J. Koh

"My Mother Learned to Read at 63" – Donna Ladd

"A Previvor's Tale" – Alena Smith

"The Anxiety and Satisfaction of Race Day" – Kassie da Costa

"The Visitors" – John Paul Brammer

Critical Thinking & Creative Writing

Critical Thinking Essays:

"Politics and the English Language" – George Orwell

"The Checklist" – Atul Gawande

"Who is We?" – Tim Marchman

"What Do We Do With the Work of Immoral Artists?" – Erin L. Thompson

"This Land is… Whose Land?: The History of Woody Guthrie's Song" – Gustavus Stadtler

"About the Shark" – Kathleen Rooney

"What Slime Knows" – Lacy M. Johnson

"How Car Seats are a Solution and a Problem" – Jim Dalrymple II

Fiction, Poetry, & Creative Writing:

"The Moon's Navel" – John Paul Brammer

"Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings" – Joy Harjo

"38" – Layli Long Soldier

"Letter to America" – Chaun Ballard

"Declaration" – Tracy K. Smith

"The Gospel of Barbecue" – Honorée Fanonne Jeffers

"The Red Convertible" – Louise Erdrich

"A New National Anthem" – Ada Limón

"The Lovers of The Poor" – Gwendolyn Brooks

"The Story of an Hour" – Kate Chopin

"A Jury of Her Peers" – Susan Glaspell

Argument & Rhetorical Analysis

"Governing Bodies" – Rafia Zakaria

"Memorial of the Cherokee Nation"

"What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" – Frederick Douglass

"Letter from Birmingham Jail" – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Address to the United Nations" – Greta Thunberg

"It's Time to Start Eating Roadkill" – Ella Jacobson

"Scientists: Don't Feed the Doubt Machine" – Cecilia Tomori

"Stolen Breaths" – The New England Journal of Medicine

"The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Could Help the Navajo Nation" – Julia Cooper

"'Nice' Isn't Going to Save the Planet" – Mary Annaïse Heglar and Amy Westervelt

"In the Wake of Uvalde, a Teacher's Plea for Police-Free Schools" – Nataliya Braginsky

"Are We Actually Arguing About Whether 14-Year-Olds Should be Working in Meatpacking Plants?" – Terri Gerstein

Videos & Multimedia

"Lakota" documentary (16:21)

"Cheerleading has a Monopoly Problem" (4:35)

"Poetry For All" Podcast episode – Tracy K. Smith on "Declaration" (23:10)

TED Talk: Jamila Lyiscott, "3 Ways To Speak English" (4:29)

TED Talk: Lizzo, "The Black History of Twerking – And How It Taught Me Self-Love" (13:50)

Video Argument: "How the #LandBack Movement Might Save the Planet" (10:40)