Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research

Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research

Revised Second Edition

Editors:

Terri Pantuso, Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders

Open Educational Resource Authors:

Melanie Gagich, Emilie Zickel, Robin Jeffrey, Amanda Lloyd, John Lanning, Yvonne Bruce, Sarah M. Lacy, Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, Nicole Rosevear, Rebecca Jones, Steven D. Krause, Kathryn Crowther, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, Kirk Swenson, Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, Daryl Bullis, Kyle Stedman, Ann Inoshita, Karyl Garland, Kate Sims, Jeanne K. Tsutsui Keuma, Tasha Williams, and Susan Wood

Texas A&M University Authors:

Terri Pantuso, James Francis Jr., Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders

With Thanks To:

Brandi Gomez, Jessie Cortez, Ashlee Chensky, Noah Ghormley, John Arndt, Sherry Adadi, Janina Siebert, Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt, Kalani Pattison, and C. Anneke Snyder

Glossary Terms By:

C. Anneke Snyder, Kathy Anders, and Sarah LeMire

Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research

Revised Second Edition

Edited by Terri Pantuso, Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders

CONTENTS

III. Rhetorical Situation

IV. Types of Argumentation

V. Process and Organization

VI. Joining the Academic Conversation

VII. Researched Writing

VIII: Ethics

OER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND INFORMATION FOR REUSE

Suggested Citation:

Pantuso, Terri, Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders, eds. *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. Rev. 2nd ed. College Station: Texas A&M University, 2022. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Textbook Creation:

This textbook was created as a collaboration between the Texas A&M English Department and the Texas A&M University Libraries. The creation of this work was funded by the University Libraries and the English Department.

Contributing Open Educational Resources:

This OER textbook was developed by drawing upon a number of existing OER textbooks. Much of *Informed Arguments* contains complete or remixed chapters from these open texts which are listed below. All contributing works are copyrighted and Creative Commons licensed by their respective authors.

Bernnard, Deborah, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis. *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014. http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Crowther, Kathryn, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, and Kirk Swenson. *Successful College Composition*. 2nd edition. Book 8. Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016. http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8.

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Gagich, Melanie, and Emilie Zickel. *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Inoshita, Ann, Karyl Garland, Kate Sims, Jeanne K. Tsutsui Keuma, Tasha Williams, and Susan Wood. "Evaluation." In *English Composition: Connect, Collaborate, Communicate*, by Ann Inoshita, Karyl Garland, Kate Sims, Jeanne K. Tsutsui Keuma, and Tasha Williams. Honolulu, 2019. http://pressbooks.oer.hawaii.edu/englishcomposition/chapter/evaluation/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Jones, Rebecca. "Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?" In *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, 156-179. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010. https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License.

Krause, Steven D. "On the Other Hand: The Role of Antithetical Writing the First Year Composition Courses." In *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 2*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, 141-153. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2011. https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=160. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 United States License.

Stedman, Kyle. "Making Sure Your Voice is Present." Writing Commons. https://writingcommons.org/article/making-sure-your-voice-is-present/. Accessed December 18, 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. This work has been slightly altered to remove embedded videos, reformat citations, and reformat the font and layout in order to be included in this textbook with permission of the author.

Credited Open Educational Resources:

Open educational resources build upon one another to create additional texts, and as we assembled *Informed Arguments*, we found that some of the OER works we used for this textbook had themselves employed other OER materials. While we

did not draw upon these resources ourselves, the following texts are credited in the OER texts we used:

Burnell, Carol, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear. *The Word on College Reading and Writing*. Open Oregon Educational Resources. Accessed December 18, 2020. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/wrd/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Jeffrey, Robin. *About Writing: A Guide*. Portland, OR: Open Oregon Educational Resources. Accessed December 18, 2020. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/aboutwriting/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Krause, Steven D. *The Process of Research Writing, Version 1.0*. Spring 2007. http://stevendkrause.com/tprw/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome

Welcome to composition and rhetoric! While most of you are taking this course because it is required, we hope that all of you will leave with more confidence in your reading, writing, researching, and speaking abilities as these are all elements of freshman composition. Many times, these elements are presented in excellent textbooks written by top scholars. While the collaborators of this particular textbook respect and value those textbooks available from publishers, we have been concerned about students who do not have the resources to purchase textbooks. Therefore, we decided to put together this Open Educational Resource (OER) explicitly for use in freshman composition courses at Texas A&M University. It is important to note that the focus for this text is on thesis-driven argumentation as that is the focus of the first year writing course at Texas A&M University at the time of development. However, other first year writing courses at different colleges and universities include a variety of types of writing such as personal essays, informative articles, and/or creative writing pieces. The collaborators for this project acknowledge each program is unique; therefore, the adaptability of an OER textbook for first year writing allows for academic freedom across campuses.

Rationale

This text was designed not only to teach students about composition and rhetoric, but about research skills, too. The editors of this text maintain that research skills, or information literacy as librarians put it, have rhetorical elements. The processes of writing and researching are intertwined, and as people write, they filter what they have heard or read from others, often seeking out and evaluating information along the way. The steps of writing and researching are iterative, too, building upon each other in loops, twists, drafts, and revisions.

Writing, as this text presents it, is contextual. It is set in a place, time, and conversation. Information is the medium of the context. Finding, evaluating, using, and creating information are integral parts of the college writing process, and the

editors wanted to make sure that these processes are represented in the same textbook. Writing and research are not discrete; the editors compiled this textbook to ensure they are presented as interconnected concepts, which reflects their interconnected reality.

Research, at the college level, is often conceptualized as searching library databases for scholarly articles. It certainly can be that, and this text discusses how to develop skills to find scholarly materials. However, research, more broadly conceived, also involves seeking and using information for a given purpose. You research customer reviews and specifications before making a big purchase. You may ask friends who have been to a given restaurant whether or not they would recommend it. You may be creating information that you are disseminating on social media, such as pictures, blogs, vlogs, videos, and tweets. It is important to address the larger principles of research that apply to those areas as well. If you are a teacher using this text, the editors invite you to consider texts as both pieces of rhetoric and information. If you are a student using this text, then please examine how you both use and create texts that are both informed and informational.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to a generous grant from former Dean David Carlson of the Texas A&M University Libraries and funding from Dr. Maura Ives, Chair of the English Department at Texas A&M University, this project became a reality. It is a collaborative endeavor undertaken by faculty in the Libraries and English Department as part of the Provost's Student Success Initiatives at Texas A&M, and it continues to be a work in progress. We are especially grateful to David Carlson and Maura Ives for their support in the initial creation of this text.

The selection, assembly, and editing of this work was a long process, and we greatly appreciate all the feedback we have received as this work has moved from a pilot text to this, the second edition of the text. We appreciate the thoughtful and careful review from Dr. James P. Purdy of Duquesne University. His comments were invaluable in our revisions.

Our student workers and graduate assistants have been indispensable in this process as well. Thanks to Brandi Gomez, Jessie Cortez, Ashlee Chensky, Noah Ghormley, John Arndt, and Sherry Adadi.

OER Acknowledgements

We owe a great deal to all of the authors who have agreed to openly license their texts. Because of their generosity in participating in the OER community, we have been able to assemble, edit, and add to their works. Their OERs made this OER possible. Much of the text of *Informed Arguments* comes from complete or remixed chapters and essays listed here. Throughout this textbook you will find citations for each of the texts that we used, as well as the texts from which they drew. While this attribution style entails attribution boxes, as editors we wanted to be as transparent as possible about all of the source material for this text. In particular, we especially want to acknowledge these works here:

- *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success First-Year Writing* by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel
- *Successful College Composition*, 2nd Edition, by Kathryn Crowther, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, and Kirk Swenson
- "Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?" by Rebecca Jones in *Writing Space: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*
- "On the Other Hand: The Role of Antithetical Writing in First Year Composition Courses" by Stephen Krause in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 2*
- *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook* by Allison Hosier, Daryl Bullis, Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Irina Holden, Jenna Pitera (Hecker), Tor Loney and Trudi Jacobson
- "Making Sure Your Voice is Present" by Kyle Steadman on the *Writing Commons* website
- "Evaluation," by Ann Inoshita, Karyl Garland, Kate Sims, Jeanne K. Tsutsui Keuma, Tasha Williams, and Susan Wood in *English Composition: Connect, Collaborate, Communicate*.

As we assembled this textbook, we found that some of the OERs we used had themselves drawn upon other open resources, and we want to acknowledge and celebrate the complex chain of OER creation. The OER authors listed above drew upon previous open texts, including:

- *The Word on College Reading and Writing* by Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear
- *About Writing: A Guide* by Robin Jeffrey

- *The Process of Research Writing, Version 1.0* by Steven D. Krause

A Note on the System of Attribution

This open textbook was assembled from many other open educational resources, and in many cases, those were created from yet more open resources. These might be thought of as our primary OERs and then the secondary OERs. Traditional authorship listings in books make it difficult to represent the complex chains of authorship and editorship through layers of importing, adapting, and remixing texts. In the creation of this textbook, much of the material is drawn verbatim from other sources, while in other places there are slight alterations. There is remixed material, and many of the images were recreated or altered to ensure accessibility. Here are some of the considerations that went into the system of attribution in this text:

- Authorship is represented as close to the texts used as possible while still keeping material readable. That means that there are attributions at the subsection level rather than the chapter level. Each section contains author bylines at the beginning and citations for OER used at the end. Where we were original authors of the entirety of a section, the attribution citation at the end of the section is for this textbook.
- In cases where the OER texts we used drew upon other OER texts, we credited the secondary OER texts in attribution boxes as they had been credited in our primary OERs. We relied upon the primary OERs to guide us in matters of authorship listings for sections anor the account of the OERs they, the primary OERs, had employed. We included at the authorship level the authors as they were listed in primary OERs.
- Our goal is to make this text easy to use for future OER adapters and adopters. In order to make the carrying through of internal citations as easy as possible, we have used a modified version of Chicago footnotes. This is to help people keep citations together as they remix this text. All figures contain attribution footnotes for a similar reason.
- All Creative Commons Licenses and Pixabay are listed and hyperlinked throughout the text. Please note that while *Informed Arguments* is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, other texts throughout have different licenses.

About the Editors

Combined, Dr. Terri Pantuso, Dr. Kathy Anders, and Prof. Sarah LeMire have over 30 years of experience in writing and research instruction. Our goal is for students to leave this course as critical thinkers, polished writers, and informed citizens who can engage in civil public discourse.

Dr. Terri Pantuso is the Coordinator of the English 104 Program and an Instructional Assistant Professor in the English Department at Texas A&M University.

Prof. Sarah LeMire is the Coordinator of First Year Programs and an Associate Professor in the Texas A&M University Libraries.

Dr. Kathy Anders is the Graduate Studies Librarian and an Associate Professor in the Texas A&M University Libraries.

II. GETTING STARTED

Introduction

Terri Pantuso

Congratulations! You're now on your way towards a college degree! But first, you must master the art of writing for a given purpose. How do you start an essay? What matters most, the topic or the sources? What if you don't understand exactly what you're being asked to write about or you can't find a topic? If you're feeling stress from questions such as these, relax. You're not alone. Even the most accomplished writers need some sort of guidance to begin a new project. In this section, we introduce you to the writing process used most commonly in composition courses and provide strategies for tackling your assignment(s). Additionally, we discuss genre and prewriting strategies to guide you through the process.

2.1 WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS?

Sarah M. Lacy; Melanie Gagich; and Terri Pantuso

Donald M. Murray, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and educator, presented his important article, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product," in 1972.[1] In the article, he criticizes writing instructors' tendencies to view student writing as "literature" and to focus our attention on the "product" (the finished essay) while grading. The idea that students are producing finished works ready for close examination and evaluation by their instructor is fraught with problems because writing is really a process and arguably one that is never finished.

In the article, Murray explains why writing is an ongoing process:

> What is the process we [writing instructors] should teach? *It is the process of discovery through language*. It is the process of exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language. It is the process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world. Instead of teaching finished writing, we should teach *unfinished* writing, and glory in its unfinishedness.[2]

In your composition courses, you may find that many college writing instructors have answered Murray's call to "teach writing as a process." Due to shifting our focus on process rather than product, you will likely find yourself spending a lot of time brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing. Embracing writing as a process helps apprehensive writers see that writing is not only about grammatical accuracy or "being a good writer." It's also about what you have to say as a writer and how you join the academic discourse community-at-large. When you embrace writing as a process, you will see it is a method for figuring out your ideas while in the process of drafting. This helps to shape your thinking as you explore through revision. These skills will prove useful beyond the first year writing course as you

1. Donald Murray, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product," *The Leaflet* (November 1972): 11-14.
2. Donald Murray, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product," in *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*, rev. 2nd ed., ed. Victor Villanueva (Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003), 4.

will use them in your major courses of study, your future career and even in crafting ideas in the everyday world.

The most important lesson to understand about the writing process is that it is recursive, meaning that you need to move back and forth between some or all of the steps. There are many ways to approach this process. Allowing yourself enough time to begin the assignment before it is due will give you time to move from one step to the other and back as needed. This recursive, back and forth process, leads to a more polished final product.

The Writing Process in 6 Steps

The following steps have been adapted from the work of Paul Eschholz and Alfred Rosa, found in their book *Subject & Strategy*.[3] In the text, the authors focus on discussing writing as a series of steps that can be adapted to meet any writer's needs. In the following, the steps have been modified to fit the needs of first-year writers. While reading through the steps below, remember that every writer has a unique approach to the writing process. The steps are presented in such a way that allow for any writer to understand the process as a whole so that they can feel prepared when beginning a paper. Take special note of all the tips and guidance presented with each step, as well as suggested further reading, remembering that writing is a skill that needs practice. Make sure to spend time developing your own connection to each step when writing a paper. Figure 2.1.1[4] provides those steps in a visual format.

3. Eschholz, Paul and Alfred Rosa. *Subject & Strategy: A Writer's Reader*. 11th ed., Bedford/St. Martin, 2007.
4. Sarah M. Lacy, "The Writing Process," in *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel (Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors), accessed July 2019, https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/3-1-eng-100-101-writing-process/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

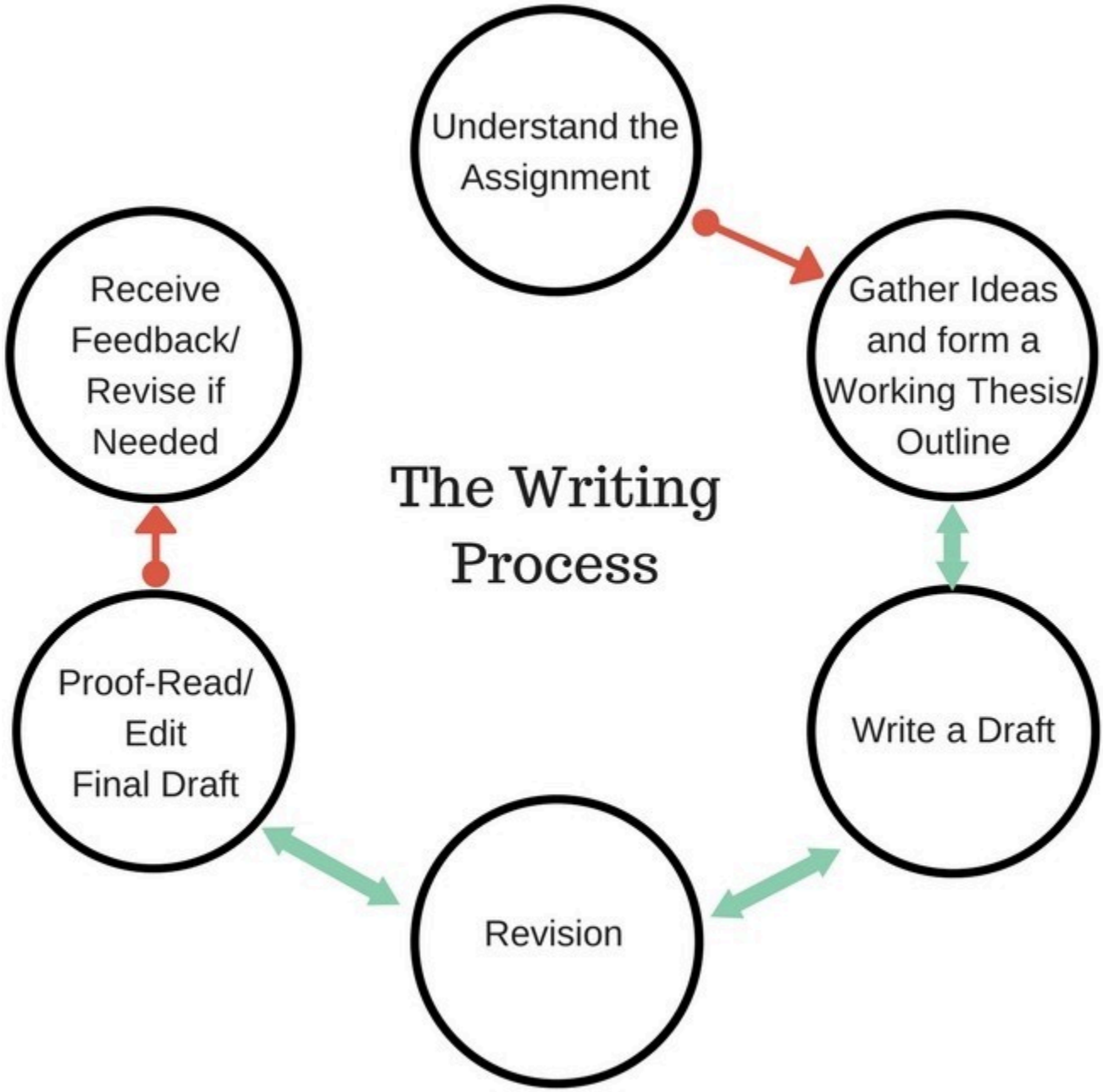


Figure 2.1.1: The Writing Process

Step 1 – Understand the Assignment

Always read over the entire assignment sheet provided to you by your instructor. Think of this sheet as a contract; by accepting the sheet, you are agreeing to follow all guidelines and requirements that have been provided. This sheet is a direct communication from your instructor to you which typically lays out every expectation and requirement of an assignment. Follow each requirement to ensure you are conducting and completing the assignment properly. Pay attention

to key words used in the prompt such as *explain, describe*, or *argue*. These keywords are directives that should be used to guide your purpose.

Step 2 – Gather Ideas and Form a Working Thesis

Once you understand the assignment, you will need to collect information in order to understand your topic and decide where you would like the paper to lead. This step can be conducted in various ways. Researching to build content knowledge is always a good place to start this step.

After you have conducted some research, begin brainstorming your topic. You can do this in a variety of ways such as:

- Free writing
- Listing ideas
- Generate a list of questions
- Clustering/mapping (creating a bubble chart)
- Create a basic outline

Next, you will want to formulate a central research question that will be revised into a working thesis. A working thesis is different from the thesis found in a final draft in that it will not be specific nor as narrowed as the final thesis. Think of a working thesis as the general focus of the paper, helping to shape your research and brainstorming activities. As you will later spend ample time working and reworking a draft, allow yourself the freedom to revise this thesis as you become more familiar with your topic and purpose. You shouldn't feel obligated to make your research fit your thesis; rather, revise your thesis to reflect the research you conduct.

Step 3 – Write a Draft

After completing Steps 1 and 2, you are ready to begin putting all parts and ideas together into a full length draft. It is important to remember that this is a first/rough draft, and the goal is to get all of your thoughts into writing, not generating a perfect draft. Do not get hung up with your language at this point; focus on the larger ideas and content instead.

Organization is a very important part of this step, and if you have not already

composed an outline or plan during Step 2, consider writing one now. The purpose of an outline is to create a logical flow of claims, evidence, and links before or during the drafting process. Outlines are great at helping you organize your outside sources if you need to use some within a particular assignment. Start by generating a list of claims (or main ideas) to support your thesis and decide which source belongs with each idea, knowing that you may (and should) use your sources more than once, with more than one claim. Experiment with outlines to learn when and how they can work for you. Note there are a variety of formats you might use for outlining your rough draft. Choose the format that works well for your purpose.

Step 4 – Revise the Draft(s)

The revision process is where your topic begins to grow. This is the step in which you are likely to spend the majority of your time. This section is different from simply editing or proofreading because you are looking for larger context issues. For example, the revision step is when you need to check your **topic sentences** and **transitions**, make sure each claim matches the thesis statement, and so on. Return to Steps 1 and 2 as needed to ensure you are on the right track and that your draft is properly adhering to the guidelines of the assignment.

The revision portion of the writing process is also where you will need to make sure all of your paragraphs are fully developed as appropriate for the assignment. If you need to have outside sources present, this is when you will make sure that all are working properly together. If the assignment is a **summary**, this is when you will need to double check all **paraphrasing** to make sure it correctly represents the ideas and information of the source text.

Step 5 – Proofread/Edit the Draft(s)

Once the larger content issues have been resolved and you are moving towards a final draft, work through the paper looking for grammar and style issues. This step is when you need to make sure that your **tone** is appropriate for the assignment. For example, you will need to make sure you have remained in a formal tone for all academic papers. Also check to make sure that sources are properly integrated into your own work if your assignment calls for them.

When entering the final step, go back to the assignment sheet, read it over once

more in full, and then conduct a close reading. Pay attention to keywords listed in the prompt. Doing this will help you to ensure you have completed all components of the assignment as per your instructor's guidance.

Step 6 – Turn in the Draft, Receive Feedback, and Revise (if needed)

Once your draft is completed, turned in, and handed back with edits from your instructor, you may have an opportunity to revise and turn in again to help raise your grade. As the goal of the composition class is to improve your writing, this is an essential step to consider so that you get the most out of the course. Ask your instructor for more detail and seek feedback from peer reviewers and your university writing center before submitting a final draft.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE WRITING ASSIGNMENT: QUICK REFERENCE

Robin Jeffrey; Emilie Zickel; Kathy Anders; and Terri Pantuso

Before you begin working on an essay or a writing assignment, don't forget to spend some quality time analyzing the assignment sheet. By closely reading and breaking down the assignment sheet, you are setting yourself up for an easier time of planning and composing the assignment. You might find it helpful to use the following steps:

- First, determine the genre of the assignment;
- Second, identify the core assignment questions that you need to answer;
- Third, note what types of secondary sources are required as well as how many;
- Fourth, locate the evaluation and grading criteria; carefully read the assignment sheet and search for the required page length, due dates, and other submission-based information;
- Finally, identify the disciplinary conventions with which you are expected to write.

Writing Genre

Loosely speaking, genre refers to a category of work that generally shares similar characteristics. When determining the genre in which you are being asked to write, if it is not explicitly stated ask yourself what, in the broadest sense, are you being asked to do?

How to Answer the Assignment Question(s)

Sometimes, a list of prompts or questions may appear with an assignment given to you by your instructor. It is likely that your instructor will not expect you to answer all of the questions listed. They are simply offering you some ideas so that you can think of your own questions to ask. When this occurs, it can be useful to:

- Circle all assignment questions that you see on the assignment sheet;
- Put a star next to the question that is either the most important OR that you will pursue in creating the assignment;
- Underline the topic about which you feel most passionate. If you are interested in the topic, you will produce a better paper.

Recognizing Implied Questions

A prompt may not include a clear 'how' or 'why' question, though one is always **implied** by the language of the prompt. For example, "Discuss the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on special education programs" is asking you to write how the act has affected special education programs, while "Consider the recent rise of autism diagnoses" is asking you to write why the diagnoses of autism are on the rise. If it is not relatively clear what is implied in the question or prompt, check with your instructor or a writing center tutor.

Identifying Writing Requirements

Some instructors offer indications of what certain parts of the essay/composition should contain. As you read the assignment sheet, look for an indication of elements to be included. Does the assignment sheet offer suggestions or requirements for the introductory paragraph? For the **thesis** statement? For the structure or content of the body paragraphs or conclusion paragraphs? If not, check with your instructor or visit your university writing center for suggestions and guidance.

Identifying Source Information Requirements

When you receive an assignment, note what types of information you will need in order to respond to the questions in the prompt. Your instructor may indicate that you need to use a certain number of **secondary sources** in your assignment and may even tell you what types of sources, e.g. newspaper stories, magazine articles, interviews, or scholarly journal articles. It may also be the case that apart from the requirements for the writing assignment, you need to find background information on the topic so that you can begin to formulate your own ideas or your claim. For example, say you are in a nutrition class and you receive the following prompt:

> "Evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of a ketogenic diet for a population with a health issue of your choosing, i.e., epilepsy, liver disease, kidney disease, obesity, etc. Use at least four scholarly sources in your paper."

If you are not already familiar with what a ketogenic diet is, you will have to do some background research on the concept itself as you begin to address the topic of your essay. You might also need to do some research about the health issue upon which you focus. As you write, you will also need to find and incorporate four **scholarly** sources into your paper likely addressing the specific question about the ketogenic diet and the population group you chose. You might choose to include even more sources depending upon how you want to address the topic. However, remember that when you are using secondary sources you keep your **voice** and **claim** prominent in the essay, and not the voices of your secondary sources.

Identifying Evaluation Criteria

Many assignment sheets contain a grading **rubric** or some other indication of evaluation criteria for the assignment. You can use these criteria to both begin the writing process and to guide your revision and editing process. If you do not see any rubric or evaluation criteria on the assignment sheet — ask!

Recognizing Disciplinary Expectations

Depending on the discipline in which you are writing, different features and formats of your writing may be expected. Always look closely at key terms and vocabulary in the writing assignment, and be sure to note what type of evidence and citations style your instructor expects.

- Does the essay need to be in MLA, APA, Chicago or another style?
- Does the instructor require any specific submission elements or formats?

This section contains material from:
Jeffrey, Robin, and Emilie Zickel. "Understanding the Writing

Assignment." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/understanding-assignments/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

2.3 PURPOSE, AUDIENCE, TONE, AND CONTENT

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; Kirk Swenson; and Terri Pantuso

Now that you have determined the assignment **parameters**, it's time to begin drafting. While doing so, it is important to remain focused on your topic and **thesis** in order to guide your reader through the essay. Imagine reading one long block of text with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. Keep in mind that three main elements shape the content of each essay (see Figure 2.3.1).[1]

- **Purpose:** The reason the writer composes the essay.
- **Audience:** The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.
- **Tone:** The attitude the writer conveys about the essay's subject.

1. "The Rhetorical Triangle" was derived by Brandi Gomez from an image in: Kathryn Crowther et al., *Successful College Composition*, 2nd ed. Book 8. (Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016), https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

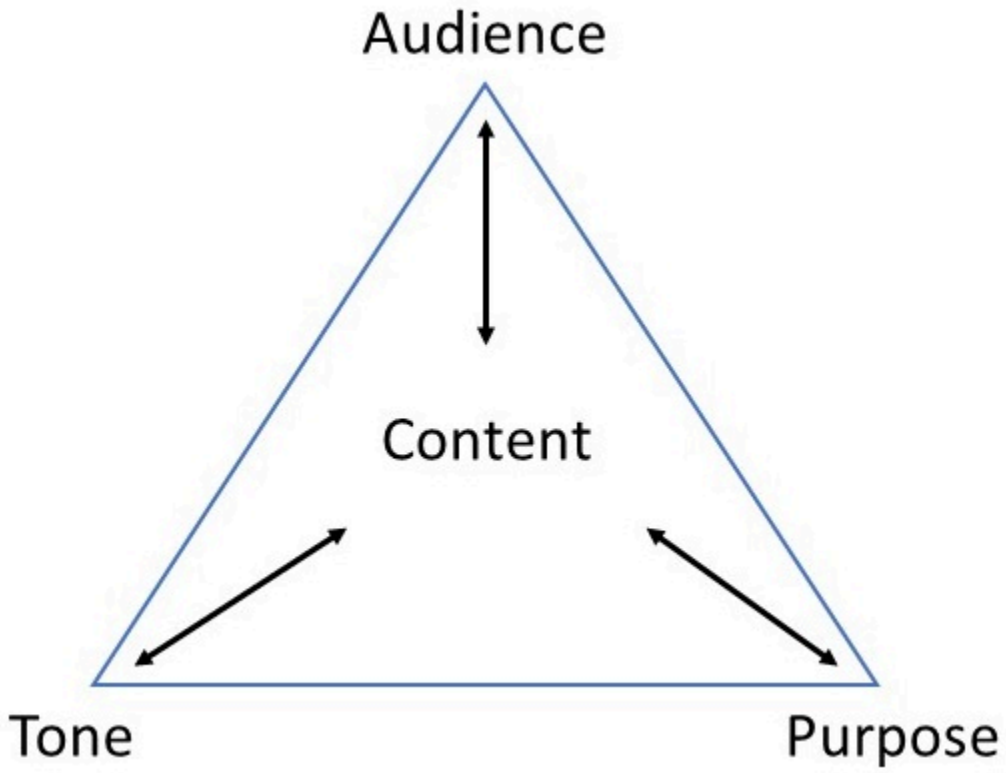


Figure 2.3.1: The Rhetorical Triangle

The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what each paragraph of the essay covers and how the paragraph supports the main point or thesis.

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose for a piece of writing identifies the reason you write it by, basically, answering the question "Why?" For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theater. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform him or her of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your congressman? To persuade him to address your community's needs.

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

- to classify
- to analyze
- to synthesize
- to evaluate

A ***classification*** shrinks a large amount of information into only the **essentials**, using your own words; although shorter than the original piece of writing, a classification should still communicate all the key points and key support of the original document without quoting the original text. Keep in mind that classification moves beyond simple **summary** to be **informative**.

An ***analysis***, on the other hand, separates complex materials into their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. In the sciences, for example, the analysis of simple table salt would require a deconstruction of its parts—the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride: simple table salt.

In an ***academic analysis***, instead of deconstructing compounds, the essay takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

The third type of writing—***synthesis***—combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Take, for example, the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar—or any other combination of instruments—to create a new sound. The purpose of an academic **synthesis** is to blend individual documents into a new document by considering the main points from one or more pieces of writing and linking the main points together to create a new point, one not **replicated** in either document.

Finally, an ***evaluation*** judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations in everyday life are often not only dictated by set standards but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge such as a supervisor's evaluation of an employee in a particular job. Academic evaluations, likewise, communicate your opinion and its justifications about a particular document or a topic of discussion. They are influenced by your reading of the document as well as your prior knowledge and experience with the topic or issue. Evaluations typically require more critical thinking and a combination of **classifying**, **analysis**, and **synthesis** skills.

You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but

also as you read for work or pleasure and, because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as you read. Remember that the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of your paper, helping you make decisions about **content** and **style**.

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

Identifying the Audience

Imagine you must give a presentation to a group of executives in an office. Weeks before the big day, you spend time creating and rehearsing the presentation. You must make important, careful decisions not only about the content but also about your delivery. Will the presentation require technology to project figures and charts? Should the presentation define important words, or will the executives already know the terms? Should you wear your suit and dress shirt? The answers to these questions will help you develop an appropriate relationship with your audience, making them more receptive to your message.

Now imagine you must explain the same business concepts from your presentation to a group of high school students. Those important questions you previously answered may now require different answers. The figures and charts may be too sophisticated, and the terms will certainly require definitions. You may even reconsider your outfit and sport a more casual look. Because the audience has shifted, your presentation and delivery will shift as well to create a new relationship with the new audience.

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

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role. Even in everyday writing activities, you

identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about the audience has become so common that you may not even detect the audience-driven decisions. For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send emails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could **intercept** the message.

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

Example A

Last Saturday, I volunteered at a local hospital. The visit was fun and rewarding. I even learned how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR. Unfortunately, I think I caught a cold from one of the patients. This week, I will rest in bed and drink plenty of clear fluids. I hope I am well by next Saturday to volunteer again.

Example B

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

Most likely, you matched each paragraph to its intended audience with little hesitation. Because each paragraph reveals the author's relationship with the intended readers, you can identify the audience fairly quickly. When writing your

own essays, you must engage with your audience to build an appropriate relationship given your subject.

Imagining your readers during each stage of the writing process will help you make decisions about your writing. Ultimately, the people you visualize will affect what and how you write.

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

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

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

Demographics

These measure important data about a group of people such as their age range, their ethnicity, their religious beliefs, or their gender. Certain topics and assignments will require these kinds of considerations about your audience. For other topics and assignments, these measurements may not influence your writing in the end. Regardless, it is important to consider demographics when you begin to think about your purpose for writing.

Education

Education considers the audience's level of schooling. If audience members have earned a doctorate degree, for example, you may need to elevate your style and use more formal language. Or, if audience members are still in college, you could write in a more relaxed style. An audience member's major or emphasis may also dictate your writing.

Prior Knowledge

This refers to what the audience already knows about your topic. If your readers have studied certain topics, they may already know some terms and concepts related to the topic. You may decide whether to define terms and explain concepts based on your audience's prior knowledge. Although you cannot peer inside the brains of your readers to discover their knowledge, you can make reasonable **assumptions**. For instance, a nursing major would presumably know more about health-related topics than a business major would.

Expectations

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

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

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

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

Exercise

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

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

Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content

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

Content is also shaped by **tone**. When the tone matches the content, the audience will be more engaged, and you will build a stronger relationship with your readers. When applied to that audience of third graders, you would choose simple content that the audience would easily understand, and you would express that content through an enthusiastic tone.

The same considerations apply to all audiences and purposes.

2.4 PREWRITING

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; Kirk Swenson; and Terri Pantuso

Loosely defined, prewriting includes all the writing strategies employed before writing your first draft. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, the following section covers using experience and observations, reading, freewriting, asking questions, listing, and clustering/idea mapping. Using the strategies in the following section can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

Choosing a Topic

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

In the next few sections, you will follow a writer named Mariah as she explores and develops her essay's topic and focus. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and write the first draft.

Experience and Observations

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

their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

Reading

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

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

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

Brainstorming

Brainstorming refers to writing techniques used to:

- Generate topic ideas
- Transfer your abstract thoughts on a topic into more concrete ideas on paper (or digitally on a computer screen)
- Organize the ideas you have generated to discover a focus and develop a working thesis

Although brainstorming techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing

process, you will have to find the techniques that are most effective for your writing needs. The following general strategies can be used when initially deciding on a topic, or for narrowing the focus for a topic: ***freewriting***, *a**sking questions***, ***listing***, and ***clustering/idea mapping***.

In the initial stage of the writing process, it is fine if you choose a general topic. Later you can use brainstorming strategies to narrow the focus of the topic.

Freewriting

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

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

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

Look at Mariah's example below. The instructor allowed the members of the class to choose their own topics, and Mariah thought about her experiences as a communications major. She used this freewriting exercise to help her generate more concrete ideas from her own experience.

Freewriting Example

Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio

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

Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

In everyday situations, you **pose** these kinds of questions to get more information. *Who* will be my partner for the project? *When* is the next meeting? *Why* is my car making that odd noise? When faced with a writing assignment, you might ask yourself, "How do I begin?"

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

When Mariah reread her freewriting notes, she found she had rambled and her thoughts were disjointed. She realized that the topic that interested her most was the one she started with, the media. She then decided to explore that topic by asking herself questions about it. Her purpose was to refine media into a topic she felt comfortable writing about. To see how asking questions can help you choose a topic, take a look at the following chart that Mariah completed to record her questions and answers. She asked herself the questions that reporters and journalists use to gather information for their stories. The questions are often called the *5WH* questions, after their initial letters.

Asking Questions Example

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

Narrowing the Focus

After rereading her essay assignment, Mariah realized her general topic, mass media, is too broad for her class's short paper requirement. Three pages are not enough to cover all the concerns in mass media today. Mariah also realized that although her readers are other communications majors who are interested in the topic, they might want to read a paper about a particular issue in mass media.

The prewriting techniques of brainstorming by freewriting and asking questions

helped Mariah think more about her topic, but the following prewriting strategies can help her (and you) narrow the focus of the topic:

- Listing
- Clustering/Idea Mapping

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

Listing

Listing is a term often applied to describe any prewriting technique writers use to generate ideas on a topic, including freewriting and asking questions. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer screen) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic. The following is Mariah's brainstorming list.

Mariah's Brainstorming List

Mass Media

- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Broadcasting
- Radio Television
- DVD
- Gaming/Video Games
- Internet Cell Phones
- Smart Phones
- Text Messages

- Tiny Cameras
- GPS

From this list, Mariah could narrow her focus to a particular technology under the broad category of "mass media."

Idea Mapping

Idea mapping, sometimes called clustering or webbing, allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped, together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped. Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map:

1. Start by writing your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Moving out from the main circle, write down as many concepts and terms ideas you can think of related to your general topic in blank areas of the page. Jot down your ideas quickly–do not overthink your responses. Try to fill the page.
2. Once you've filled the page, circle the concepts and terms that are relevant to your topic. Use lines or arrows to categorize and connect closely related ideas. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

To continue brainstorming, Mariah tried idea mapping. Review Mariah's idea map in Figure 2.4.1.[1]

1. "Mariah's Idea Map" was derived by Brandi Gomez from an image in: Kathryn Crowther et al, *Successful College Composition*, 2nd ed. Book 8. (Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016), http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Mariah's Idea Map

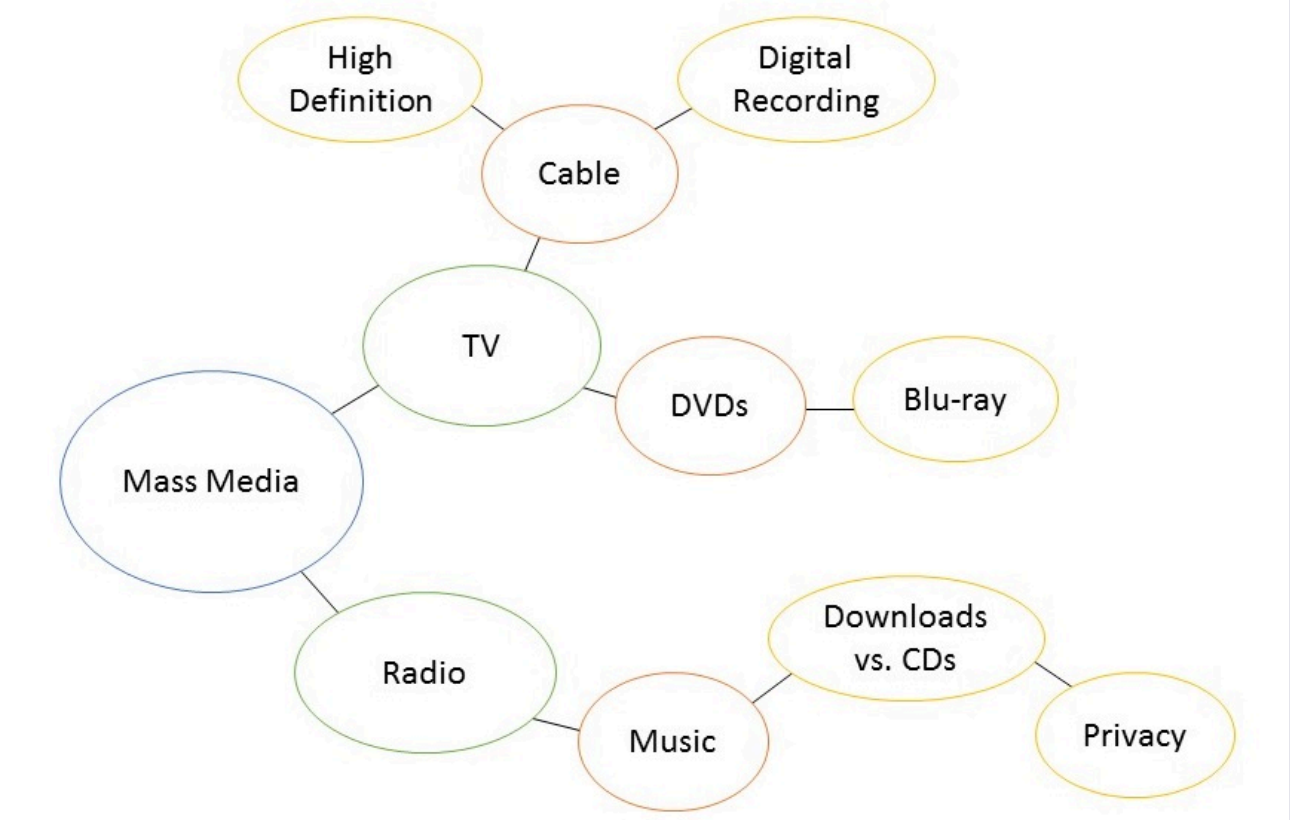


Figure 2.4.1: Mariah's Idea Map

Notice Mariah's largest circle contains her general topic, mass media. Then, the general topic branches into two subtopics written in two smaller circles: television and radio. The subtopic television branches into even more specific topics: cable and DVDs. From there, Mariah drew more circles and wrote more specific ideas: high definition and digital recording from cable and Blu-ray from DVDs. The radio topic led Mariah to draw connections between music, downloads versus CDs, and, finally, piracy. From this idea map, Mariah saw she could consider narrowing the focus of her mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

Topic Checklist: Developing a Good Topic

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

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you choose a broad topic, and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step: Developing a working **thesis** and planning the organization of your essay by creating an outline.

Outlining

Purpose of an Outline

Once your topic has been chosen, your ideas have been generated through brainstorming techniques, and you've developed a working thesis, the next step in the prewriting stage might be to create an outline. Sometimes called a "blueprint," or "plan" for your paper, an outline helps writers organize their thoughts and categorize the main points they wish to make in an order that makes sense.

The purpose of an outline is to help you organize your paper by checking to see if and how your ideas connect to each other, or whether you need to flesh out a point or two. No matter the length of the paper, from a three-page weekly assignment to a 50-page **senior thesis**, outlines can help you see the overall picture. Having an outline also helps prevent writers from "getting stuck" when writing the first draft of an essay.

A well-developed outline will show the **essential** elements of an essay:

- thesis of essay
- main idea of each body paragraph

- evidence/support offered in each paragraph to **substantiate** the main points

A well-developed outline breaks down the parts of your thesis in a clear, **hierarchical** manner. Writing an outline *before* beginning an essay helps the writer organize ideas generated through brainstorming and/or research. In short, a well-developed outline makes your paper easier to write.

The formatting of any outline is not **arbitrary**; the system of formatting and number/letter designations creates a visual hierarchy of the ideas, or points, being made in the essay. Major points, in other words, should not be buried in subtopic levels.

Outlines can also be used for **revision**, oftentimes referred to as backwards, or reverse, outlines. When using an outline for revision purposes, you can identify issues with organization or even find new directions in which to take your essay.

Creating an Outline

- **Identify your topic.** Put the topic in your own words with a single sentence or phrase to help you stay on topic.
- **Determine your main points.** What are the main points you want to make to convince your audience? Refer back to the prewriting/brainstorming exercise of answering 5WH questions: "why or how is the main topic important?" Using your brainstorming notes, you should be able to create a working **thesis**.
- **List your main points/ideas in a logical order.** You can always change the order later as you evaluate your outline.
- **Create sub-points for each major idea.** Typically, each time you have a new number or letter, there needs to be at least two points (i.e. if you have an A, you need a B; if you have a 1, you need a 2; etc.). Though perhaps frustrating at first, it is indeed useful because it forces you to think hard about each point. If you can't create two points, then reconsider including the first in your paper, as it may be **extraneous** information that may detract from your argument.
- **Evaluate.** Review your organizational plan, your blueprint for your paper. Does each paragraph have a controlling idea/topic sentence? Is each point adequately supported? Look over what you have written. Does it make logical sense? Is each point suitably fleshed out? Is there anything included that is unnecessary?

Sample Outline

Thesis: Moving college courses to an **asynchronous** online environment is an effective way of preventing the spread of COVID-19 and offers more students the opportunity to participate.

I. Moving college courses to an asynchronous online environment is an effective way of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

   A. An online environment reduces the risk of in-person contact.

      1. Students don't have to be on-campus, avoiding high-contact living situations
      2. Students don't have to travel, avoiding buses and other high-contact travel environments
      3. Students don't have to sit in lecture halls, avoiding extended indoor exposure

   B. An online environment reduces the risk of contact infections

      1. Students complete group work via chat rooms or online platforms.
      2. Students don't have to touch shared seating, doors, etc.
      3. Students don't have to share lab equipment or other materials

II. Moving college courses to an asynchronous online environment offers more students the opportunity to participate.

   A. An asynchronous course allows students to work at their own pace.

      1. This affords students the ability to complete coursework around a job schedule.
      2. This format is often family-friendly for those who have children or other familial responsibilities.

   B. An asynchronous course provides additional protection for those at high-risk of COVID-19

1. Students may be at high risk or have family members who are high risk
2. The reduced exposure of an online environment allows these students to participate without increasing their risk

2.5 WRITING THESIS STATEMENTS

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; and Kirk Swenson

To be effective, all support in an essay must work together to convey a central point; otherwise, an essay can fall into the trap of being out of order and confusing. Just as a topic sentence focuses and unifies a single paragraph, the thesis statement focuses and unifies an entire essay. This statement is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination; it tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point.

Because writing is not a **linear** process, you may find that the best thesis statement develops near the end of your first draft. However, creating a draft or working thesis early in the writing project helps give the drafting process clear direction. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

A thesis is not just a topic, but rather the writer's comment or interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic you select (for example, school uniforms, social networking), you must ask yourself, "What do I want to say about it?" Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful, and confident.

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

Working Thesis Statements

A strong thesis statement must have the following qualities:

- **It must be arguable.** A thesis statement must state a point of view or

judgment about a topic. An established fact is not considered arguable.

- **It must be supportable.** The thesis statement must contain a point of view that can be supported with evidence (reasons, facts, examples).
- **It must be specific.** A thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a **coherent** argument and remain focused on the topic.

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

1. Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
2. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
3. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
4. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.
5. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxson in the play *Fences* symbolize the challenges of black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.

Pitfalls to Avoid

A thesis is weak when it is simply a **declaration** of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.

Weak Thesis Statement Example

My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.

Weak Thesis Statement Example

Religious radicals across America are trying to legislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.

A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

Weak Thesis Statement Example

Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

Weak Thesis Statement Example

The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

Ways to Revise Your Thesis

Your thesis statement begins as a working thesis statement, an **indefinite** statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing. Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and develop new ideas and reasons for those ideas. **Revision** helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

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

- ***Pinpoint and replace*** all non specific words, such as people, everything, society, or life, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

Pinpoint and Replace Example

Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.
Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use, and be appreciated for, their talents.
Explanation: The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like *people* and *work hard*, the writer can better focus their research and gain more direction in their writing. The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard.

- ***Clarify*** *ideas* that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

Clarify Example

Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.
Revised thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by **alluring** members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.
Explanation: A *joke* means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke* and more accurately defines their stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

- ***Replace any linking verbs with action verbs.*** Linking verbs are forms of the verb *to be*, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

Replace with Action Verbs Example

Working thesis: Kansas City school teachers are not paid enough.
Revised thesis: The Kansas City legislature cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.
Explanation: The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, "Why are they not paid enough?" But this statement does not **compel** them to ask many more questions.

- Asking questions will help you replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:
  - Who is not paying the teachers enough?
  - How much is considered "enough"?
  - What is the problem?
  - What are the results?

- ***Omit any general claims*** that are hard to support.

Omit General Claims Example

Working thesis: Today's teenage girls are too sexualized.
Revised thesis: Teenage girls who are captivated by the sexual images on the internet and social media are conditioned to believe that a woman's worth depends on her sensuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behavior.
Explanation: It is true that some young women in today's society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. Many girls have strict parents, dress appropriately, and do not engage in sexual activity while in middle school and high school. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

- Which teenage girls?
- What constitutes "too" sexualized?
- Why are they behaving that way?
- Where does this behavior show up?
- What are the repercussions?

III. RHETORICAL SITUATION

Introduction

Terri Pantuso

Oftentimes in a composition course, the focus is on getting students to view themselves as part of a larger dialogic, or **discursive**, community. In order to do so, students must understand the rhetorical strategies employed in argumentation. In the section that follows, we introduce you to the concept of rhetoric from the classical viewpoint and discuss ways in which to use Aristotelian strategies. The classic appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos are discussed along with common logical fallacies that weaken an argument. We end the section by covering different rhetorical **modes** of writing that typically precede argumentation and ways in which visuals present an argument.

3.1 WHAT IS RHETORIC?

Melanie Gagich and Terri Pantuso

The definition of rhetoric commonly used is "the art of persuasion." Rhetoric is everywhere and can involve any kind of text including speech, written words, images, movies, documentaries, the news, etc. So it is important to understand how to navigate the murky waters of persuasion and rhetoric.

According to the section titled "Classical Argument: A (Very) Brief History of Rhetoric" from the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website:

> In ancient Greece and Rome, rhetoric was most often considered to be the art of persuasion and was primarily described as a spoken skill. In these societies, **discourse** occurred almost exclusively in the public sphere, so learning the art of effective, convincing speaking was essential for public **orators**, legal experts, politicians, philosophers, generals, and educators. To prepare for the speeches they would need to make in these roles, students engaged in written exercises called *progymnasmata*. Today, rhetorical scholars still use strategies from the classical era to conceptualize argument. However, whereas oral discourse was the main focus of the classical rhetoricians, modern scholars also study the peculiarities of written argument.[1]

Why Do I Need to Think Rhetorically?

A rhetorical analysis asks you to examine the interactions between a text, an author, and an audience. However, before you can begin the analysis you must first understand the historical context of the text and the rhetorical situation.

To locate a text's historical context, you must determine where in history the text is

1. "Classical Argument: A (Very) Brief History of Rhetoric," Purdue Online Writing Lab, accessed August 8, 2019, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/historical_perspectives_on_argumentation/classical_argument.html.

situated—was it written in the past five years? Ten? One hundred? You should think about how that might affect the information being delivered. Once you determine the background of the text, you should determine the rhetorical situation (i.e. who, what, when, where, why). The following questions may help:

- What is the topic of the text?
- Who is the author? What are the author's **credentials**, what sort of experiences have they had? How do their credentials, or lack of, connect (or not) with the topic of the text?
- Who is the target audience? Who did the author have in mind when they created the text?
- Who is the unintended audience? Are they related in any way to the target audience?
- What was the occasion, historical context, or setting? What was happening during the time period when the text was produced? Where was the text distributed or published?
- How does the topic relate to the author, audience, and occasion?
- What is the author's purpose? Why did they create the text?
- In what **medium** was the text originally produced?

Meaning can change based on when, where, and why a text was produced and meaning can change depending on who reads the text. Rhetorical situations affect the meaning of a text because it may have been written for a specific audience, in a specific place, and during a specific time (often referred to as *kairos*). An important part of the rhetorical situation is the audience and since many of the articles were not written with you, a college student in a college writing class, in mind, the meaning you interpret or recognize might be different from the author's original target audience. For example, if you read an article about higher education written in 2016, then you, the reader, are connected with and understand the context of the topic. However, if you were asked to read a text about higher education written in 1876, you would probably have a hard time understanding and connecting to it because you are not the target audience and the text's context (or rhetorical situation) has changed.

Further, the occasion for writing might be very different, too. Articles or scholarly works that are at least five years old or older may include out of date references and may not represent relevant or accurate information (e.g. think of the change regarding online learning in the past few years). Older works require that you

investigate significant historical moments or changes that have occurred since the writing of a given text.

Targeted audience and occasion will all affect the way you, the reader, read a text as well as the date, site, and medium of publication. Therefore, it is your duty as a thoughtful reader to research these aspects in order to fully understand and conceptualize the text's rhetorical situation. Furthermore, even though you might not be a member of the targeted audience, or perhaps might not have even been alive during the production of a text, that does not mean that you cannot recognize rhetorical moves within it. We will examine the aspects of the rhetorical situation in a later section but first, let's review a few of the characteristics of classical rhetoric.

3.2 WHAT IS RHETORICAL ANALYSIS?

Rhetoric: The art of persuasion

Analysis: Breaking down the whole into pieces for the purpose of examination

Unlike summary, a rhetorical analysis does not simply require a restatement of ideas; instead, you must recognize rhetorical moves that an author is making in an attempt to persuade their audience to do or to think something. In the 21st century's abundance of information, it can sometimes be difficult to **discern** what is a rhetorical strategy and what is simple manipulation. However, an understanding of rhetoric and rhetorical moves will help you become more savvy with the information surrounding you on a day-to-day basis. In other words, rhetorical moves can be a form of manipulation, but if you can recognize those moves, then you can be a more critical consumer of information rather than blindly accepting whatever you read, see, hear, etc. as indisputable truth.

The goal of a rhetorical analysis is to explain *what* is happening in the text, *why* the author might have chosen to use a particular move or set of rhetorical moves, and *how* those choices might affect the **audience**. The text you analyze might be explanatory, although there will be aspects of argument because you must negotiate with what the author is *trying to do* and *what you think* the author is doing.

One of the elements of doing a rhetorical analysis is looking at a text's rhetorical situation. **The rhetorical situation is the context out of which a text is created.** Another element of rhetorical analysis is simply reading and summarizing the text. You have to be able to describe the basics of the author's **thesis** and main points before you can begin to analyze it.

To do rhetorical analysis, first connect the rhetorical situation to the text. Move beyond simply **summarizing** and instead look at how the author shapes their text based on its **context**. In developing your reading and analytical skills, allow yourself to think about what you're reading, to question the text and your responses to it as

you read. Consider using the following questions to help you to take the text apart—dissecting it or unpacking to see how it works:

- ***Does the author successfully support the thesis or claim?*** Is the point held consistently throughout the text or does it wander at any point?
- ***Is the evidence the author used effective for the intended audience?*** How might the intended audience respond to the types of evidence that the author used to support the thesis/claim?
- ***What rhetorical moves do you see the author making to help achieve their purpose?*** Are there word choices or content choices that seem to you to be clearly related to the author 's agenda for the text?
- ***Describe the tone in the piece.*** Is it friendly? Authoritative? Does it lecture? Is it biting or sarcastic? Does the author use simple language or is it full of **jargon**? Does the language feel positive or negative? Point to aspects of the text that create the tone; spend some time examining these and considering how and why they work.
- ***Is the author objective, or do they try to convince you to have a certain opinion?*** Why does the author try to persuade you to adopt this viewpoint? If the author is biased, does this interfere with the way you read and understand the text?
- ***Do you feel like the author knows who you are?*** Does the text seem to be aimed at readers like you or at a different audience? What assumptions does the author make about their audience? Would most people find these reasonable, acceptable, or accurate?
- ***Does the flow of the text make sense?*** Is the line of reasoning logical? Are there any gaps? Are there any spots where you feel the reasoning is flawed in some way?
- ***Does the author try to appeal to your emotions?*** Does the author use any controversial words in the headline or the article? Do these affect your reading or your interest?
- ***Do you believe the author?*** Do you accept their thoughts and ideas? Why or why not?

Once you have done this basic, rhetorical, critical reading of your text, you are ready to think about how the rhetorical situation – the context out of which the text arises – influences certain rhetorical appeals that appear in it.

3.3 WHAT IS THE RHETORICAL SITUATION?

Robin Jeffrey; Emilie Zickel; and Terri Pantuso

A key component of rhetorical analysis involves thinking carefully about the rhetorical situation of a text. You can think of the rhetorical situation as the context or set of circumstances out of which a text arises. Any time anyone is trying to make an argument, one is doing so out of a particular context, one that influences and shapes the argument that is being made. When we do a rhetorical analysis, we look carefully at how the rhetorical situation (context) shapes the rhetorical act (the text).

We can understand the concept of a rhetorical situation if we examine it piece by piece, by looking carefully at the rhetorical concepts from which it is built. The philosopher **Aristotle** organized these concepts as author, audience, setting, purpose, and text. Answering the questions about these rhetorical concepts below will give you a good sense of your text's rhetorical situation – the starting point for rhetorical analysis.

We will use the example of Kamala Harris's vice presidential acceptance speech (the text) delivered November 7, 2020 to sift through these questions about the rhetorical situation (context).[1]

Author

The author of a text is the creator – the person who is communicating in order to try to effect a change in their audience. An author doesn't have to be a single person or a person at all – an author could be an organization. To understand the

1. Kamala Harris, "Vice Presidential Acceptance Speech," speech, Wilmington, Delaware, November 7, 2020, in "Read Kamala Harris's Vice President-Elect Acceptance Speech," by Matt Stevens, *New York Times*, November 8, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/article/watch-kamala-harris-speech-video-transcript.html

rhetorical situation of a text, one must examine the identity of the author and their background.

- What kind of experience or authority does the author have in the subject about which they are speaking?
- What values does the author have, either in general or with regard to this particular subject?
- How invested is the author in the topic of the text? In other words, what affects the author's perspective on the topic?

Example of Author Analysis for the Rhetorical Situation
(Kamala Harris's VP Acceptance Speech)

At the time she delivered this speech, Kamala Harris was a first-term vice-presidential nominee, a former US Senator, former Attorney General of California, and the first woman ever elected to the second highest office in the country. Ethnically, Harris identifies as both African American and South Asian American. She became the first person of color, and first woman, to be elected to the office of Vice President. Her political affiliation is with the Democratic party – the liberal political party in America.

Audience

In any text, an author is attempting to **engage** an audience. Before we can analyze how effectively an author engages an audience, we must spend some time thinking about that audience. An audience is any person or group who is the intended **recipient** of the text and also the person/people the author is trying to influence. To understand the rhetorical situation of a text, one must examine who the intended audience is by thinking about these things:

- Who is the author addressing?
  Sometimes this is the hardest question of all. We can get this information of who the author is addressing by looking at where an article is published. Be sure to pay attention to the newspaper, magazine, website, or journal title where the text is published. Often, you can research that publication to get a

good sense of who reads it.

- What is the audience's demographic information (age, gender, etc.)?
- What is/are the background, values, interests of the intended audience?
- How open is this intended audience to the author?
- What **assumptions** might the audience make about the author?
- In what **context** is the audience receiving the text?

Example of Audience Analysis for the Rhetorical Situation
(Kamala Harris's VP Acceptance Speech)

Harris was addressing the American people (and the world) at-large; since her acceptance speech was broadcast on major news networks and the internet, she was speaking to people of all ethnicities, genders, religions, nationalities. Harris was the VP candidate for Joe Biden. Biden's election was contested by the **incumbent**, Donald Trump, and this contributed to tension already present among the country that was enduring a global pandemic. Members of the intended audience included health care workers, first responders, poll workers, etc., as well as women of all ages and demographics. While much of the intended audience was receptive to Harris's speech and the significance of her election, a portion of the audience was in disbelief and felt that the election was **fraudulent**. Given this tension, some audience members might assume that Harris was not legally elected and therefore would not represent them. Some audience members might assume that her gender would impact her ability to perform the duties of her office, while others might assume that Harris would be a **conduit** for change in the country.

Setting

Nothing happens in a vacuum, and that includes the creation of any text. Essays, speeches, photos, political ads – any text – was written in a specific time and/or place, all of which can affect the way the text communicates its message. To understand the rhetorical situation of a text, we can identify the particular occasion or event that prompted the text's creation at the particular time it was

created. When considering the setting in terms of rhetorical analysis, consider the following:

- Was there a debate about the topic that the author of the text addresses? If so, what are (or were) the various perspectives within that debate?
- Did something specific occur that motivated the author to speak out?

Example of Setting Analysis for the Rhetorical Situation
(Kamala Harris's VP Acceptance Speech)

The occasion of Kamala Harris giving this speech was the confirmation that Joe Biden had won enough electoral college votes to be considered the winner of the election. While it is customary for the President-elect to make an acceptance speech, it is less common for a Vice-President-elect to do so. However, given the historical significance of Harris's election, millions of people wanted to hear from her.

Purpose

The purpose of a text blends the author with the setting and the audience. Looking at a text's purpose means looking at the author's motivations for creating it. The author has decided to start a conversation or join one that is already underway. Why have they decided to join in? In any text, the author may be trying to inform, to convince, to define, to announce, or to activate a debate or discussion. When determining rhetorical purpose, consider the following in regard to the author:

- What is the author hoping to achieve with this text?
- Why did the author decide to join the conversation about the topic?
- What does the author want from their audience? What does the author want the audience to do once the text is communicated?

Example of Purpose Analysis for the Rhetorical Situation
(Kamala Harris's VP Acceptance Speech)

Harris's purpose in this speech was to set the tone for the Biden presidency, to acknowledge the hardships many had been enduring, and to attempt to unite the country and prepare it for moving forward with peaceful acceptance.

Text

When analyzing the rhetorical situation of a given text, it is important to consider the format, or medium, in which the text is being made. If you are analyzing an image for rhetorical context, elements such as shading, color, and placement are part of the argument being presented. Other forms of media that a text might take include a written essay, speech, song, protest sign, meme, or sculpture. When examining the rhetorical situation of a text's medium, ask yourself the following:

- What is gained by having a text composed in a particular format/medium?
- What limitations does that format/medium have?
- What opportunities for expression does that format/medium have (that perhaps other formats do not have?)

Example of Text Analysis for the Rhetorical Situation
(Kamala Harris's VP Acceptance Speech)

Acceptance speeches are intended to celebrate victories while uniting across political lines. While the tone may be formal, oftentimes candidates use this opportunity to express gratitude. Given that they are broadcast internationally, there are two ways to examine the text: the written form and the spoken word.

A Note About Audience

What is the difference between an audience and a reader? Thinking about audience can be a bit tricky. Your audience is the person or group that you intend to reach with your writing. We sometimes call this the intended audience – the group of people to whom a text is intentionally directed. But any text likely also has an unintended audience, a reader (or readers) who read it even without being the

intended recipient. The reader might be the person you have in mind as you write, the audience you're trying to reach, but they might be some random person you've never thought of a day in your life. You can't always know much about random readers, but you should have some understanding of who your audience is. It's the audience that you want to focus on as you shape your message.

3.4 CLASSICAL RHETORIC

Rebecca Jones

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."[1] 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."[2] 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."[3] 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."[4] 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.[5] 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

1. James Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987), xxi.
2. Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing*, xxiii.
3. Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing*, xxvii.
4. Murphy, *Quintilian On the Teaching and Speaking of Writing*, 6.
5. Plato, "The Dialogues of Plato, vol. 1 [387 AD]," Online Library of Liberty, n.d., accessed May 5, 2010. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=111&layout=html#chapter_39482>.

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 is discussed 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.[6]

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."[7] As a culture, we are skeptical of this kind of position, though often most 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

6. Lee Honeycutt, "Aristotle's Rhetoric: A Hypertextual Resource Compiled by Lee Honeycutt," June 21, 2004, accessed May 5, 2010, 1354a I i.
7. Honeycutt, "Aristotle's Rhetoric," 1355a I i.

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 3.4.1)[8] 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.

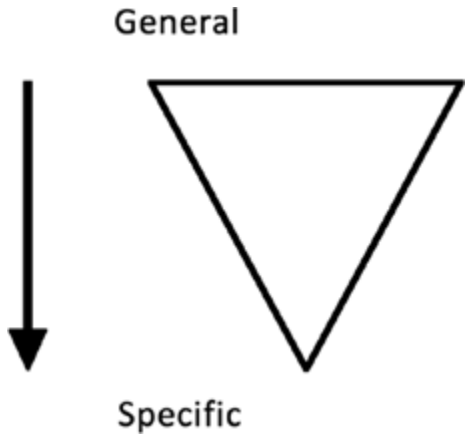


Figure 3.4.1: Deductive Reasoning

For example:

8. "Deductive Reasoning" by Rebecca Jones is in: Rebecca Jones, "Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?," in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, eds. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010), 156-179, https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License.

- **Major Premise:** People who burn flags are unpatriotic.
- **Minor Premise:** Sara burned a flag.
- **Conclusion:** Sara is unpatriotic.

The above line of logic 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."[9]

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.

Inductive reasoning moves in a different direction than deductive reasoning (see Figure 3.4.2[10] below). Inductive reasoning starts with a particular or local statement and moves to a more general conclusion. We can think of inductive reasoning as a stacking of evidence. The more particular examples you give, the more it seems that your conclusion is correct.

Inductive reasoning is a common method for arguing, especially when the

---

9. Stanley Fish, "Democracy and Education," *New York Times,* July 22, 2007, accessed May 5, 2010.
10. "Inductive Reasoning" by Rebecca Jones is in: Rebecca Jones, "Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?," in Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1, eds. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010), 156-179, https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License.

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).

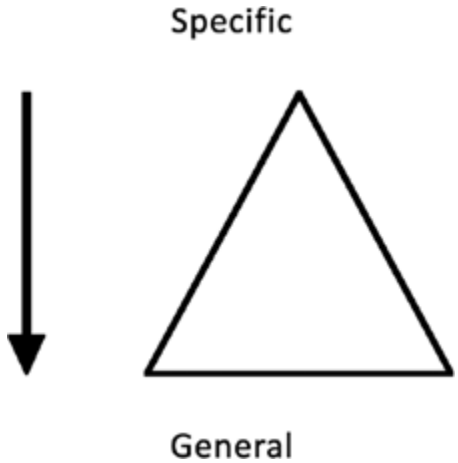


Figure 3.4.2: Inductive Reasoning

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 proves that the point is true.

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."[11]

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.

Example of Logos
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.

11. Lee Honeycutt, "Aristotle's Rhetoric: A Hypertextual Resource Compiled by Lee Honeycutt," June 21, 2004, accessed May 5, 2010, 1356a.

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.

Example of Ethos

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.

Example of Pathos

Car Commercial: Images of a pregnant woman 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. 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.[12]

12. This chapter originally contained the following citation in the Works Cited: Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 4th ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2009. Print.

3.5 RHETORICAL APPEALS: LOGOS, PATHOS, AND ETHOS DEFINED

Melanie Gagich; Emilie Zickel; and Terri Pantuso

Rhetoric, as the previous sections have discussed, is the way that authors use and manipulate language in order to persuade an audience. Once we understand the rhetorical situation out of which a text is created (why it was written, for whom it was written, by whom it was written, how the medium in which it was written creates certain constraints, or perhaps freedom of expression), we can look at how all of those contextual elements shape the author's creation of the text.

We can look first at the classical rhetorical appeals which are the three ways to classify an author's intellectual, moral, and emotional approaches to getting the audience to react in the manner in which the author may have intended.

Rhetorical Appeals

In composition studies, the term rhetorical appeals refers to the use of ethos, pathos, and logos. These are classical Greek terms dating back to Aristotle who is traditionally viewed as the creator of rhetoric. To be rhetorically effective (and thus persuasive), an author must engage the audience in a variety of compelling ways which involves carefully choosing how to craft their argument so that the intended outcome is achieved. Often that outcome occurs when the audience agrees with the argument or point being presented. Aristotle defined these modes of engagement and gave them the terms that we still use today: logos, pathos, and ethos.

Logos: Appeal to Logic

Logic. Reason. Rationality. Logos is brainy and intellectual, cool, calm, collected, objective.
When an author relies on logos, it means that they are using logic, careful

structure, and objective evidence to appeal to the audience. Objective evidence is anything that can be proven with statistics or other facts via more than one source. Oftentimes that evidence has been validated by more than one authority in the field of study.

For example, if Dr. Smith was trying to convince her students to complete their homework, she might explain that she understands everyone is busy and they have other classes (non-biased), but that completing their homework will help them get a better grade on their test (explanation). She could add to this explanation by providing statistics showing the number of students who failed and didn't complete their homework versus the number of students who passed and did complete their homework (factual evidence). This is an example of logos employed for the purposes of argument and persuasion.

Logical appeals rest on **rational** modes of thinking**,** such as:

- **Comparison:** a comparison between one thing (with regard to your topic) and another, similar thing to help support your claim. It is important that the comparison is fair and valid – the things being compared must share significant traits of similarity.
- **Cause/effect thinking:** you argue that X has caused Y, or that X is likely to cause Y to help support your claim. Be careful with the latter – it can be difficult to predict that something "will" happen in the future.
- **Deductive reasoning:** starting with a broad, general claim/example and using it to support a more specific point or claim (picture an hourglass where the sands gather in the middle)
- **Inductive reasoning:** using several specific examples or cases to make a broad generalization (consider the old question of "if your friend jumped off of a bridge, would you" to make the sweeping claim that all young people are easily persuaded to follow the crowd)
- **Analogical reasoning:** moves from one particular claim/example to another, seemingly **sequential** (sometimes this line of reasoning is used to make a guilt by association claim)
- **Exemplification:** use of many examples or a variety of evidence to support a single point
- **Elaboration:** moving beyond just including a fact, but explaining the

significance or relevance of that fact
- **Coherent thought:** maintaining a well-organized line of reasoning; not repeating ideas or jumping around

Pathos: Appeal to Emotions

When an author relies on pathos, it means that they are trying to tap into the audience's emotions to get them to agree with the author's claim. An author using pathos appeals wants the audience to feel something: anger, pride, joy, rage, or happiness. For example, many of us have seen the ASPCA commercials that use photographs of injured puppies, or sad-looking kittens, and slow, depressing music to emotionally persuade their audience to donate money. This is a classic example of the use of pathos in argument.

Pathos-based rhetorical strategies are any strategies that get the audience to "open up" to the topic, the argument, or to the author through an emotional connection. Emotions can make us vulnerable and an author can use this vulnerability to get the audience to believe that their argument is a compelling one.

Pathos appeals might include:

- Expressive descriptions of people, places, or events that help the reader to feel or experience those events
- Vivid imagery of people, places or events that help the reader to feel like they are seeing those events
- Sharing personal stories that make the reader feel a connection to, or empathy for, the person being described
- Using emotion-laden vocabulary as a way to put the reader into that specific emotional mindset (what is the author trying to make the audience feel? and how are they doing that?)
- Using any information that will evoke an emotional response from the audience. This could involve making the audience feel empathy or disgust for the person/group/event being discussed, or perhaps connection to or

rejection of the person/group/event being discussed.

When reading a text, try to locate where the author is trying to convince the reader by strictly using emotions because, if used to excess, pathos appeals can indicate a lack of substance or emotional manipulation of the audience. If the only way in which an author can persuade the reader is by making him/her sad or angry, does that make for a solid, valid argument?

Ethos: Appeal to Values/Trust

Appeals using ethos are typically two faceted focusing on audience values and authorial credibility/character.

On the one hand, when an author makes an ethical appeal, they are attempting to *tap into the values or ideologies that the audience holds*. Examples include patriotism, tradition, justice, equality, dignity for all humankind, self-preservation, or other specific social, religious or philosophical values (Christian values, socialism, capitalism, feminism, etc.). These values can sometimes feel very close to emotions, but they are felt on a social level rather than only on a personal level. When an author evokes the values that the audience cares about as a way to justify or support their argument, we classify that as ethos. The audience will feel that the author is making an argument that is "right" (in the sense of moral "right"-ness, i.e., *My argument rests upon the values that matter to you. Therefore, you should accept my argument*). This first part of the definition of ethos, then, is focused on the audience's values.

On the other hand, this sense of referencing what is "right" in an ethical appeal connects to the other sense of ethos, the author. Ethos that is centered on the author revolves around two concepts: the credibility of the author and their character.

Credibility of the speaker/author is determined by their knowledge and expertise in the subject at hand. For example, if you are learning about Einstein's Theory of Relativity, would you rather learn from a professor of physics or a cousin who took two science classes in high school thirty years ago? It is fair to say that, in general, the professor of physics would have more credibility to

discuss the topic of physics than your cousin. To establish their credibility, an author may draw attention to who they are or what kinds of experience they have with the topic being discussed as an ethical appeal (i.e., *Because I have experience with this topic – and I know my stuff! – you should trust what I am saying about this topic*). Some authors do not have to establish their credibility because the audience already knows who they are and that they are credible.

Character is another aspect of ethos that is different from credibility because it involves personal history and sometimes personality traits. A person can be credible but lack character or vice versa. For example, in politics, sometimes the most experienced candidates – those who might be the most credible candidates – fail to win elections because voters do not accept their character. Politicians take pains to shape their character as leaders who have the interests of the voters at heart. The candidate who successfully proves to the voters (the audience) that they have the type of character that they can trust is more likely to win.

Thus, ethos comes down to trust. How can the author get the audience to trust him or her so that they will accept their argument? How can the author make himself or herself appear as a credible speaker who embodies the character traits that the audience values?

In building ethical appeals, we may see authors:

- Referring either directly or indirectly to the values that matter to the intended audience (so that the audience will trust the speaker)
- Using language, phrasing, imagery, or other writing styles common to people who hold those values, thereby "talking the talk" of people with those values (again, so that the audience is inclined to trust the speaker)
- Referring to their experience and/or authority with the topic (and therefore demonstrating their credibility)
- Referring to their own character, or making an effort to build their character in the text

When reading, you should always think about the author's credibility regarding the subject as well as their character. Here is an example of a rhetorical move that connects with ethos: when reading an article about abortion, the author mentions that she has had an abortion. That is an example of an ethical move

because the author is creating credibility via anecdotal evidence and first person narrative. In a rhetorical analysis project, it would be up to you, the analyzer, to point out this move and associate it with a rhetorical strategy.

When Writers Misuse Logos, Pathos, or Ethos, Arguments can be Weakened

Above, we defined and described what logos, pathos, and ethos are and why authors may use those strategies. Sometimes, using a combination of appeals leads to a sound, balanced, and persuasive argument. It is important to understand, though, that using rhetorical appeals does not always lead to a sound, balanced argument. In fact, any of the appeals could be misused or overused. When that happens, arguments can be weakened.

Exercise

Using a social media platform, find a topic that is trending for today and create an argument using ethos, pathos, and logos for that topic.

3.6 LOGICAL FALLACIES

Melanie Gagich; Emilie Zickel; and Terri Pantuso

As previously noted, using ethos, pathos, and logos in an argument does not mean that the argument made is necessarily a good one. In academia, especially, we care a lot about making our arguments logically sound; we care about logos. We seek to create work that is rooted in rational **discourse**. We seek to produce our own rational discourse. We value carefully researched, methodically crafted work. Thus, to be a strong academic writer, one should seek to avoid logical fallacies, which are flaws in reasoning.

To refer to something as a fallacy means to say that it is false. Think of the concept of a logical fallacy as something that makes an argument problematic, open to attack, or weak. In academic discourse, logical fallacies are seen as failures – as things we want to avoid.

Thinking about fallacies can be confusing because we see them all the time: in advertising, in conversation, in political discourse. Fallacies are everywhere. But as students of rhetoric, part of our job is to spend time identifying these fallacies in both our own writing and in others' as a way to avoid them.

Table 3.6.1 contains a partial list of logical fallacies.

Logical Fallacies – A Partial List	
Hasty Generalization	A conclusion or judgement made from insufficient evidence. When one piece of evidence or information is used to make a broad conclusion or statement.
Cherry Picking	Picking and choosing only some of the available evidence in order to present only points most favorable to your point of view. If someone knowingly chooses certain (favorable) pieces of information and conveniently ignores less favorable information, then the argument is not supported by all of the available research.
Straw Man	An oversimplification of an opposing perspective so that it becomes easy to attack. This is unfair and illogical because when one oversimplifies or inaccurately represents an argument and refutes that oversimplified version, one is not actually addressing the argument.
Red Herring	Changing topics to avoid the point being discussed. This is an argument tactic in which one attempts to change the conversation, often by bringing up information that is not relevant to the claim or point being debated, in order to try to control the conversation. This can be a way to avoid having to address or answer the question at hand, and it harms the quality of an argument.
Ad Hominem	Making a personal attack rather than engaging with someone's ideas such as the following: "You are an idiot! That's why you're wrong!" This type of logical fallacy occurs when an arguer attacks or insults the person making opposing arguments instead of attacking the ideas, the logic, or the evidence within the opposing argument itself.
Ad Populum	Making an argument solely based upon the perceived shared beliefs of a group such as the following: "This is about freedom and righteousness, and if you believe in those things, then you should believe my argument." This is an example of misused ethos – when the author is referencing the values that the audience cares about so that they think only about the values and not about the content of the argument (or, likely, the fact that there is little intellectual substance in what is being said).
False Dilemma, Either/or	This is an argument that attempts to create a situation of absolutes with no options in between such as the following: "Either we intervene or we are basically no better than the Nazis." This thinking is fallacious because it assumes that there are only two options, with nothing in between.
Slippery Slope	This is a fallacy that assumes that one thing is going to have a series of consequences or effects–often leading to a worst case scenario such as the following: "If we let this happen, then that will happen and then the worst possible thing will happen." It is false reasoning because 1) it's impossible to predict the future, 2) it is illogical to suggest that one action will always necessarily lead to the worst possible outcome, and 3) it assumes a very specific chain of future events. This "if we let this happen there will be some horrible end" is a misuse of cause/effect reasoning, often with some pathos (fear) sprinkled in.
Bandwagon	This is a fallacy that assumes one will follow the crowd, sort of by peer pressure. Consider the old adage "Everybody's doing it!" The problem with this type of fallacy is that it assumes the reader/listener will only follow the crowd and not exercise free thought.

Logical Fallacies – A Partial List	
False Authority	This fallacy attempts to use credentials of one to support another claim even when those credentials are not valid for the argument at hand such as the following: "Because X says it's true, it must be true!" For example, someone with a PhD in music theory might know a great deal about genetically modified foods based upon readings; however, citing that person as an expert in the field would be a fallacy.
Dogmatism	This fallacy relies on the assumption that the truth is self-evident and needs no further explanation such as the following: "Global warming is real because polar bears are dying." This line of reasoning is often aggressive and invasive. Someone relying upon this tactic refuses to hear the other side.
Stacking the Deck	This fallacy is used when only one line of reasoning or evidence is used to support a claim/argument. When used, this fallacy ignores oppositional reasoning or counterevidence.
Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc	This is a Latin phrase that means "after this, therefore because of this." This means that someone makes a claim that one event caused another, when it is instead a correlation. An extreme example of this might be someone claiming that the sunrise causes people to brush their teeth, just because many people brush their teeth in the morning.
Begging the Question	This fallacy occurs when the speaker assumes that the conclusion of his/her argument is valid without proving the lines of reasoning. Many times, the support used for the claim is simply a repetitious restatement of the conclusion. Oftentimes, this type of argument feels circular or redundant.
Equivocation	This fallacy relies on the ambiguous use of a key term within the argument thereby misleading the reader/listener. An example might be the use of the term "undocumented workers" to signify persons who are not citizens of a country yet work/live in a country. Oftentimes, equivocations rely on half-truths that give the illusion of an honest overall appearance to the argument.
Non Sequitur (it does not follow)	This fallacy skips or confuses logical steps thereby making an argument appear to be hollow. The result is often a conclusion that does not follow from the evidence provided.

Table 3.6.1. Logical Fallacies – A Partial List

When reading or listening to an argument, be **cognizant** of when the reasoning relies upon one of these fallacies of logic. If it does, question the source and the information presented carefully.

As you draft ideas for your own arguments, test each of your reasons/claims against these definitions. If you find that you have used any of these fallacies to build your argument, revise for clarity.

Exercise

Select five (5) of the logical fallacies presented above and write an example for each. Then, in a brief statement explain the nature of the fallacies you have written.

3.7 RHETORICAL MODES OF WRITING

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; Kirk Swenson; Ann Inoshita; Karyl Garland; Kate Sims; Jeanne K. Tsutsui Keuma; Tasha Williams; Susan Wood; and Terri Pantuso

Rhetorical modes simply mean the ways we can effectively communicate through language. Each day people interact with others to tell a story about a new pet, describe a transportation problem, explain a solution to a science experiment, evaluate the quality of an information source, persuade a customer that a brand is the best, or even reveal what has caused a particular medical issue. We speak in a manner that is purposeful to each situation, and writing is no different. While rhetorical modes can refer to both speaking and writing, in this section we discuss the ways in which we shape our writing according to our purpose or intent. *Your purpose for writing determines the mode you choose*.

Typically speaking, the four major categories of rhetorical modes are narration, description, exposition, and persuasion.

1. The **narrative** essay tells a relevant story or relates an event.
2. The **descriptive** essay uses vivid, sensory details to draw a picture in words.
3. The writer's purpose in expository writing is to explain or inform. Oftentimes, **exposition** is subdivided into other modes: classification, evaluation, process, definition, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect.
4. In the **persuasive** essay, the writer's purpose is to persuade or convince the reader by presenting one idea against another and clearly taking a stand on one side of the issue. We often use several of these modes in everyday and professional writing situations, so we will also consider special examples of these modes such as personal statements and other common academic writing assignments.

Whether you are asked to write a cause/effect essay in a history class, a comparison/contrast report in biology, or a narrative email recounting the events in a situation on the job, you will be equipped to express yourself precisely and communicate your message clearly. Learning these rhetorical modes will also help you to become a more effective writer.

Narration

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration. A narrative can be factual or fictional. A factual story is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded in real life. A fictional story is a made-up, or imagined, story. When writing a fictional story, we can create characters and events to best fit our story.

The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is determined by a writer's purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart from real people and events because their intentions are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories, whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. However, sometimes it can be effective to begin with an exciting moment from the **climax** of the story ("flash-forward") or a pivotal event from the past ("flash-back") before returning to a chronological narration. Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story.

The following are the other basic components of a narrative:

- **Plot:** The events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Characters:** The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, or the protagonist.
- **Conflict:** The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that the protagonist must solve or overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.
- **Theme:** The ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Exercises

- Write the narrative of a typical Saturday in your life.
- Write a narrative of your favorite movie.

Description

Writers use description in writing to make sure that their audience is fully immersed in the words on the page. This requires a concerted effort by the writer to describe the world through the use of sensory details.

As mentioned earlier, sensory details are descriptions that appeal to our sense of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. The use of sensory details provides you the greatest possibility of relating to your audience and thus engaging them in your writing, making descriptive writing important not only during your education but also during everyday situations. To make your writing vivid and appealing, avoid empty descriptors if possible. Empty descriptors are adjectives that can mean different things to different people. Good, beautiful, terrific, and nice are examples. The use of such words in descriptions can lead to misreads and confusion. A good day, for instance, can mean far different things depending on one's age, personality, or tastes.

The Structure of a Description Essay

Description essays typically describe a person, a place, or an object using sensory details. The structure of a descriptive essay is more flexible than in some of the other rhetorical modes. The introduction of a description essay should set up the **tone** and focus of the essay. The **thesis** should convey the writer's overall impression of the person, place, or object described in the body paragraphs.

The organization of the essay may best follow spatial order, which means an arrangement of ideas according to physical characteristics or appearance. Depending on what the writer describes, the organization could move from top to bottom, left to right, near to far, warm to cold, frightening to inviting, and so on. For example, if the subject were a client's kitchen in the midst of renovation, you might start at one side of the room and move slowly across to the other end, describing appliances, cabinetry, and so on. Or you might choose to start with older remnants of the kitchen and progress to the new installations. Or maybe start with the floor and move up toward the ceiling.

Exercises

- Describe various objects found in your room.
- Describe an analog clock.

Classification

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. For example, cars can be classified by type (convertible, sedan, station-wagon, or SUV) or by the fuel they use (diesel, petrol, electric, or hybrid). Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world. Keep both of these elements in mind when writing a classification essay. It's best to choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays. The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.

The Structure of a Classification Essay

The classification essay opens with a paragraph that introduces the broader topic. The **thesis** should then explain how that topic is divided into subgroups and why. Take the following introductory paragraph, for example:

> When people think of New York, they often think of only New York City. But New York is actually a diverse state with a full range of activities to do, sights to see, and cultures to explore. In order to better understand the diversity of New York State, it is helpful to break it into these five separate regions: Long Island, New York City, Western New York, Central New York, and Northern New York.

The underlined thesis explains not only the category and subcategory, but also the rationale for breaking the topic into those categories. Through this classification essay, the writer hopes to show the readers a different way of considering the state of New York.

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each region of New York would have its own paragraph. To avoid settling for an overly simplistic classification, make sure you break down any given topic at least three different ways. This will help you think outside the box and perhaps even learn something entirely new about a subject.

The conclusion should bring all of the categories and subcategories back together again to show the reader the big picture. In the previous example, the conclusion might explain how the various sights and activities of each region of New York add to its diversity and complexity.

Exercises

- Classify your college by majors (i.e. biology, chemistry, physics, etc.).
- Classify the variety of fast food places available to you by types of foods sold in each location.

Evaluation

Writers evaluate arguments in order to present an informed and well-reasoned judgment about a subject. While the evaluation will be based on their opinion, it should not seem opinionated. Instead, it should aim to be reasonable and unbiased. This is achieved through developing a solid judgment, selecting appropriate **criteria** to evaluate the subject, and providing clear evidence to support the criteria.

Evaluation is a type of writing that has many real-world applications. Anything can be evaluated. For example, evaluations of movies, restaurants, books, and technology ourselves are all real-world evaluations.

The Structure of an Evaluation Essay

Evaluation essays are typically structured as follows.

Subject: First, the essay will present the subject. What is being evaluated? Why? The essay begins with the writer giving any details needed about the subject.

Judgement: Next, the essay needs to provide a judgment about a subject. This is the thesis of the essay, and it states whether the subject is good or bad based on how it meets the stated criteria.

Criteria: The body of the essay will contain the **criteria** used to evaluate the subject. In an evaluation essay, the criteria must be appropriate for evaluating the subject under consideration. Appropriate criteria will help to keep the essay from seeming biased or unreasonable. If authors evaluated the quality of a movie based on the snacks sold at the snack bar, that would make them seem unreasonable, and their evaluation may be disregarded because of it.

Evidence: The evidence of an evaluation essay consists of the supporting details authors provide based on their judgment of the criteria. For example, if the subject of an evaluation is a restaurant, a judgment could be “Kay’s Bistro provides an unrivaled experience in fine dining.” Some authors evaluate fine dining restaurants by identifying appropriate criteria in order to rate the establishment’s food quality, service, and atmosphere. The examples are the evidence.

Another example of evaluation is literary analysis; judgments may be made about

a character in the story based on the character's actions, characteristics, and past history within the story. The scenes in the story are evidence for why readers have a certain opinion of the character.

Job applications and interviews are more examples of evaluations. Based on certain criteria, management and hiring committees determine which applicants will be considered for an interview and which applicant will be hired.

Exercises

- Evaluate a restaurant. What do you expect in a good restaurant? What criteria determines whether a restaurant is good?
- List three criteria that you will use to evaluate a restaurant. Then dine there. Afterwards, explain whether or not the restaurant meets each criteria, and include evidence (qualities from the restaurant) that backs your evaluation.
- Give the restaurant a star rating. (5 Stars: Excellent, 4 Stars: Very Good, 3 Stars: Good, 2 Stars: Fair, 1 Star: Poor). Explain why the restaurant earned this star rating.

Process

The purpose of a process essay is to explain how to do something (directional) or how something works (informative). In either case, the formula for a process essay remains the same. The process is articulated into clear, definitive steps.

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process. From learning to ride a bike as a child to starting a new job as an adult, we initially needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are—and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together.

The Structure of a Process Essay

The process essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement

that states the goal of the process. The organization of a process essay typically follows **chronological** order. The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur, and so your body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. But if a series of simple steps is easy to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph. Words such as first, second, third, next, and finally are cues to orient readers and organize the content of the essay.

Finally, it's a good idea to always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a peer read over your analysis will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.

Exercises

- Describe the process for applying to college.
- Describe the process of your favorite game (board, card, video, etc.).

Definition

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: to write an extended definition of a word or term. But defining terms in writing is often more complicated than just consulting a dictionary. In fact, the way we define terms can have far-reaching consequences for individuals as well as collective groups. Take, for example, a word like alcoholism. The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as marriage and climate change, has an enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Debating the definition of a word or term might have an impact on your relationship or your job, or it might simply be a way to understand an unfamiliar phrase in popular culture or a technical term in a new profession.

Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can be difficult at first, but once a definition is established between two people or a group of people, it is easier to have productive dialogues. Definitions, then, establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse, which is why they are so important.

When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as hero, immigration, or loyalty, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay. For definition essays, try to think of concepts in which you have a personal stake. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has value and importance to you.

The Structure of a Definition Essay

The definition essay opens with a general discussion of the term to be defined. You then state your definition of the term as your thesis. The rest of the essay should explain the **rationale** for your definition. Remember that a dictionary's definition is limiting, so you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. Indeed, unless you are specifically addressing an element of the dictionary definition (perhaps to dispute or expand it), it is best to avoid quoting the dictionary in your paper. Instead, consider the context in which you are using the word. Context identifies the circumstances, conditions, or setting in which something exists or occurs. Often words take on different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the ideal leader in a battlefield setting could likely be very different from a leader in an elementary school setting. If a context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be vague and confusing.

The remainder of the essay should explain different aspects of the term's definition. For example, if you were defining a good leader in an elementary classroom setting, you might define such a leader according to personality traits: patience, consistency, and flexibility. Each attribute would be explained in its own paragraph. Be specific and detailed: flesh out each paragraph with examples and connections to the larger context.

Exercises

- Define what is meant by the word *local*.
- Define what is meant by the word *community*.

Comparison and Contrast

Comparison in writing discusses elements that are similar, while contrast in writing discusses elements that are different. A compare-and-contrast essay, then, analyzes two subjects by examining them closely and comparing them, contrasting them, or both. The key to a good compare-and-contrast essay is to choose two or more subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities. For example, if you wanted to focus on contrasting two subjects you would not pick apples and oranges; rather, you might choose to compare and contrast two types of oranges or two types of apples to highlight **subtle** differences. For example, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.

Similarly, to focus on comparison, choose two subjects that seem at first to be unrelated. For a comparison essay, you likely would not choose two apples or two oranges because they share so many of the same properties already. Rather, you might try to compare how apples and oranges are quite similar. The more **divergent** the two subjects initially seem, the more interesting a comparison essay will be.

The Structure of a Comparison-and-Contrast Essay

The compare-and-contrast essay starts with a thesis that clearly states the two subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both, and the reason for doing so. The thesis could lean more toward comparing, contrasting, or both. Remember, the point of comparing and contrasting is to provide useful knowledge to the

reader. Take the following thesis as an example that leans more toward contrasting.

Thesis statement: Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.

Here the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), and it makes a claim about the results that might prove useful to the reader. You may organize compare-and-contrast essays in one of the following two ways:

1. According to the subjects themselves, discussing one and then the other.
2. According to individual points, discussing each subject in relation to each point.

The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience.

Exercises

- Compare two types of fruit, then
- Contrast how they are different from each other

Cause and Effect

It is often considered human nature to ask, "why?" and "how?" We want to know how our child got sick so we can better prevent it from happening in the future, or why our colleague received a pay raise because we want one as well. We want to know how much money we will save over the long term if we buy a hybrid car. These examples identify only a few of the relationships we think about in our lives, but each shows the importance of understanding cause and effect.

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various **phenomena** relate in terms of origins and results.

Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult. For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to lead to the sickness. That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments.

Indeed, you can use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

The cause-and-effect essay opens with a general introduction to the topic, which then leads to a thesis that states the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event. The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of the following two primary ways:

1. Start with the cause and then talk about the effects.
2. Start with the effect and then talk about the causes.

For example, if your essay were on childhood obesity, you could start by talking about the effect of childhood obesity and then discuss the cause, or you could start the same essay by talking about the cause of childhood obesity and then move to the effect.

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and **anecdotes**. Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage.

Exercises

- Discuss the cause/effect relationship between studying and good grades
- Discuss the cause/effect impact of sleep deprivation

Persuasion

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies that more than one opinion on the subject can be argued. The idea of an argument often **conjures** up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we enter. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following five features make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

- Introduction and thesis
- Opposing and qualifying ideas
- Strong evidence in support of claim
- Style and tone of language
- A compelling conclusion

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and clearly states the writer's point of view.

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own because it allows you to focus on countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. Readers will know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space. It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience ("ethos"). Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and they will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

> Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be

realistic in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to their ideas.

Exercises

- Write a paragraph where you persuade readers to drink water rather than soda
- Write a paragraph persuading your professors to adopt Open Educational Resources (free textbooks) for all classes

3.8 BIAS IN WRITING

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; and Kirk Swenson

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a **bias** toward listening to music radio stations rather than talk radio or news programs. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you will put forth and the better the final product will be. The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using "I" too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

This section contains material from:
Crowther, Kathryn, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, and Kirk Swenson. *Successful College Composition*. 2nd edition. Book 8. Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016. http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8. Licensed under a Creative

3.9 THE USE OF "I" IN WRITING

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; and Kirk Swenson

The use of "I "in writing is a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing. Be mindful of the use of "I" in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

1. Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention–and usually not in a good way. The use of "I" is no different.
2. The insertion of "I" into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. "I" is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

    <u>Smoking</u> is bad.

    <u>I</u> think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, smoking, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of "I" and "think" replaces smoking as the subject, which draws attention to "I" and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate. Indeed, your argument will be stronger if you remove the "I think" and simply assert "Smoking is bad."

This section contains material from:

3.10 FACTS AND OPINIONS

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; and Kirk Swenson

Facts are statements that can be definitely proven using **objective** data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as true or false. For example, 2 + 2 = 4. This expression identifies a true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data.

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience; this credibility is sometimes called "ethos" and is one way that we make our arguments persuasive. For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should they offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa. In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

This section contains material from:
Crowther, Kathryn, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, and Kirk Swenson. *Successful College Composition*. 2nd edition. Book 8. Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016. http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8. Licensed under a Creative

3.11 USING VISUAL ELEMENTS TO STRENGTHEN ARGUMENTS

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; and Kirk Swenson

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. An appeal based on logic is called "logos," and it persuades the reader using reasoning. Often we can provide information in data form to persuade the reader through logic. Quantitative visuals help display the information clearly. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions. Persuading your reader based on an emotional appeal is called "pathos." Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals that can create an emotional appeal. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

Writing a Persuasive Essay

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your **thesis** should typically

appear somewhere in your introduction. Be sure to have a clear thesis that states your position and previews the main points your essay will address.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice. Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis.

3.12 VISUAL ANALYSIS IN COMPOSITION & RHETORIC AND LITERATURE

James Francis Jr.

In this section, we'll focus on how visual analysis functions within the composition classroom and life outside of that space. To simplify our discussion, we will consider a visual text as one that tells a story or makes a persuasive argument through its form and content without a leading or major focus on the written word. Three questions will guide this unit to help provide a better understanding of visual analysis toward its effective use in writing:

1. What is a visual analysis?
2. Why is visual analysis important?
3. How can we use visual analysis in the composition & rhetoric and literature classrooms?

What is Visual Analysis?

In the simplest understanding, visual analysis is the action of analyzing visuals to comprehend the messages they communicate to various audiences. However, a more complex investigation of the process involves a breakdown into visual rhetoric and visual literacy – the act of communicating through visuals and the ability to "read" them, respectively. In other words, *visuals are composed of elements like color, shape, space, texture, shading, and positioning that convey specific messages and meaning based on the arrangement of the elements working together and their individual impact*. How we "read" (interpret) them depends on **subjective** perspectives that we back up by using the text itself to support our analysis. Let's take a look at an example in Figure 3.12.1.[1]

1. Derek Blackadder, *Bangladeshi Spectrum Workers Protest Deaths*, May 29, 2005, photograph, Flickr, accessed January 6, 2021, https://www.flickr.com/photos/39749009@N00/16231675. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic License.

Figure 3.12.1: Bangladeshi Spectrum workers protest deaths.

By reading the elements of this photograph in Figure 3.12.1 – without any other context provided – we might come to the following conclusions:

- The photograph represents a protest.
- The people pictured are angry/upset about an issue.
- The people are united in their objective.
- This is a public demonstration.
- The situation is immediate.

How can we make these interpretations?

- The image depicts a gathering of people with fists raised high in a symbolic protest gesture.
- Their mouths are open, indicating voices yelling for recognition.
- The flags carried by the people are all the same color.
- There is a police presence in the background, typically to provide public oversight.
- The photo is framed in closeup which provides an urgent mood/tone.

This type of reading is something we do every day as we interpret traffic lights

while driving, say hello to a stranger on the sidewalk based on their facial expression, and binge-watch a favorite TV series into the wee hours of the morning, following visual cues provided in each episode.

Exercise

Activity: Discuss the following image (Figure 3.12.2[2]) with your peers to compare similar and different ways in which you interpret its visual elements:

Figure 3.12.2: Traffic lights.

But if you read visuals all the time, you might not immediately consider their importance as writing tools in composition & rhetoric and literature.

2. Jorge González, *Traffic Lights*, April 22, 2006, photograph, Flickr, accessed January 6, 2021, https://www.flickr.com/photos/35873968@N00/134769430. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic License.

Why is Visual Analysis Important?

Because we read visuals all the time is the exact reason why visual analysis is important. We need to know how to understand visuals because they represent such large components of life: human communication, learning how-to do something, and entertainment; and within the classroom, they function as aids to help us develop critical reading, writing, and comprehension skills that can be applied to various modes of writing.

How Can We Use Visual Analysis in the Composition & Rhetoric and Literature Classrooms?

First, we must remember that literature is written and visual. We encounter stories in the form of poems, short fiction, novellas/novels, screenplays, and stage plays. But stories are also told on the small screen (television) and big screen (cinematic shorts and feature-length movies). In both composition & rhetoric and literature courses, we are sometimes provided a visual text to examine. When prompted to engage in the writing process, your instructor might ask you to write a:

- **Review/Evaluation**
  - A movie review is comparable to a book review. Your argument centers on the personal evaluation of the film (what you like, dislike, or other and why) and takes into account literary/film elements that support your claim. What separates the book and movie review is simply the medium, the format of film as a visual narrative instead of a written narrative. As a movie, elements that relate to the visuals – cinematography, camera shots, framing, montage, set and costume design – are often given priority to discuss how they contribute to the favorable and/or negative review. For a more detailed list of written and visual literature terminology, see the Visual Terminology chart later in this section.

Sample Thesis

The Blair Witch Project[3] uses shaky camera angles and dark settings to successfully convey a sense of dread as a classic modern horror film.

- **Reflection**
  - Watching a TV series or film allows you, the viewer, to compare your own lives with characters and situations represented in the narrative. An **introspective** discussion forms to demonstrate your personal relatability to, or disconnection from, the story. The reflection also offers the writer a chance to discuss how the narrative content of the series/film offers relevant social commentary. For example, Spike Jonze's *Her*[4] makes real-world associations regarding our use or misuse of technology to communicate with each other.
- **Rhetorical Analysis**
  - The writing could involve examining an advertisement, commercial, or marketing campaign to demonstrate how design principles (the CRAP test – contrast, repetition, alignment, **proximity**), use of color, and font choice indicate uses of ethos, pathos, and/or logos to effectively communicate a message and persuade the viewer. Figure 3.12.3[5] is an example.

Example of Rhetorical Analysis

3. *The Blair Witch Project*, directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez (Santa Monica, CA: Artisan Entertainment, 1999).
4. Her, directed by Spike Jones (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2013.)
5. Frank Hazell, *West Point, United States Military Academy, in the Highlands of the Hudson. New York Central Lines - Frank Hazell*. LCCN94504463 (Cropped).jpg. circa 1920s, Wikimedia Commons, accessed January 6, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_Point,_United_States_Military_Academy,_in_the_highlands_of_the_Hudson._New_York_Central_Lines_-_Frank_Hazell._LCCN94504463_(cropped).jpg.

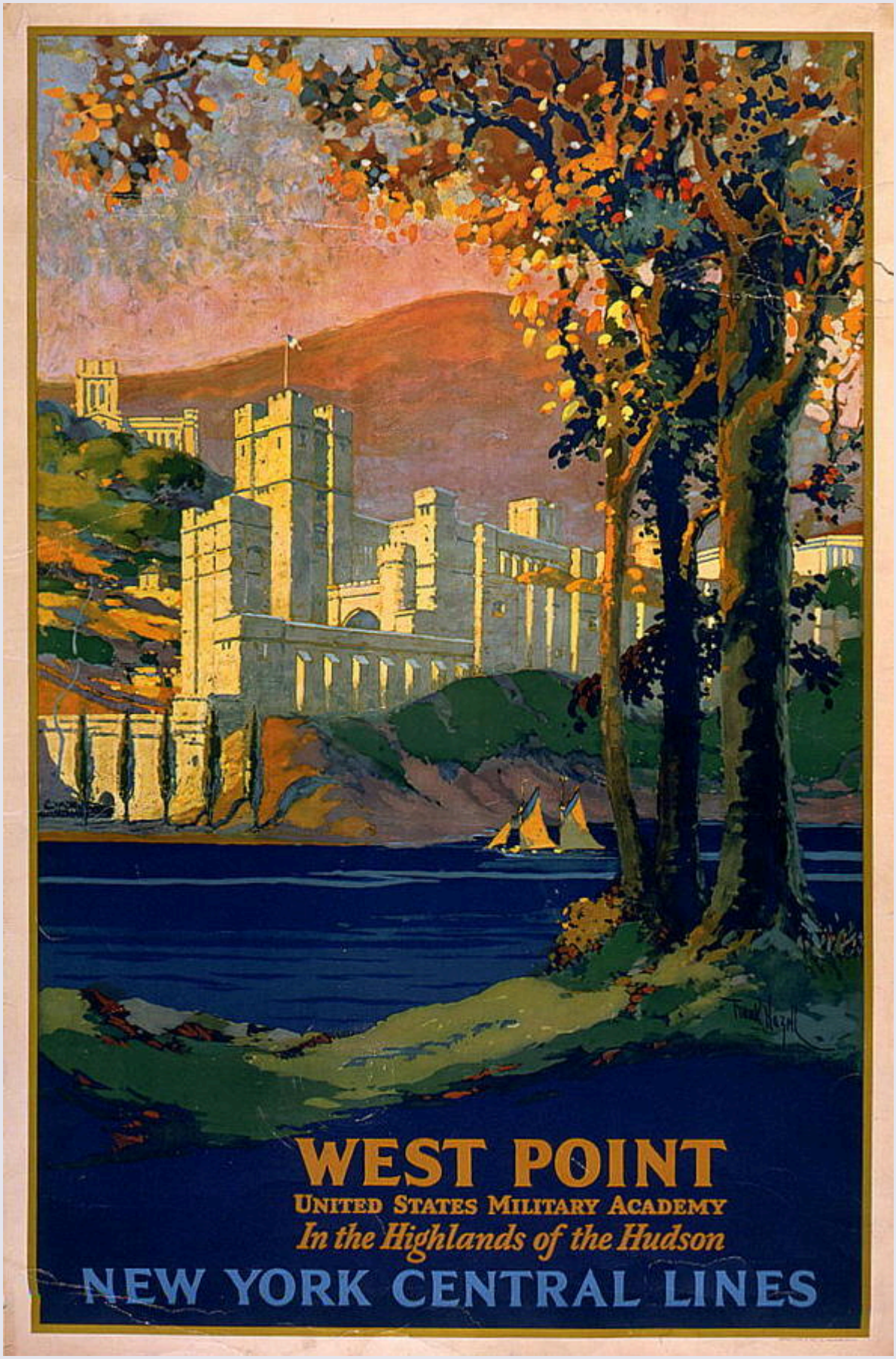

WEST POINT
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
In the Highlands of the Hudson
NEW YORK CENTRAL LINES

Figure 3.12.3: West Point, United States Military Academy, in the highlands of the Hudson.

The soft and warm autumn colors of the natural environment (trees, land, and water) in Figure 3.12.3 **contrast** the hard and cold building material of West Point to create a welcoming atmosphere. We see the poster like an advertisement for a vacation spot more than a military academy: **repetition** bonds the environment to the academy, as the blue and orange (primary and secondary) color scheme of the setting also appears in the text; center-**alignment** pulls focus directly to West Point; and the academy exists in close **proximity** to the natural elements to persuade the viewer to consider it in a similar perspective – natural.

The poster creates an emotional connection with its audience, particularly people who may be on the fence regarding military service and/or individuals who never considered it as a possibility. It is cohesive in its message and persuasive as it appeals to the viewer's desire to connect with nature in a picturesque location. The sailboats convey a sense of tranquility, and the academy resembles a regal castle nestled in a fairy tale landscape. We are convinced that even if we never thought about joining the military, doesn't West Point seem like a great place to start if we make that life decision?

- **Analysis/Critique**
  - Literary analysis and film criticism function in the same manner – unlike the review – to examine the text (story) in order to argue what the narrative form and/or content communicate to its audience. This is typically accomplished by examining story structure, use of literary & film devices; critical theory can also be applied to "read" the text through various lenses of criticism (feminist, critical race theory, Marxist, disability studies, cultural/new historicist, queer theory, gender studies, structuralist). Visual story elements are analyzed and criticism is applied to the text to unpack various arguments presented in the narrative.
  - Art criticism represents another extension of visual analysis in which you might study a painting, photograph, sculpture, installation, drawing, or other medium to interpret what the artist's work represents – what they are communicating to their audience through the art text.

- **Research**
  - The previous section on analysis/critique involves conducting research; however, research writing might also focus on a visual text in an informative manner: providing historical and cultural context, investigating development, offering description and/or definition, reporting findings, and more. In this respect, the visual text is the site of investigation and sometimes a prompt for the writing exercise. You might research the production history of *Inception*[6] or use the film to research a topic presented within it, such as lucid dreaming.

What unifies these various types of writing is that you offer persuasive arguments for your audience to consider, and supporting evidence (most often secondary source material) is used to develop the conversation and validate your claims. Visuals are used as primary sources for evaluation and/or prompts to help illustrate or provide a rhetorical situation to investigate. Although visual analysis has been covered in a few different ways in this section, always consult your instructor and/or your assignment sheet guidelines if you are unsure how visuals are being used in your course and what the expectations are for how you engage with them.

**** The elements/terms mentioned in the various types of visual texts identified above are not exhaustive. For a more comprehensive listing, try performing "soft" research in which you utilize services such as Google or Wikipedia to obtain more information regarding the specific medium.*

Visual Terminology

Written and visual texts share a lot in common regarding the elements that comprise their narratives and how we interpret them, but there are terms that distinguish the two from each other. The following "Written Literature Terminology" list (Table 3.12.1) identifies select terminology for written literature that also apply to visual narratives, but not vice versa. The subsequent "Visual Literature Terminology" list (Table 3.12.2) identifies select terminology that is applicable to visual narratives only.

6. Inception, directed by Christopher Nolan (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2010).

Written Literature Terminology		
antagonist	flat (static) character	realism
antihero	foreshadowing	resolution
author	genre	rhetoric
chapter	implicit meaning (subtext)	rising action
character	interior monologue	round (dynamic) character
characterization	irony	scene
climax	metaphor	setting
conflict	motif	simile
dénouement	narration	story
dialogue	narrator	subplot
dramatic irony	omniscient	theme
explicit meaning	plot	verisimilitude
flashback	point of view (POV)	
flash-forward	protagonist	

Table 3.12.1. Written Literature Terminology

Visual Literature Terminology		
aerial-view shot	depth of field	method acting
angle	diegesis	mise-en-scène
animation	direct narration (breaking the 4th wall)	montage
auteur / auteurism	director	production value
blockbuster	dissolve	rule of thirds
cameo	documentary	score
camera oscura	dolly shot	shot
casting	editing	slow motion
CGI	establishing shot	special effects
character POV	experimental films	split screen
cinematic time	extra	starpower
cinematography	fade-in/fade-out	tracking shot
cinéma vérité	film noir	two-shot
close-up	Foley sound	typecasting
continuity editing	graphic match cut	voice-over narration
costumes	improvisation	

Table 3.12.2. Visual Literature Terminology

3.13 WRITING A VISUAL ANALYSIS

Terri Pantuso

While visuals such as graphs and charts can enhance an argument when used to present evidence, visuals themselves can also present an argument. Every time you encounter an ad for a certain product, stop and consider what exactly the creators of that visual want you to believe. Who is the target audience? Does the message **resonate** more with one group of people than another? While most advertisements or political cartoons seem to be **nebulous** conveyors of commerce, if you look closely you will uncover an argument presented to you, the audience.

So how do you write a visual rhetorical analysis essay? First, you'll want to begin by examining the rhetorical strengths and weaknesses of your chosen visual. If your purpose is to write an argument *about* the visual, such as what artworks are considered "fine art," then your focus will be on demonstrating how the visual meets the criteria you establish in your **thesis**. To do this, try a method adapted from one on working with primary sources where you Observe, Reflect and Question.[1]

Arguments *About* a Visual

Take for example Vincent Van Gogh's "The Starry Night" (Figure 3.13.1).[2] If you want to argue that the painting is a classic example of fine art, you'll first have to define the criteria for your terms "classic" and "fine art." Next, you'll want to look for elements within the painting to support your claim. As you study the painting, try the following strategy for analysis: **Describe/Observe**; **Respond/Reflect**; **Analyze/Question**.

1. This exercise was inspired by a workshop titled "Working with Primary Sources," hosted by Meg Steele, given at the Library of Congress alongside the National Council of Teachers of English Convention in Washington, D.C. in November 2014.
2. Vincent Van Gogh, The Starry Night, 1889, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York City, Wikimedia Commons, accessed November 15, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Gogh_-_Starry_Night_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg.

Figure 3.13.1: The Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh

Describe/Observe

First, describe what you see in the visual quite literally. Begin by focusing on colors, shading, shapes, and font if you're analyzing an advertisement. In the case of "The Starry Night," you might begin by describing the various shades of blue, the black figures that resemble buildings, or shades of yellow that cast light. As you describe them, observe the texture, shape, contour, etc. about each element. For this initial stage, you are simply describing what you observe. Do not look deeper at this point.

Respond/Reflect

Next, respond to the ways in which the things you described have impacted you as a viewer. What emotions are evoked from the various shadings and colors used in the ad or painting? If there are words present, what does the artist's font selection do for the image? This is where you'll want to look for appeals to ethos and pathos. In the case of "The Starry Night," how does the use of black create depth and for what reason? Reflect on how the **intermittent** use of shades of blue impacts the

overall impression of the painting. At this stage, you are questioning the elements used so that you may move to the final stage of analysis.

Analyze/Question

After you've described and reflected upon the various elements of the visual, question what you have noted and decide if there is an argument presented by the visual. This assessment should be made based upon what you've observed and reflected upon in terms of the content of the image alone. Ask yourself if the arrangement of each item in the visual impacts the message? Could there be something more the artist wants you to gather from this visual besides the obvious? Question the criteria you established in your thesis and introduction to see if it holds up throughout your analysis. Now you are ready to begin writing a visual rhetorical analysis of your selected image.

Arguments *Presented By/Within* a Visual

In the summer of 2015, the Bureau of Land Management ran an ad campaign with the #mypubliclandsroadtrip tag. The goal of this campaign was to "explore the diverse landscapes and resources on [our] public lands, from the best camping sites to cool rock formations to ghost towns."[3] The photo below (Figure 3.13.2)[4] is of the King Range National Conservation Area (NCA) in California which was the first NCA designated by Congress in 1970.[5] Returning to the Observe, Reflect and Question method, analysis of this photo might focus on what the image presents overall *as well as* arguments embedded within the image.

---

3. "Drop A Line: Explore Your Lands! My Public Lands Summer Roadtrip 2016," Bureau of Land Management, accessed November 14, 2021, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=0d3fdf6ca0e44d258adde314479b3bdb.
4. Bureau of Land Management, *My Public Lands Roadtrip,* June 3, 2015, digital photograph, Flickr, accessed January 6, 2021, https://www.flickr.com/photos/91981596@N06/18607529954. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License.
5. "King Range National Conservation Area," U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management, accessed January 14, 2021, https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/california/king-range-national-conservation-area.

Figure 3.13.2: King Ranch National Conservation Area in California.

Describe/Observe

As with "The Starry Night", you might start by describing what you see in the visual quite literally. Begin by focusing on colors, shading, shapes, and font. With the Bureau of Land Management ad, you could begin by describing the multiple shades of blues and browns in the landscape. Next, you might focus on the contrasts between the sea and land, and the sea and sky. Making note of textures presented by various rock formations and the sand would add depth to your analysis. You might also note the solitary person walking along the shoreline. Finally, you would want to observe the placement of the sun in the sky at the horizon.

Respond/Reflect

Next, respond to the ways in which the things you described have impacted you as a viewer. What emotions are evoked from the various shadings and colors used in the photo? How does the artist's font selection impact the image? Through these observations, you will be able to identify appeals to ethos and pathos. In the Bureau of Land Management ad, you might respond to the various shades of blue as seemingly unreal yet reflect on their natural beauty as a way of creating an inviting tone. Next, reflect on the textures presented by the rocks and sand as a

way of adding texture to the image. This texture further contributes to the welcoming mood of the image. By focusing on the solitary person in the image, you might respond that this landscape offers a welcoming place to reflect on life decisions or to simply enjoy the surroundings. Finally, you might respond to the placement of the sun as being either sunrise or sunset.

Analyze/Question

After describing and reflecting on the various elements of the visual, question what you have noted and decide if there is an argument presented by the image. Again, this assessment should be made based upon what you've observed and reflected upon in terms of the content of the image alone. Using the Bureau of Land Management ad, you might ask if the font choice was intentional to replicate the rolling waves, or if the framing around the edges of the image is done intentionally to tie back into the Bureau logo in the upper right-hand corner. Once you've moved beyond the surface image, question the criteria you established in your thesis and introduction to see if it holds up throughout your analysis. Now you are ready to begin writing a visual rhetorical analysis of an argument *presented by/within* your selected image.

IV. TYPES OF ARGUMENTATION

Introduction

Terri Pantuso

Where can you find the best tacos in Texas? Who wrote the best version of the song *Wagon Wheel*? Which cause is most deserving of a federal grant? While all of these topics seem like fodder for a happy hour conversation, each one can be proven with specifically defined criteria and evidence. And while the word *argument* conjures up negative memories for some, in rhetoric we use the term to refer to a persuasive essay. In this section, we introduce you to the concepts surrounding argumentation and discuss two of the more prominent methodologies used today.

4.1 FEATURES OF AN ARGUMENT

Terri Pantuso

Argument is not the loud, assertive, unwavering statement of your opinion in the hopes of conquering the opposition. Argument is the careful consideration of numerous positions and the careful development of logically sound, carefully constructed **assertions** that, when combined, offer a worthwhile perspective in an ongoing debate. Certainly you want to imagine yourself arguing *with* others—and certainly you want to believe your ideas have superior qualities to theirs—but the purpose of argument in the college setting is not to solve a practical problem or shut down a conversation. Rather, it's to illuminate, expand, and further inform a debate happening on a worthwhile subject between reasonable, intelligent people. In other words, calling the opposition *stupid* is not good argument, it's an ad hominem attack. For a review of this and other logical fallacies, refer to section 3.6 of this text.

Some of the key tools of argument are the strategies that students are asked to consider when doing a rhetorical analysis. Before beginning an argument of your own, review the basic concepts of rhetorical appeals below. As you plan and draft your own argument, carefully use the following elements of rhetoric to your own advantage.

Rhetorical Appeals

Logos

The use of data, statistical evidence, and sufficient support to establish the practicality and rationality of your claims should be the strongest element of your argument. To have a logically sound argument, you should include:

- A debatable and supportable claim
- Logical reasoning to support your claim
- Sound evidence and examples to justify the reasoning
- Reasonable projections

- Concessions & rebuttals
- Avoid logical fallacies

Ethos

The ethical and well-balanced use of all of the strategies above will help you to present yourself as trustworthy and intelligent in your consideration of the topic and in the development of your argument. This balance should include the use of credible, relevant sources which can be accomplished through research methods utilizing the strategies governing your discipline. Following those strategies will build your credibility as a writer of argument, particularly in the college setting, as you pay attention to the needs of the audience with regard to presentation and style. In college, this means that you have used the style manual (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) required for the assignment and appropriate to the audience. In so doing, make certain to cite the sources you have used according to the style manual you are using.

Pathos

The use of examples and language that evoke an appropriate emotional response in your reader—that gets them to care about your topic—can be helpful in argument. For academic essays, pathos may be useful in introductory sections, concluding sections, or as ways to link various parts of the paper together. However, if your argument is based solely or primarily upon emotional appeals, it will be viewed as weak in an academic setting, especially when data or ethical sources can disprove your claims. Therefore, college writing often puts more emphasis on logos and ethos.

Approaches to Argument

A well-structured argument is one that is carefully and optimally planned. It is organized so that the argument has a continuous building of ideas, one upon the other or in concert with the other, in order to produce the most persuasive impact or effect on the reader. For clarity, avoid repeating ideas, reasons, or evidence. Instead, consider how each idea in your argument connects to the others. Should some ideas come before others? Should you build your reasons from simple to complex or from complex to simple? Should you present the counterargument

before your reasons? Or, would it make more sense for you to present your reasons and then the **concessions** and **rebuttals**? How can you use clear transitional phrases to facilitate reader comprehension of your argument? Consider these questions while constructing and revising your argument.

Simple to Complex/Complex to Simple

Whether structuring a paragraph or a research paper, the simple to complex (or reverse) method can be an effective way to build cohesion throughout your writing. Just as the phrase implies, simple to complex is when a writer introduces a simple concept then builds upon it to heighten interest. Sometimes, the opposite structure works to move the reader through your position. For example, if you choose to write on the topic of pollution as it impacts the world, you might begin with the concept of straws and sea turtles. Your simple topic of sea turtles swallowing straws thrown away might then move to the complex issues of consumption, consumerism and disposal. Conversely, if you begin with the broad, complex topic of consumerism, you could then move to the story of the sea turtles as a way of building pathos in the reader. Whichever method you choose, make sure that the relationship between the topics is logical and clear so that readers find validity in your position.

Cause/Effect

The cause/effect method is a way of establishing a reason, or reasons, why something has occurred. For example, if you live in south Texas, then you understand the problem that mosquitoes cause in the hot, humid summer months. While there is no way to eliminate all mosquitoes, there are ways to minimize their growth in your backyard. If you research the ways in which mosquitoes are born, you would understand the importance of things such as emptying containers of all **stagnant** water so that they cannot incubate or keeping your grass mowed to eliminate areas for them to populate. The process by which you go through to determine the cause of mosquito infestations is the cause and effect method. In argumentation, you might use this method to support a claim for community efforts to prevent mosquitoes from growing in your neighborhood. Demonstrating that process is effective for a logos based argument.

Chronological

Sometimes an argument is presented best when a sequential pattern is used. Oftentimes, that pattern will be based on the pattern of time in which the sequence occurs. For example, if you are writing an argumentative essay in which you are calling for a new stop light to be installed at a busy intersection, you might utilize a chronological structure to demonstrate the rate of increased accidents over a given period of time at that intersection. If your pattern demonstrates a marked increase in accidents, then your data would show a logical reason for supporting your position. Oftentimes, a chronological pattern involves steps indicated by signal words such as first, next, and finally. Utilizing this pattern will walk readers through your line of reasoning and guide them towards reaching your proposed conclusion.

Emphatic

Another method for organizing your writing is by order of importance. This method is often referred to as emphatic because organization is done based upon emphasis. The direction you choose to go is yours whether you begin with the strongest, most important point of your argument, or the weakest. In either case, the **hierarchy** of ideas should be clear to readers. The emphatic method is often **subjectively** based upon the writer's beliefs. If, for example, you want to build an argument for a new rail system to be used in your city, you will have to decide which reason is most important and which is simply support material. For one writer, the decrease in the number of cars on the road might be the most important aspect as it would result in a reduction of toxic emissions. For another writer, the time saved for commuters might be the most important aspect. The decision to start with your strongest or weakest point is one of style.

Style/ Eloquence

When we discuss style in academic writing, we generally mean the use of formal language appropriate for the given academic audience and occasion. Academics generally favor Standard American English and the use of precise language that avoids **idioms**, **clichés**, or dull, simple word choices. This is not to imply that these **tropes** are not useful; however, strong academic writing is typically **objective** and

frequently avoids the use of first-person pronouns unless the disciplinary style and conventions suggest otherwise.

Some writing assignments allow you to choose your audience. In that case, the style in which you write may not be the formal, precise Standard American English that the academy prefers. For some writing assignments, you may even be asked to use, where appropriate, poetic or figurative language or language that evokes the senses. Additionally, instructors should be **cognizant** of second language learners and the variations in style when writing in a non-native language.

In all cases, it is important to understand what style of writing your audience expects, as delivering your argument in that style could make it more persuasive.

4.2 FAILURES IN EVIDENCE: WHEN "LOTS OF QUOTES" CAN'T SAVE A PAPER

Emilie Zickel

In a strong essay, the author or writer's own thesis and reasoning drive the argument, and then credible, valid evidence is used to support that reasoning. Arguments, in particular, are interactions between writer and audience. The author wants to persuade the audience to accept his or her claim, so he or she tries to provide sufficient compelling evidence that will sway the audience to his or her perspective.

Research questions might be easy to come up with. **Claims** or **thesis** statements can be easy to come up with. Even reasons or ideas to support the thesis or claim may be fairly easy to come up with. But for your ideas in a paper to be valid, for them to be accepted by a reader, they must be supported and developed with solid, credible, sufficient, accurate, relevant and compelling evidence.

Evidence is not simply "a bunch of quotes." Nor is evidence a bunch of facts or statistics from an article, no matter how credible that article may be. For evidence to truly work in the sense of supporting a thesis/claim, it has to be accurate, sufficient to prove your point, directly related to the reason, ethically chosen, current, and credible. That is a lot to think about. It is certainly more than "a quote that looks good".

Here are some things to think about avoiding when attempting to develop a strong source-based essay. Just as understanding what logical fallacies are so you can avoid them in your own writing, understanding what weak evidence is can help you to avoid falling into the trap of using it in your own work.

Failures in evidence occur when a reader says, "I do not accept your evidence". Here is why that might happen:

- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***inaccurate.***
  You've misread information or misquoted; you are not interpreting the quoted material in an accurate manner

- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***insufficient.***
  You are using just a small piece of evidence to support your reasoning. You need more. You probably have a "generalization" fallacy.
- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***unrelated to the reason.***
  Your evidence does not clearly or directly relate to the point that you are trying to make.
- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***incomplete or too narrowly chosen.***
  You have "cherry picked" certain examples or pieces of information to the exclusion of others, so while you do have evidence to support your point, you are also neglecting a lot of other information
- *The evidence that you have provided is* ***old.***
  The information that you are citing is not relevant anymore. It is outdated!
- *The evidence that you have provided does not come from an* ***authoritative source.***
  The source of your evidence is not credible; the person being cited is not an authority on the topic

One of the bigger issues with evidence is not so much with the evidence itself, but with the way that you **integrate** it into the paper. A reader needs to understand clearly how and why the evidence you chose relates to the point that you are making. Evidence must always be explained. Whenever you integrate evidence into your papers, it is important to answer the question "How does this evidence support the point that I am making?" Never assume that the reader sees what you see in evidence. Always make it as clear as possible how the evidence supports the reason.

This section contains material from:
Zickel, Emilie. "Failures in Evidence: When Even 'Lots of Quotes' Can't Save an [*sic*] Paper." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019.
https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/failures-in-evidence-when-even-lots-of-quotes-cant-save-an-argument/.

4.3 BASIC STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF ARGUMENT

Amanda Lloyd; Emilie Zickel; Robin Jeffrey; and Terri Pantuso

When you are tasked with crafting an argumentative essay, it is likely that you will be expected to craft your argument based upon a given number of sources–all of which should support your topic in some way. Your instructor might provide these sources for you, ask you to locate these sources, or provide you with some sources and ask you to find others. Whether or not you are asked to do additional research, an argumentative essay should contain the following basic components.

Claim: What Do You Want the Reader to Believe?

In an argument paper, the thesis is often called a **claim**. This claim is a statement in which you take a stand on a debatable issue. A strong, debatable claim has at least one valid counterargument, an opposite or alternative point of view that is as sensible as the position that you take in your claim. In your thesis statement, you should clearly and specifically state the position you will convince your audience to adopt. One way to accomplish this is via either a closed or open thesis statement.

A **closed** thesis statement includes sub-claims or reasons why you choose to support your claim.

Example of Closed Thesis Statement
The city of Houston has displayed a commitment to attracting new residents by making improvements to its walkability, city centers, and green spaces.

In this instance, walkability, city centers, and green spaces are the sub-claims, or reasons, why you would make the claim that Houston is attracting new residents.

An **open** thesis statement does not include sub-claims and might be more

appropriate when your argument is less easy to prove with two or three easily-defined sub-claims.

Example of Open Thesis Statement
The city of Houston is a vibrant metropolis due to its walkability, city centers, and green spaces.

The choice between an open or a closed thesis statement often depends upon the complexity of your argument. Another possible construction would be to start with a research question and see where your sources take you.

A research question approach might ask a large question that will be narrowed down with further investigation.

Example of Research Question Approach
What has the city of Houston done to attract new residents and/or make the city more accessible?

As you research the question, you may find that your original **premise** is invalid or incomplete. The advantage to starting with a research question is that it allows for your writing to develop more organically according to the latest research. When in doubt about how to structure your thesis statement, seek the advice of your instructor or a writing center consultant.

A Note on Context: What Background Information About the Topic Does Your Audience Need?

Before you get into defending your claim, you will need to place your topic (and argument) into context by including relevant background material. Remember, your audience is relying on you for vital information such as definitions, historical placement, and controversial positions. This background material might appear in either your introductory paragraph(s) or your body paragraphs. How and where to incorporate background material depends a lot upon your topic, assignment,

evidence, and audience. In most cases, kairos, or an opportune moment, factors heavily in the ways in which your argument may be received.

Evidence or Grounds: What Makes Your Reasoning Valid?

To validate the thinking that you put forward in your claim and sub-claims, you need to demonstrate that your reasoning is based on more than just your personal opinion. Evidence, sometimes referred to as grounds, can take the form of research studies or scholarship, expert opinions, personal examples, observations made by yourself or others, or specific instances that make your reasoning seem sound and believable. Evidence only works if it directly supports your reasoning — and sometimes you must explain how the evidence supports your reasoning (do not assume that a reader can see the connection between evidence and reason that you see).

Warrants: Why Should a Reader Accept Your Claim?

A warrant is the **rationale** the writer provides to show that the evidence properly supports the claim with each element working towards a similar goal. Think of warrants as the glue that holds an argument together and ensures that all pieces work together coherently.

An important way to ensure you are properly supplying warrants within your argument is to use topic sentences for each paragraph and linking sentences within that connect the particular claim directly back to the thesis. Ensuring that there are linking sentences in each paragraph will help to create consistency within your essay. Remember, the thesis statement is the driving force of organization in your essay, so each paragraph needs to have a specific purpose (topic sentence) in proving or explaining your thesis. Linking sentences complete this task within the body of each paragraph and create cohesion. These linking sentences will often appear after your textual evidence in a paragraph.

Counterargument: But What About Other Perspectives?

Later in this section, we have included an essay by Steven Krause who offers a thorough explanation of what counterargument is (and how to respond to it). In summary, a strong arguer should not be afraid to consider perspectives that either challenge or completely oppose his or her own claim. When you respectfully and thoroughly discuss perspectives or research that counters your own claim or even weaknesses in your own argument, you are showing yourself to be an ethical arguer. The following are some things of which counter arguments may consist:

- summarizing opposing views;
- explaining how and where you actually agree with some opposing views;
- acknowledging weaknesses or holes in your own argument.

You have to be careful and clear that you are not conveying to a reader that you are rejecting your own claim. It is important to indicate that you are merely open to considering alternative viewpoints. Being open in this way shows that you are an ethical arguer – you are considering many viewpoints.

Types of Counterarguments

Counterarguments can take various forms and serve a range of purposes such as:

- *Could someone disagree with your claim?* If so, why? Explain this opposing perspective in your own argument, and then respond to it.
- *Could someone draw a different conclusion from any of the facts or examples you present?* If so, what is that different conclusion? Explain this different conclusion and then respond to it.
- *Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims?* If so, which ones would they question? Explain and then respond.
- *Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue?* If so, what might their explanation be? Describe this different explanation, and then respond to it.
- *Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position?* If so, what is it? Cite and discuss this evidence and then respond to it.

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, that does not necessarily mean that

you have a weak argument. It means ideally, and as long as your argument is logical and valid, that you have a counterargument. Good arguments can and do have counterarguments; it is important to discuss them. But you must also discuss and then respond to those counterarguments.

Response to Counterargument: I See That, But...

Just as it is important to include counterargument to show that you are fair-minded and balanced, you must respond to the counterargument so that a reader clearly sees that you are not agreeing with the counterargument and thus abandoning or somehow undermining your own claim. Failure to include the response to counterargument can confuse the reader. There are several ways to respond to a counterargument such as:

- Concede to a specific point or idea from the counterargument by explaining why that point or idea has validity. However, you must then be sure to return to your own claim, and explain why even that concession does not lead you to completely accept or support the counterargument;
- Reject the counterargument if you find it to be incorrect, fallacious, or otherwise invalid;
- Explain why the counterargument perspective does not invalidate your own claim.

A Note About Where to Put the Counterargument

It is certainly possible to begin the argument section (after the background section) with your counterargument + response instead of placing it at the end of your essay. Some people prefer to have their counterargument first where they can address it and then spend the rest of their essay building their own case and supporting their own claim. However, it is just as valid to have the counterargument + response appear at the end of the paper after you have discussed all of your reasons.

What is important to remember is that wherever you place your counterargument, you should:

- Address the counterargument(s) fully:

    - Explain what the counter perspectives are;
    - Describe them thoroughly;
    - Cite authors who have these counter perspectives;
    - Quote them and summarize their thinking.
- Then, respond to these counterarguments:
    - Make it clear to the reader of your argument why you concede to certain points of the counterargument or why you reject them;
    - Make it clear that you do not accept the counterargument, even though you understand it;
    - Be sure to use transitional phrases that make this clear to your reader.

Responding to Counterarguments

You do not need to attempt to do all of these things as a way to respond. Instead, choose the response strategy that makes the most sense to you for the counterargument that you find:

- If you agree with some of the counterargument perspectives, you can concede some of their points. ("I do agree that ....", "Some of the points made by X are valid.....") You could then challenge the importance/usefulness of those points;
    - "However, this information does not apply to our topic because..."
- If the counterargument perspective is one that contains different evidence than you have in your own argument, you can explain why a reader should not accept the evidence that the counterarguer presents;
- If the counterargument perspective is one that contains a different *interpretation* of evidence than you have in your own argument, you can explain why a reader should not accept the interpretation of the evidence that your opponent (counterarguer) presents.

If the counterargument is an acknowledgement of evidence that threatens to weaken your argument, you must explain why and how that evidence does not, in fact, invalidate your claim.

It is important to use **transitional phrases** in your paper to alert readers when you're about to present a counterargument. It's usually best to put this phrase at the beginning of a paragraph such as:

- Researchers have challenged these claims with...

- Critics argue that this view...
- Some readers may point to...
- A perspective that challenges the idea that...

Transitional phrases will again be useful to highlight your shift from counterargument to response:

- Indeed, some of those points are valid. However, . . .
- While I agree that . . . , it is more important to consider . . .
- These are all compelling points. Still, other information suggests that . .
- While I understand . . . , I cannot accept the evidence because . . .[1]

In the section that follows, the Toulmin method of argumentation is described and further clarifies the terms discussed in this section.

1. This section originally contained the following attribution: This page contains material from "About Writing: A Guide" by Robin Jeffrey, OpenOregon Educational Resources, Higher Education Coordination Commission: Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

4.4 TOULMIN: DISSECTING THE EVERYDAY ARGUMENT

Rebecca Jones

Rebecca Jones

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.[1]

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 (for a review of syllogisms see section 3.4 of this text). 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.

1. Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francesca Snoeck Henkemans, *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (Mahwah: Erlbaum, NJ, 2002), 131.

Toulmin's vocabulary for the study of argument offers labels for the parts of the argument to help us create our map.[2]

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."[3] Charting this excerpt helps us to understand some of the underlying assumptions found in the article.

Example: "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

2. Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument, (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).
3. Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith, "Reimagining a Politics of Trust: Not Everyone Is Out to Get You," *UNTE Reader,* September-October 2009, https://www.utne.com/politics/reimagining-a-political-community-of-trust.

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 4.4.1[4] below 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.

Example of Visualizing an Argument

4. This image was derived from "Figure 5: This Chart Demonstrates the Utility of Visualizing an Argument" by Rebecca Jones in: Rebecca Jones, "Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?," in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, eds. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010), 156-179, https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=243. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License.

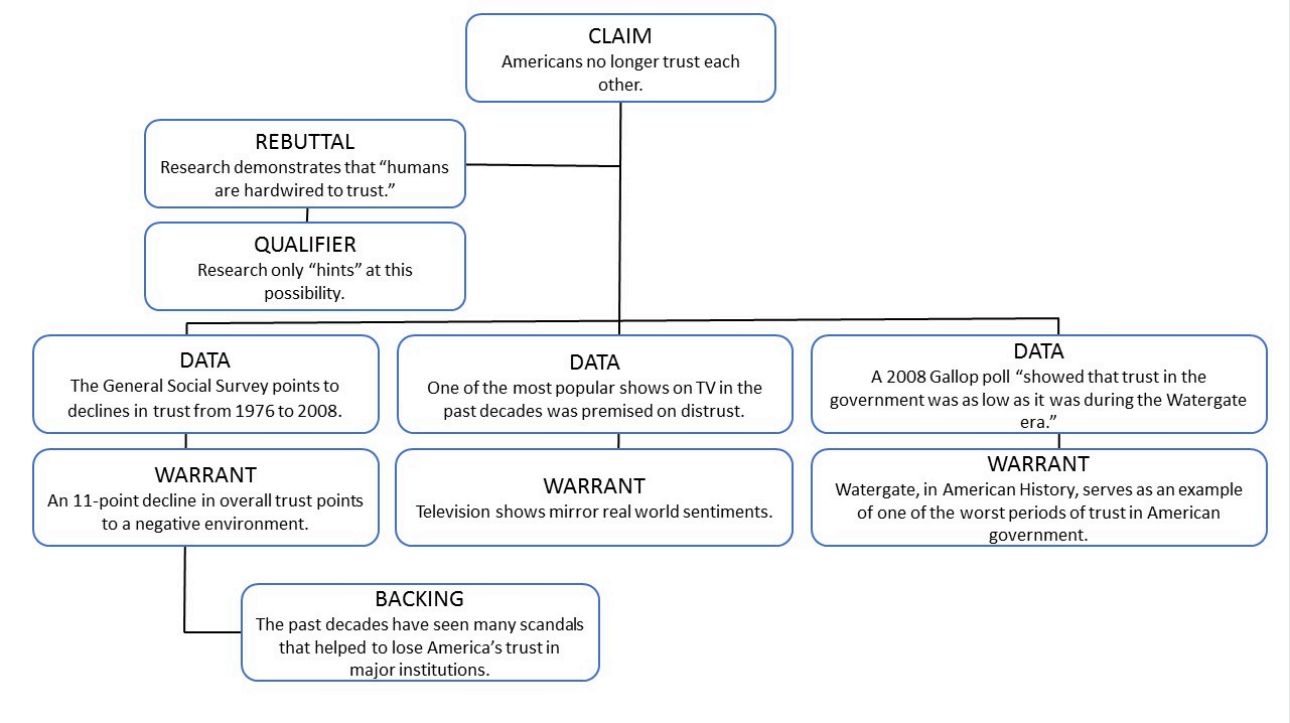


Figure 4.4.1: Visualizing an Argument

Charting your own arguments and the arguments of 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.

The Toulmin method is a useful way of determining the validity of an argument and is oftentimes the model used in legal proceedings. But the Toulmin method can leave you feeling as if you're stuck in an either/or situation as it focuses on justifying the arguer's reasons only. For a method that incorporates a humanistic approach, consider using the Rogerian method.

4.5 ROGERIAN ARGUMENT

Terri Pantuso

As discussed in the previous section, for Toulmin, argumentation is an attempt to justify a statement or a set of statements and focuses solely upon proving those statements. But what happens when you can concede that your opponent has a valid point? Because we are complex creatures, humans oftentimes find themselves strongly opposed to something that later changes for them once they are presented with different evidence. While many arguments can seemingly be based upon emotions alone, when presented with logical evidence to refute our position we may experience a crisis of conscience. Is it possible to hold firmly to one belief yet concede that the opposing side has merit? There is a way if you utilize the Rogerian method for argumentation.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987) was an American psychologist and clinical therapist who utilized a **humanistic** (client-centered) approach to psychology. When applied to argumentation, the Rogerian method makes use of examining counterarguments as enhancements, or concessions, rather than viewing them as completely oppositional. According to Lunsford et al., "Rogers argued that people involved in disputes should not respond to each other until they [can] fully, fairly, and even sympathetically state the other person's position."[1] Rogers' non confrontational methods, when applied to argumentation in rhetoric, suggests that the most personal feelings are also the most common and, therefore, are the most likely to be understood.

One benefit to utilizing a Rogerian approach in composition studies is that it encourages the writer/arguer to build a bridge towards oppositional positions. This does not mean that you abandon your own position, and it does not mean that your position is weak. Rather, a Rogerian approach provides alternative perspectives for considering a given position as well as methods for responding to counterarguments that might seem to refute your major **premise**.

1. Andrea Lunsford, John J. Ruszkiewicz, and Keith Walters, *Everything's an Argument,* 8th ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018), 139.

Much like the Toulmin method, the Rogerian method relies upon claims that can be supported with evidence (data). How the Rogerian method differs is in the concession where, if there is a strong, valid argument that refutes your claim, you concede that argument might be a valid point in a different context. Or, perhaps you concede that a portion of your opponent's argument is valid for your position, yet point out how the circumstances differ, therefore making your position the most logical, strongest one for your given topic. While the goal remains to persuade your reader/audience to view your position as valid, when utilizing the Rogerian method you build common ground to other possibilities and demonstrate that counterviews are not entirely wrong.

When used in argumentation, the Rogerian method allows for a dialogue to occur surrounding an issue. By examining counterarguments to your claims, you are able to view your position/ **thesis** from a different point of view. Understanding all (or most) of the points surrounding your given topic will strengthen your own position as you will create a more fully informed essay.

4.6 ON THE OTHER HAND: THE ROLE OF ANTITHETICAL WRITING IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION COURSES

Steven D. Krause

Besides my own experiences as a student many years ago in courses similar to the ones you and your classmates are in now, I think the most important influence on how I have approached research and argumentative writing came from academic debate. Debate taught me at least two ways to approach an argument that were not part of my formal schooling. First, academic policy debate[1] taught me that argumentation is a contest—a sport, not at all different from tennis or basketball or figure skating or gymnastics, an activity where you have to work with a team, you have to practice, and the goal is to "win." And winning in academic debate happens: while it is a sport that is judged, it is an activity, like gymnastics or figure skating, where the rules for judging are surprisingly well codified. I will admit that seeing a debate or argument as something "to be won" has not always served me well in life, for there are any number of situations in which the framework for an argument is perhaps better perceived as an opportunity to listen and to compromise than to score points.

Second, because of the way that academic debate is structured, I learned quickly the importance of being able to perceive and argue multiple and opposing views on the same issue. Not unlike other sports where players play both offense and defense—baseball and basketball immediately come to mind—debaters have to argue both for and against the year's resolution, which was the broad proposition that framed all of the particular cases debate teams put forward for the entire

1. Explaining "academic policy debate" is not my goal in this essay. But I will say that academic debate bears almost no resemblance to "debates" between political candidates or to the stereotypical way debate tends to be depicted on television shows or in movies. Certainly debate involves a certain intellectual prowess; but I think it's fair to say that debate is a lot closer to a competitive sport than a classroom exercise. Two excellent introductions to the world of academic debate are the Wikipedia entry for "Policy Debate" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_debate)

season. In fact, it was not at all uncommon for a team to strenuously advocate for a controversial position one round—"the U.S. should engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—only to strenuously argue the opposite position—"the U.S. should not engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—the very next round. Seeing "multiple positions" was not simply a good idea; it was one of the rules of the game.

I've brought these past experiences into my current teaching in a number of ways, including one of the exercises I am discussing here, what my students and I call antithesis writing. These exercises will help you gain a better understanding of how to shape an argument, how to more fully explore a topic, and how to think more carefully about your different audiences.[2]

Thesis Is Not Doesn't Have to Be a Bad Thing (Or Why Write Antithesis Essays in the First Place)

Somewhere along the way, "thesis" became a dirty word in a lot of writing courses, inherently bound up and attached to all that is wrong with what composition historians and the writing scholars call the "Current-Traditional" paradigm of writing instruction. Essentially, this approach emphasizes the product and forms of writing (in most nineteenth century American rhetoric textbooks, these forms were Exposition, Description, Narration, and Argument), issues of syntax and grammar, correctness, and so forth. It didn't matter so much what position a writer took; what mattered most was that the writer got the form correct.

"Thesis" is often caught in/lumped into this current-traditional paradigm, I think mainly because of the rigid role and placement of a thesis in the classic form of the five-paragraph essay. Most of you and your classmates already know about this: in the five-paragraph formula, the thesis is the last sentence of the introduction, is divided into three parts, and it rigidly controls the structure of the following four paragraphs. Certainly this overly prescriptive and narrow definition of thesis is not useful. Jasper Neel describes this sort of formula in his book *Plato, Derrida, and*

2. The original text contained this statement: "In this essay, I borrow heavily from my own online textbook, The Process of Research Writing, which is available for free at http://stevendkrause.com/tprw/. You might want to visit that site for additional information about this exercise and other exercises I've put together for teaching the research writing process."

Writing as "anti-writing,"[3] and I think that Sharon Crowley is correct in arguing that the kind of teaching exemplified by the five-paragraph essay is more akin to filling out a form than it is to actual "writing."[4]

But when I discuss "thesis" here, I mean something much more broad and organic. I mean an initial direction that every research writing project must take. A thesis advocates a specific and debatable position, is not a statement of fact nor a summary of events, and it answers the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" You should begin with a working thesis that attempts to answer these questions simply as a way of getting your research process started. True, these initial working theses are usually broad and unwieldy, but the emphasis here is on working, because as you research and think more carefully, you will inevitably change your thesis. And this is good—change is the by-product of learning, and seeing a working thesis differently is both the purpose and the opportunity of the antithesis exercise.

So, I think the first and probably most important reason to consider antithesis writing is to test and strengthen the validity of the working thesis. After all, there isn't much "debatable" about a working thesis like "crime is bad" or "cleaning up the environment is good," which suggests that there probably isn't a viable answer to the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" Considering opposing and differing views can help you find the path to make a vague generalization like "crime is bad" into a more pointed, researchable, and interesting observation.

The second general value for antithesis exercises is to raise more awareness of your audience—the potential readers who would disagree with your working thesis, along with readers who are more favorable to your point. Sometimes, readers won't be convinced no matter what evidence or logic a writer presents; but it seems to me that writers have an obligation to at least try.

---

3. Jasper Neel, *Plato, Derrida, and Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1988).
4. Sharon Crowley, *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric,* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1990).

Generating Antithetical Points in Five Easy Steps

Step 1: Have a Working Thesis and Make Sure You Have Begun the Research Process.

Developing a good antithetical argument is not something you can do as a "first step" in the research process. Generally, you need to have already developed a basic point and need some evidence and research to develop that point. In other words, the process of developing an antithetical position has to come after you develop an initial position in the first place.

Step 2: Consider the Direct Opposite of Your Working Thesis.

This is an especially easy step if your working thesis is about a controversial topic.

Examples

Working thesis:
To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons.
Antithesis:
To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should be allowed to carry concealed weapons.

Examples

Working thesis:
Drug companies should be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.
Antithesis:
Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.

This sort of simple change of qualifiers also exposes weak theses, because,

generally speaking, the opposite position of a proposition that everyone accepts as true is one that everyone easily accepts as false. For example, if you begin with a working thesis like "Drunk driving is bad" or "Teen violence is bad" to their logical opposites, you end up with an opposite that is ridiculous—"Drunk driving is good" or "Teen violence is good." What that signals is that it is probably time to revisit your original working thesis.

Usually though, considering the opposite of a working thesis is a little more complicated. For example:

Examples

Working Thesis:
Many computer hackers commit serious crimes and represent a major expense for internet-based businesses.
Antitheses:
Computer hackers do not commit serious crimes.
Computer hacking is not a major expense for internet-based businesses.

Both of the antithetical examples are the opposite of the original working theses, but each focuses on different aspects of the working thesis.

Step 3: Ask "Why" about Possible Antithetical Arguments.

Creating antitheses by simply changing the working thesis to its opposite typically demands more explanation. The best place to develop more details with your antithesis is to ask "why." For example:

Examples

Why should drug companies not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs? Because . . .

- The high cost of television advertising needlessly drives up the costs of

prescriptions.

- Advertisements too often confuse patients and offer advice that contradicts the advice of doctors.

Examples

Why are the crimes committed by computer hackers not serious? Because . . .

- They are usually pranks or acts of mischief.
- Computer hackers often expose problems for Internet businesses before serious crimes result.

The point here is to dig a little further into your antithetical argument. Asking "why" is a good place to begin that process.

Step 4: Examine Alternatives to Your Working Thesis.

Often, the best antithetical arguments aren't about "the opposite" so much as they are about alternatives. For example, the working thesis "To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons" presumes that a serious potential cause for violence on campuses is the presence of guns. However, someone could logically argue that the more important cause of violence on college campuses is alcohol and drug abuse. Certainly the number of incidents involving underage drinking and substance abuse outnumber those involving firearms on college campuses, and it is also probably true that many incidents of violence on college campuses involve drinking or drugs.

Now, unlike the direct opposite of your working thesis, the alternatives do not necessarily negate your working thesis. There is no reason why a reader couldn't believe that both concealed weapons and alcohol and substance abuse contribute to violence on campuses. But in considering alternatives to your working thesis,

the goal is to "weigh" the positions against each other. I'll return to this matter of "weighing your position" later.

Step 5: Imagine Hostile Audiences.

Whenever you are trying to develop a clearer understanding of the antithesis of your working thesis, you need to think about the kinds of audiences who would disagree with you. By thinking about the opposites and alternatives to your working thesis, you are already starting to do this because the opposites and the alternatives are what a hostile audience might think.

Sometimes, potential readers are hostile to a particular working thesis because of ideals, values, or affiliations they hold that are at odds with the point being advocated by the working thesis. For example, people who identify themselves as being "pro-choice" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that restrict access to abortion; people who identify themselves as being "prolife" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that provide access to abortion.

At other times, audiences are hostile to the arguments of a working thesis because of more crass and transparent reasons. For example, the pharmaceutical industry disagrees with the premise of the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" because they stand to lose billions of dollars in lost sales. Advertising companies and television broadcasters would also be against this working thesis because they too would lose money. You can probably easily imagine some potential hostile audience members who have similarly selfish reasons to oppose your point of view.

Of course, some audiences will oppose your working thesis based on a different interpretation of the evidence and research. This sort of difference of opinion is probably most common with research projects that are focused on more abstract and less definitive subjects. But there are also different opinions about evidence for topics that you might think would have potentially more concrete "right" and "wrong" interpretations. Different researchers and scholars can look at the same evidence about a subject like gun control and arrive at very different conclusions.

Regardless of the reasons why your audience might be hostile to the argument you are making with your working thesis, it is helpful to try to imagine your

audience as clearly as you can. What sort of people are they? What other interests or biases might they have? Are there other political or social factors that you think are influencing their point of view? If you want to persuade at least some members of this hostile audience that your point of view and your interpretation of the research is correct, you need to know as much about your hostile audience as you possibly can.

Strategies for Answering Antithetical/Oppositional Arguments

It might not seem logical, but directly acknowledging and addressing positions that are different from the one you are holding in your research can actually make your position stronger. When you take on the antithesis in your research project, it shows you have thought carefully about the issue at hand and you acknowledge that there is no clear and easy "right" answer. There are many different ways you might incorporate the antithesis into your research to make your own thesis stronger and to address the concerns of those readers who might oppose your point of view. For now, focus on three basic strategies: directly refuting your opposition, weighing your position against the opposition, and making concessions.

Directly Refuting Your Opposition

Perhaps the most obvious approach, one way to address those potential readers who might raise objections to your arguments, is to simply refute their objections with better evidence and reasoning. Of course, this is an example of yet another reason why it is so important to have good research that supports your position: when the body of evidence and research is on your side, it is usually a lot easier to make a strong point.

Answering antithetical arguments with research that supports your point of view is also an example of where you as a researcher might need to provide a more detailed evaluation of your evidence. The sort of questions you should answer about your own research—who wrote it, where was it published, when was it published, etc.—are important to raise in countering antithetical arguments that you think come from suspicious sources.

Weighing Your Position Against the Opposition

Readers who oppose the argument you are trying to support with your research might do so because they value or "weigh" the implications of your working thesis differently than you do. For example, those opposed to a working thesis like "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might think this because they think the advantages of advertising drugs on television—increased sales for pharmaceutical companies, revenue for advertising agencies and television stations, and so forth—are more significant than the disadvantages of advertising drugs on television.

Besides recognizing and acknowledging the different ways of comparing the advantages and disadvantages suggested by your working thesis, the best way of answering these antithetical arguments in your own writing is to clearly explain how you weigh and compare the evidence. This can be a challenging writing experience because it requires a subtle hand and a broad understanding of multiple sides of your topic. But if in acknowledging to your readers that you have carefully considered the reasons against your working thesis and you can demonstrate your position to be more persuasive, then this process of weighing positions can be very effective.

Making Concessions

In the course of researching and thinking about the antithesis to your working thesis and its potentially hostile audiences, it may become clear to you that these opposing views have a point. When this is the case, you may want to consider revising your working thesis or your approach to your research to make some concessions to these antithetical arguments.

Sometimes, my students working on this exercise "make concessions" to the point of changing sides on their working thesis—that is, in the process of researching, writing, and thinking about their topic, a researcher moves from arguing for their working thesis to arguing for their antithesis. This might seem surprising, but it makes perfect sense when you remember the purpose of research in the first place. When we study the evidence on a particular issue, we often realize that our initial and uninformed impression or feelings on an issue were simply wrong. That's why we research: we put more trust in ideas based on research than in things based on gut instinct or feelings.

But usually, most concessions to antithetical perspectives are less dramatic and can be accomplished in a variety of ways. You might want to employ some qualifying terms to hedge a bit. For example, the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might be qualified to "Drug companies should be closely regulated about what they are allowed to advertise in TV." I think this is still a strong working thesis, but the revised working thesis acknowledges the objections some might have to the original working thesis.

Of course, you should use these sorts of concessions carefully. An over-qualified working thesis can be just as bad as a working thesis about something that everyone accepts as true: it can become so watered-down as to not have any real significance anymore. A working thesis like "Drug company television advertising is sometimes bad and sometimes good for patients" is over-qualified to the point of taking no real position at all.

But You Still Can't Convince Everyone . . .

I'd like to close by turning away a bit from where I started this essay, the influence of competitive debate on my early education about argument. In debate, an argument is part of the game, the catalyst for the beginning of a competition. The same is often true within college classrooms. Academic arguments are defined in terms of their hypothetical nature; they aren't actually real but rather merely an intellectual exercise.

But people in the real world do hold more than hypothetical positions, and you can't always convince everyone that you're right, no matter what evidence or logic you might have on your side. You probably already know this. We have all been in conversations with friends or family members where, as certain as we were that we were right about something and as hard as we tried to prove we were right, our friends or family were simply unwilling to budge from their positions. When we find ourselves in these sorts of deadlocks, we often try to smooth over the dispute with phrases like "You're entitled to your opinion" or "We will have to agree to disagree," and then we change the subject. In polite conversation, this is a good strategy to avoid a fight. But in academic contexts, these deadlocks can be frustrating and difficult to negotiate.

A couple of thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher and rhetorician Aristotle

said that all of us respond to arguments based on three basic characteristics or appeals: logos or logic, pathos or emotional character, and ethos, the writer's or speaker's perceived character. Academic writing tends to rely most heavily on logos and ethos because academics tend to highly value arguments based on logical research and arguments that come from writers with strong character-building qualifications—things like education, experience, previous publications, and the like. But it's important to remember that pathos is always there, and particularly strong emotions or feelings on a subject can obscure the best research.

Most academic readers have respect for writers when they successfully argue for positions that they might not necessarily agree with. Along these lines, most college writing instructors can certainly respect and give a positive evaluation to a piece of writing they don't completely agree with as long as it uses sound logic and evidence to support its points. However, all readers—students, instructors, and everyone else—come to your research project with various preconceptions about the point you are trying to make. Some of them will already agree with you and won't need much convincing. Some of them will never completely agree with you, but will be open to your argument to a point. And some of your readers, because of the nature of the point you are trying to make and their own feelings and thoughts on the matter, will never agree with you, no matter what research evidence you present or what arguments you make. So, while you need to consider the antithetical arguments to your thesis in your research project to convince as many members of your audience as possible that the point you are trying to make is correct, you should remember that you will likely not convince all of your readers all of the time.

This section contains material from:
Krause, Steven D. "On the Other Hand: The Role of Antithetical Writing the First Year Composition Courses." In *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 2*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, 141-153. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2011. https://writingspaces.org/?page_id=160.

V. PROCESS AND ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Terri Pantuso

Once you've selected a topic and began planning your essay, you'll want to focus on the organization of your final product as one that guides your reader through the topic in a coherent, cohesive manner. This means using language that is appropriate for the audience as well as a logical structure. You'll want to decide on an organizational method that works best for your purpose. Next, you'll want to make sure each draft builds upon the previous one so that you end with a strong, focused essay. In this section, we provide guidance on ways to structure your rough draft in ways that maintain focus on your thesis/claim as well as how to revise and edit the final draft so that your thesis is threaded throughout your essay.

5.1 METHODS OF ORGANIZING YOUR WRITING

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; and Terri Pantuso

Now that you've identified your topic, it's time to focus on how to best organize the information. Keep in mind that the method of organization for essays and paragraphs is just as important as content. When you begin to draft an essay or paragraph, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner. However, your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas to help them draw connections between the body and the **thesis**. A solid organizational pattern not only helps readers to process and accept your ideas, but also gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your essay (or paragraph). Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. In addition, planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research. This section covers three ways to organize both essays and paragraphs: chronological order, order of importance, and spatial order.

Chronological Order

Chronological arrangement has the following purposes:

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

Chronological order is used mostly in expository writing which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process. When using chronological order, arrange the events in the order that they actually happened, or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as *first*,

second, *then*, *after that*, *later*, and *finally*. These transitional words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis. For example, if you are writing an essay about the history of the airline industry, you would begin with its conception and detail the essential timeline events up until present day. You would follow the chain of events using words such as first, then, next, and so on.

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

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

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

Order of Importance

Order of importance is best used for the following purposes:

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

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

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

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

Spatial Order

Spatial order is best used for the following purposes:

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

Spatial order means that you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your readers, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you. The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then to guide the reader to follow your eye as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

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

Example of Spatial Order Organization

Attached to my back bedroom wall is a small wooden rack dangling with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as I enter. Just to the right of the rack, billowy white curtains frame a large window with a sill that ends just six inches from the floor. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, sitting to the right of the window, layered in textbooks, crumpled papers, coffee cups, and an overflowing ashtray. Turning my head to the right, I see a set of two bare

windows that frame the trees outside the glass like a three-dimensional painting. Below the windows is an oak chest from which blankets and scarves are protruding. Against the wall opposite the billowy curtains is an antique dresser, on top of which sits a jewelry box and a few picture frames. A tall mirror attached to the dresser takes up much of the lavender wall.

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

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

Transition Words for Spatial Order	
Just to the left	Just to the right
Behind	Between
On the left	On the right
Across from	A little further down
To the north	To the south
To the east	To the west
Turning left	Turning right
A few yards away	

Table 5.1.1: Spatial Order Transition Words

5.2 WRITING PARAGRAPHS

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; Kirk Swenson; and Terri Pantuso

Once you decide on a method for organizing your essay, you'll want to start drafting your paragraphs. Think of your paragraphs as links in a chain where coherence and continuity are key. Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. You are likely to lose interest in a piece of writing that is disorganized and spans many pages without breaks. Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks, each paragraph focusing on only one main idea and presenting coherent sentences to support that one point. Because all the sentences in one paragraph support the same point, a paragraph may stand on its own. For most types of informative or persuasive academic writing, writers find it helpful to think of the paragraph **analogous** to an essay, as each is controlled by a main idea or point, and that idea is developed by an organized group of more specific ideas. Thus, the **thesis** of the essay is analogous to the topic sentence of a paragraph, just as the supporting sentences in a paragraph are analogous to the supporting paragraphs in an essay.

In essays, each supporting paragraph adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related supporting idea is developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis. Effective paragraphing makes the difference between a satisfying essay that readers can easily process and one that requires readers to mentally organize the piece themselves. Thoughtful organization and development of each body paragraph leads to an effectively focused, developed, and coherent essay.

An effective paragraph contains three main parts:

- a topic sentence
- body, supporting sentences
- a concluding sentence

In **informative** and **persuasive** writing, the topic sentence is usually the first or

second sentence of a paragraph and expresses its main idea, followed by supporting sentences that help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. In **narrative** and **descriptive** paragraphs, however, topic sentences may be implied rather than explicitly stated, with all supporting sentences working to create the main idea. If the paragraph contains a concluding sentence, it is the last sentence in the paragraph and reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Creating Focused Paragraphs with Topic Sentences

The foundation of a paragraph is the topic sentence which expresses the main idea or point of the paragraph. A topic sentence functions in two ways: it clearly refers to and supports the essay's thesis, and it indicates what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. As the unifying sentence for the paragraph, it is the most general sentence, whereas all supporting sentences provide different types of more specific information such as facts, details, or examples.

An effective topic sentence has the following characteristics:

- A topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

Weak Example

First, we need a better way to educate students.
Explanation: The claim is vague because it does not provide enough information about what will follow and it is too broad to be covered effectively in one paragraph.

Stronger Example

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

Explanation: The sentence replaces the vague phrase "a better way" and leads readers to expect supporting facts and examples as to why standardizing education in these subjects might improve student learning in many states.

- A good topic sentence is the most general sentence in the paragraph and thus does not include supporting details.

Weak Example

Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don't allow the same team to win year after year.
Explanation: This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.

Stronger Example

Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons.
Explanation: This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph, yet the sentence still makes a claim about salary caps – improvement of the game.

- A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

Weak Example

In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types.
Explanation: The confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary

bury the main idea, making it difficult for the reader to follow the topic sentence.

Stronger Example

Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline.
Explanation: This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary **verbiage** and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow. The writer can include examples of what kinds of writing can benefit from outlining in the supporting sentences.

Location of Topic Sentences

As previously discussed, a topic sentence can appear anywhere within a paragraph depending upon the mode of writing, or it can be implied such as in narrative or descriptive writing. In college-level expository or persuasive writing, placing an explicit topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph (the first or second sentence) makes it easier for readers to follow the essay and for writers to stay on topic, but writers should be aware of variations and maintain the flexibility to adapt to different writing projects. The following examples illustrate varying locations for the topic sentence. In each example, the topic sentence is underlined.

Topic Sentence Begins the Paragraph (General to Specific)

<u>After reading the new TV guide this week I wondered why we are still being bombarded with reality shows, a plague that continues to darken our airwaves.</u> Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season and hope that other viewers will express their criticism. These

producers must stop the constant stream of meaningless shows without plotlines. We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime.

The first sentence tells readers that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*. Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show and why the writer finds it unappealing. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It **reiterates** the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show *Prisoner*). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph. However, when utilizing a specific to general method, the topic sentence may be located later in the paragraph.

Topic Sentence Ends the Paragraph (Specific to General)

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

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

writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

When the Topic Sentence Appears in the Middle of the Paragraph

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

In this paragraph, the underlined sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal **anecdote** (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety. Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic.

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all, a technique often used in descriptive and narrative writing. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph, as in the following narrative paragraph.

Example of Implied Topic Sentence

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

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated so that all the details in the paragraph can work together to convey the dominant impression of Luella's age. In a paragraph such as this one, an explicit topic sentence would seem awkward and heavy-handed. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

Developing Paragraphs

If you think of a paragraph as a sandwich, the supporting sentences are the filling between the bread. They make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the controlling idea in the topic sentence. The overall method of development for paragraphs depends upon the essay as a whole and the purpose of each paragraph; thus paragraphs may be developed by using examples, description, narration, comparison and contrast, definition, cause and effect, classification and division. A writer may use one method or combine several methods.

Writers often want to know how many words a paragraph should contain, and the answer is that a paragraph should develop the idea, point, or impression completely enough to satisfy the writer and readers. Depending on their function, paragraphs can vary in length from one or two sentences, to over a page; however, in most college assignments, successfully developed paragraphs usually contain

approximately one hundred to two hundred and fifty words and span one-fourth to two-thirds of a typed page. A series of short paragraphs in an academic essay can seem choppy and unfocused, whereas paragraphs that are one page or longer can tire readers. Giving readers a paragraph break on each page helps them maintain focus.

This advice does not mean, of course, that composing a paragraph of a particular number of words or sentences guarantees an effective paragraph. Writers must provide enough supporting sentences within paragraphs to develop the topic sentence and simultaneously carry forward the essay's main idea.

For example, in a descriptive paragraph about a room in the writer's childhood home, a length of two or three sentences is unlikely to contain enough details to create a picture of the room in the reader's mind, and it will not contribute in conveying the meaning of the place. In contrast, a half page paragraph, full of carefully selected vivid, specific details and comparisons, provides a fuller impression and engages the reader's interest and imagination. In descriptive or narrative paragraphs, supporting sentences present details and actions in vivid, specific language in objective or subjective ways, appealing to the readers' senses to make them see and experience the subject. In addition, some sentences writers use make comparisons that bring together or substitute the familiar with the unfamiliar, thus enhancing and adding depth to the description of the incident, place, person, or idea.

In a persuasive essay about raising the wage for certified nursing assistants, a paragraph might focus on the expectations and duties of the job, comparing them to that of a registered nurse. Needless to say, a few sentences that simply list the certified nurse's duties will not give readers a complete enough idea of what these healthcare professionals do. If readers do not have plenty of information about the duties and the writer's experience in performing them for what she considers inadequate pay, the paragraph fails to do its part in convincing readers that the pay is inadequate and should be increased.

In informative or persuasive writing, a supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

- **Reason:** The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.
- **Fact:** Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.

- **Statistic:** Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.
- **Quotation:** "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns.
- **Example:** Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position, you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Personal testimony in the form of an extended example can be used in conjunction with the other types of support.

Consider the elements in the following paragraph.

Example Persuasive Paragraph

Topic sentence: There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.
Sentence 1 (statistic): First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel- efficient gas-powered vehicle.
Sentence 2 (fact): Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving.
Sentence 3 (reason): Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump.
Sentence 4 (example): Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance.
Sentence 5 (quotation): "It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I've owned."
Concluding sentence: Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Sometimes the writing situation does not allow for research to add specific facts or other supporting information, but paragraphs can be developed easily with examples from the writer's own experience.

Farheya, a student in a freshman English Composition class, quickly drafted an

essay during a timed writing assignment in class. To practice improving paragraph development, she selected the body paragraph below to add support:

Example of Original Body Paragraph

Topic: Would you be better off if you didn't own a television? Discuss.
Lack of ownership of a television set is also a way to preserve innocence, and keep the exposure towards anything inappropriate at bay. From simply watching a movie, I have seen things I shouldn't have, no matter how fast I switch the channel. Television shows not only display physical indecency, but also verbal. Many times movies do voice-overs of profane words, but they also leave a few words uncensored. Seeing how all ages can flip through and see or hear such things make t.v. toxic for the mind, and without it I wouldn't have to worry about what I may accidentally see or hear.

The original paragraph identifies two categories of indecent material, and there is mention of profanity to provide a clue as to what the student thinks is indecent. However, the paragraph could use some examples to make the idea of inappropriate material clearer. Farheya considered some of the television shows she had seen and made a few changes.

Example of Revised Body Paragraph

Not owning a television set would also be a way to preserve innocence and keep my exposure to anything inappropriate at bay. While searching for a program to view, I have seen things I shouldn't have, no matter how fast I switched the channel. The synopsis of Euro Trip, which describes high school friends traveling across Europe, leads viewers to think that the film is an innocent adventure; however; it is filled with indecency, especially when the students reach Amsterdam. The movie Fast and Furious has the same problem since the women are all half-naked in half tops and mini-skirts or short- shorts. Television shows not only display physical indecency, but also verbal. Many television shows have no filters, and the characters say profane words freely. On Empire,

> the main characters Cookie and Lucious Lyon use profane words during their fights throughout entire episodes. Because The Big Bang Theory is a show about a group of science geeks and their cute neighbor, viewers might think that these science geniuses' conversations would be about their current research or other science topics. Instead, their characters regularly engage in conversations about their personal lives that should be kept private. The ease of flipping through channels and seeing or hearing such things makes t.v. toxic for the mind, and without a television I wouldn't have to worry about what I may accidentally see or hear.

Farheya's addition of a few examples helps to convey why she thinks she would be better off without a television.

Concluding Sentences

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

Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the first example on hybrid cars:

> **Topic Sentence:** There are many advantages to owning a hybrid car.
>
> **Concluding Sentence:** Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Notice the use of the synonyms *advantages* and *benefits*. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using the exact same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

Writers should avoid introducing any new ideas into a concluding sentence because a conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion.

Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse readers and weaken the writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.

Example

Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.

- Summarize the key points in the paragraph

Example

A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.

- Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.

Example

These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.

- Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.

Example

Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be morbidly obese by the year 2030 unless we take evasive action.

- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

Example

Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Paragraph Length

Although paragraph length is discussed in the section on developing paragraphs with supporting sentences, some additional reminders about when to start a new paragraph may prove helpful to writers:

- If a paragraph is over a page long, consider providing a paragraph break for readers. Look for a logical place to divide the paragraph; then revise the opening sentence of the second paragraph to maintain coherence.
- A series of short paragraphs can be confusing and choppy. Examine the content of the paragraphs and combine ones with related ideas or develop each one further.
- When dialogue is used, begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.
- Begin a new paragraph to indicate a shift in subject, tone, or time and place.

Improving Paragraph Coherence

A strong paragraph holds together well, flowing seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use a combination of elements:

- **A clear organizational pattern:** chronological (for narrative writing and describing processes), spatial (for descriptions of people or places), order of

importance, general to specific (deductive), specific to general (inductive)

- **Transitional words and phrases:** These connecting words describe a relationship between ideas.
- **Repetition of ideas:** This element helps keep the parts of the paragraph together by maintaining focus on the main idea, so this element reinforces both paragraph coherence and unity.

In the following example, notice the use of transitions (**bolded**) and key words (underlined):

Example of Transition Words

Owning a hybrid car benefits both the owner and the environment. **First**, these cars get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **Second**, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **Because** they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. "It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I've owned." Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Words such as *first* and *second* are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer's ideas by showing that he or she has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas).

In addition to transition words, the writer repeats the word *hybrid* (and other references such as *these cars*, and *they*), and ideas related to *benefits* to keep the paragraph focused on the topic and hold it together.

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

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

Although the phrase "in conclusion" certainly reinforces the idea of summary and closure, it is not necessary in this case and seems redundant, as the sentence without the phrase already repeats and summarizes the benefits presented in the topic sentence and flows smoothly from the preceding quotation. The second half of the sentence, in making a prediction about the future, signals a conclusion, also making the phrase "in conclusion" unnecessary. The original version of the concluding sentence also illustrates how varying sentence openings can improve paragraph coherence. As writers continue to practice and develop their style, they more easily make these decisions between using standard transitional phrases and combining the repetition of key ideas with varied sentence openings.

Table 5.2.1 provides some useful transition words and phrases to connect sentences within paragraphs as well as to connect body paragraphs:

Common Transitional Words and Phrases		
Transitions That Show Sequence or Time		
after	before	later
afterward	before long	meanwhile
as soon as	finally	next
at first	first, second, third	soon
at last	in the first place	then
Transitions That Show Position		
above	across	at the bottom
at the top	behind	below
beside	beyond	inside
near	next to	opposite
to the left, to the right, to the side	under	where
Transitions That Show a Conclusion		
indeed	hence	in conclusion
in the final analysis	therefore	thus
Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought		
consequently	furthermore	additionally
because	besides the fact	following this idea further
in addition	in the same way	moreover
looking further	considering..., it is clear that	
Transitions That Change a Line of Thought		
but	yet	however
nevertheless	on the contrary	on the other hand
Transitions That Show Importance		
above all	best	especially
in fact	more important	most important
most	worst	
Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay		
finally	last	in conclusion

Common Transitional Words and Phrases		
most of all	least of all	last of all
All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs		
admittedly	at this point	certainly
granted	it is true	generally speaking
in general	in this situation	no doubt
no one denies	obviously	of course
to be sure	undoubtedly	unquestionably
Transitions that Introduce Examples		
for instance	for example	
Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps		
first, second, third	generally, furthermore, finally	in the first place, also, last
in the first place, furthermore, finally	in the first place, likewise, lastly	

Table 5.2.1. Common Transitional Words and Phrases

5.3 DRAFTING

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; Kirk Swenson; Sarah M. Lacy; Melanie Gagich; and Terri Pantuso

---

Recall from Section 2.1 the six steps of the writing process:

1. Understand the assignment
2. Gather ideas and form a working thesis
3. Write a draft
4. Revise the draft(s)
5. Proofread/edit the draft(s)
6. Turn in the draft, receive feedback, and revise (if needed)

Now that you've decided on an organizational strategy for your essay, it's time to begin the third step. **Drafting** is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing. Even professional writers admit that an empty page scares them because they feel they need to come up with something fresh and original every time they open a blank document on their computers. Because you have completed the first two steps in the writing process, you have already recovered from empty page syndrome. You have prewriting and planning already done, so you know what will go on that blank page: what you wrote in your outline or prewriting notes.

Goals and Strategies for Drafting

Your objective at this stage of the writing process is to draft an essay with at least three body paragraphs, which means that the essay will contain a minimum of five paragraphs, including an introduction and a conclusion. This five paragraph structure is sometimes referred to as the **emphatic method**. While the five paragraph format works well for beginning writers, you'll want to move beyond this mold and think of your work in a more organic manner as you progress further along through the process.

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

If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can start on paper and then type it before you revise. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking. Another option might be to use the Notes feature on your smartphone.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

The following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in the writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.**
  You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader's interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than the length of an entire double-spaced page.
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.**
  As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.**
  This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multi-page report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write.
- **Be reasonable with your goals.**

If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.

- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.**
  These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, for example, you will present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can. Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

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

The Basic Elements of a First Draft

If you have been using the information in the previous sections step by step to help you develop an assignment, you already have both a formal topic outline and a formal sentence outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft.

A first draft should include the following elements:

- An **introduction** that grabs the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.

- A **thesis statement** that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.
- A **topic sentence** in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the **thesis** statement.
- **Supporting sentences** in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, **anecdotes**, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.
- A **conclusion** that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

The Bowtie Method

There are many ways to think about the writing process as a whole. One way to imagine your essay is to see it like a bowtie. In Figure 5.3.1[1] below, you will find a visual representation of this **metaphor**. The left side of the bow is the introduction, which begins with a **hook** and ends with the thesis statement. In the center, you will find the body paragraphs, which grow with strength as the paper progresses, and each paragraph contains a supported topic sentence. On the right side, you will find the conclusion. Your conclusion should reword your thesis and then wrap up the paper with a summation, call to action, or challenge. In the end, your paper should present itself as a neat package, like a bowtie.

1. "Bowtie Method" was derived by Brandi Gomez from "Figure of the Bowtie Method" in: Kathryn Crowther et al., *Successful College Composition,* 2nd ed., Book 8 (Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016), http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

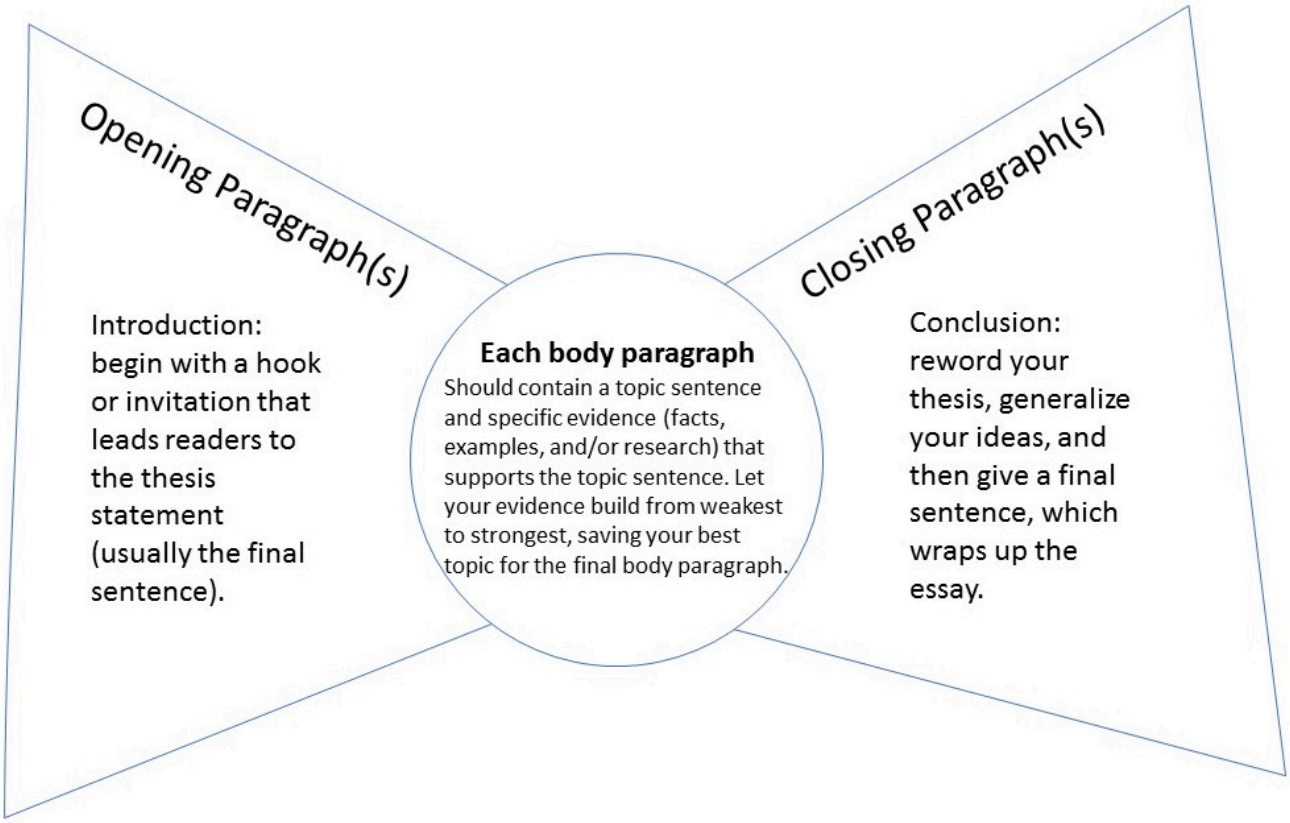


Figure 5.3.1: "Bowtie Method"

If you think of this method on its side, you might envision an hour-glass figure. In either visual, the concepts remain the same: start broad, narrow the focus, then extend back out to repeat the main idea.

Sample First Draft

Let's follow Mariah as she begins to write her essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. The following is Mariah's thesis statement:

Mariah's Thesis Statement
E-book readers are changing the way people read.

Here are the notes that Mariah wrote to herself to characterize her purpose and audience:

Mariah's Notes on Purpose and Audience

Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.
Purpose: My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumers don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.
Audience: My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I'm writing about. I'll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.

Mariah chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised. Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point. Remember that she could have started directly with any of the body paragraphs.

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

Mariah's Sentence Outline

I. Ebook readers are changing the way people read.

    A. Ebook readers make books easy to access and to carry.

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

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

1. Booksellers sell their own ebook readers.
2. Electronics and computer companies also sell ebook readers.

C. Current ebook readers have significant limitations.

1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
2. Few programs have been made to duplicate the way Americans borrow and read printed books.

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

Mariah's Paragraph

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

Ebooks can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore,

use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restrict the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a traditional book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?

If you write your first draft on the computer, consider creating a new file folder for each course with a set of subfolders inside the course folders for each assignment you are given. Label the folders clearly with the course names, and label each assignment folder and document/essay with a title that you will easily recognize. The assignment name is a good choice for the document. Then use that subfolder to store all of the drafts you create. When you start each new draft, do not just write over the last one. Instead, save the draft with a new tag after the title—draft 1, draft 2, and so on—so that you will have a complete history of drafts in case your instructor wishes you to submit them. In your documents, observe any formatting requirements for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters that your instructor requires.

Drafting Body Paragraphs

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement. The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

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

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

Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

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

- **Be relevant to the thesis.**
  Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your supporting points wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be specific.**
  The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be more specific than the thesis. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.
- **Be detailed.**
  Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Pre-write to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

Recall that when you pre-write you essentially make a list of examples or reasons

why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting, you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

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

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

1. **Facts.** Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on, or a solid foundation for, your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence "The most populated state in the United States is California" is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.
2. **Judgments.** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
3. **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; they add authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides **commentary** based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony, but

personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. There are many types of sources that you can use for your essays, such as newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field. The best source to use for your essay will depend on its topic and context; formal research papers will tend to rely more heavily on scholarly journal articles and books, while a movie review may be likely to cite a website such as Rotten Tomatoes. Regardless of your topic, it is important to use the best quality sources available – which may take some digging and even a visit or two to the library. When using sources, you are responsible for properly documenting the borrowed information properly. More information on source attribution and citation formatting is available in the Ethics section of this text (section VIII).

Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations. Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements: topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)

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

Unless your professor instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body

paragraphs in your essay. A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for exams and basic essay assignments because it is meant to help students create fully developed essays. However, writers should maintain flexibility and not expect all essays to conform to that model. The emphasis should be on creating an essay that provides enough support to tell a story, create an image or idea, or inform or persuade the audience.

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Primary Support Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence. The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement.

Example of Thesis and Supporting Details

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

I. Dogs can scare cyclists.

    A. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the roads.
    B. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.
    C. People walking at night freeze in fear.

II. Loose dogs are traffic hazards.

    A. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.
    B. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.
    C. Children coaxing dogs across streets create danger.

III. Unleashed dogs damage gardens.

    A. They step on flowers and vegetables.
    B. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.
    C. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

As previously discussed, you have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways. You can state it at the beginning of the body paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph, or you do not have to write it at all. This is called an implied topic sentence. An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want to clearly identify the sentences that support your thesis.

Drafting Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

Picture your introduction as a storefront window. You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis). Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

Writing an Introduction

An introduction serves the following purposes:

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

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

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving

smoothly and logically from your introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be achieved using a funnel technique, as illustrated in Figure 5.3.2[2] below.

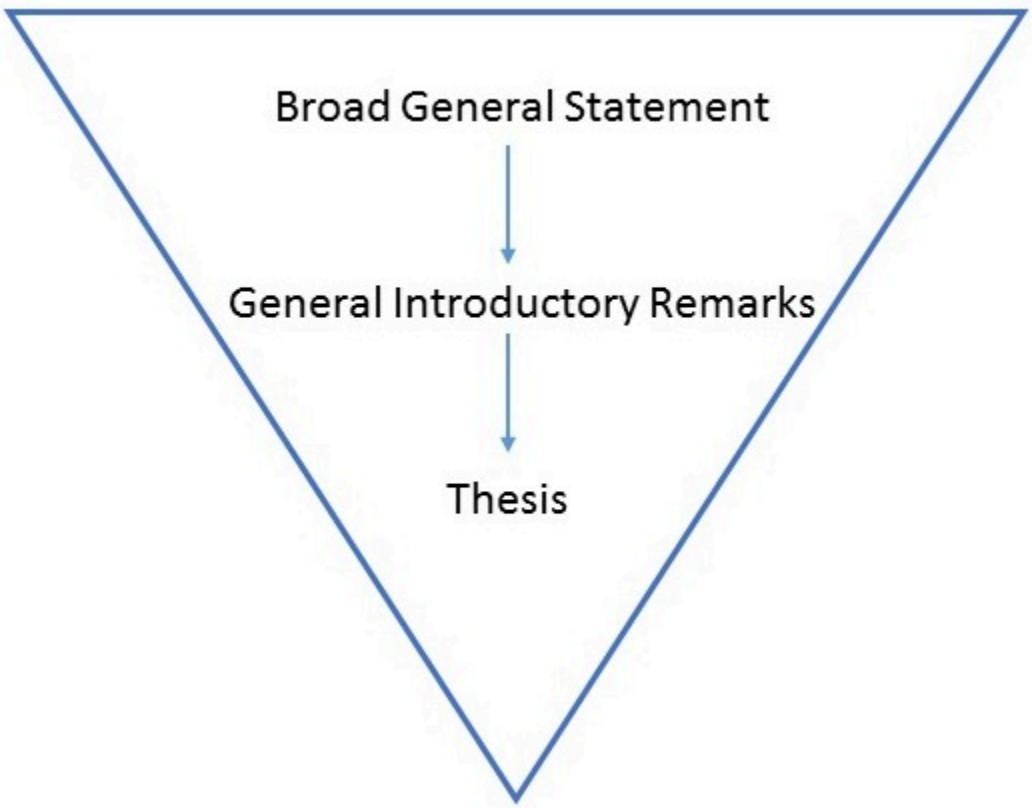


Figure 5.3.2: Funnel Technique

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

- Appealing to their emotions;
- Using logic;
- Beginning with a provocative question or opinion;
- Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact;

2. "Funnel Technique" was derived by Brandi Gomez in 2019 from "Fig. Funnel Technique" in: Kathryn Crowther et al., *Successful College Composition*, 2nd ed., Book 8 (Georgia: English Open Textbooks, 2016), http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

- Raising a question or series of questions;
- Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay;
- Opening with a relevant quotation or incident;
- Opening with a striking image;
- Including a personal anecdote.

Remember that your diction, or word choice, while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your discussion. Choose words that create images or express action.

Earlier in this section we followed Mariah as she moved through the writing process. In this section, Mariah writes her introduction and conclusion for the same essay on media. Mariah incorporates some of the introductory elements into her introductory paragraph, which she previously outlined. Her thesis statement is underlined.

Mariah's Introductory Paragraph

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

Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even

experienced writers may run out of energy. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

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

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay. In order to tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating your thesis reminds your readers of the major arguments you have been trying to prove and also indicates that your essay is drawing to a close. A strong conclusion also reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic.

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

Many writers like to end their essays with a final **emphatic** statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable.

Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay.

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

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

- **Introducing new material.**
  Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.
- **Contradicting your thesis.**
  Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a specific point of view.
- **Changing your thesis.**
  When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.
- **Using apologies or disclaimers.**
  By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

Mariah incorporates some of these pointers into her conclusion. She has paraphrased her thesis statement in the first sentence, which is underlined.

Mariah's Conclusion

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

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

Writing a Title

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

Following her outline carefully, Mariah crafted each paragraph of her essay. Moving step by step in the writing process, Mariah finished the draft and even included a brief concluding paragraph which you will read later. She then decided, as the final touch for her writing session, to add an engaging title.

Mariah's Title

Thesis Statement:

Some people want the newest and the best gaming technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

Working Title:

Gaming Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?

Lacey, Sarah M., and Melanie Gagich. "The Writing Process." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/3-1-eng-100-101-writing-process/

5.4 REVISING AND EDITING

Kathryn Crowther; Lauren Curtright; Nancy Gilbert; Barbara Hall; Tracienne Ravita; Kirk Swenson; and Terri Pantuso

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

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

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

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

Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results.

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you

can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why? Many people hear the words critic, critical, and criticism and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity.

Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Creating Unity and Coherence

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

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

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

Creating Unity

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

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the off- topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph. Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah's changes, and the second time with them.

Mariah's Changes

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

much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ buy more television than you need!

Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essay. The Table of Common Transitional Words and Phrases (table 5.2.1) groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise. If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

Identifying Wordiness

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

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

Examples

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

- Sentences with unnecessary modifiers.

Examples

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

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

Examples

Wordy: As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy. A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.
Revised: As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy. A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

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

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

Examples

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

- Sentences with constructions that can be shortened.

Examples

Wordy: The ebook reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle bought an ebook reader, and his wife bought an ebook reader, too.
Revised: The ebook reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought ebook readers.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English, suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate.

- **Avoid slang.** Find alternatives to words that only a certain demographic would understand.
- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about "men and women" rather than "girls and guys" unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions.** Use *do not* in place of *don't*, *I am* in place of *I'm*, *have not* in place of *haven't*, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech.
- **Avoid clichés.** Overused expressions such as *green with envy*, *face the music*, *better late than never*, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may

not appeal to your audience.

- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings.** Some examples are allusion/illusion, complement/compliment, council/counsel, concurrent/consecutive, founder/flounder, and their/there/they're. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
- **Choose words with the connotations you want.** Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word proud and the negative connotations of arrogant and conceited.
- **Use specific words rather than overly general words.** Find synonyms for thing, people, nice, good, bad, interesting, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions Mariah made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. She has already incorporated the changes she made to improve unity and coherence.

Mariah's Revisions

Finally, nothing ^ confuses buyers more than purchasing ~~is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want~~ a new high-definition digital television (HDTV)~~, with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on.~~ ^ and with

~~There's~~ a good reason. for this confusion. ~~You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions.~~ The first big decision is ^ involves screen resolution, ~~you want.~~ ^ which ~~Screen resolution~~ means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or ^ as 768p. The trouble is that ^ on ~~if you have a smaller screen,~~ 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal, ^ screen, viewers will not you won't be able to tell the difference ^ between them with the naked eye. The other important decision ~~you face as you walk around the sales floor~~ is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer ^ deeper blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current

LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. ^ Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets. ~~Don't buy more television than you need!~~

Completing a Peer Review

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

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called peer review. You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease.

Using Feedback

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience). It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

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

- Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
- Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience. Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

Editing Your Draft

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

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

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

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they do notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas—unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use there, their, and they're correctly; but they

notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document.

Checklists for Editing Your Writing Grammar

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

Sentence Structure

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

Punctuation

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

Mechanics and Usage

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

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

Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to read past a mistake. Set your paper aside for at least a few hours, if not a day or more, so your mind will rest. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark. If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

Formatting

Remember to use proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name.

These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included. To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

VI. JOINING THE ACADEMIC CONVERSATION

Introduction

Kathy Anders

When a student writes a research essay, that essay is not written for the student alone. In section 3 on the rhetorical situation, you learned that all written works have an audience and a context. Not only is there an audience and a context for a given text, but generally a text is joining an ongoing conversation about that topic as well. If, for example, someone writes about climate change, the author is stepping into a conversation about climate change that has been happening for the past fifty years and longer. Part of joining that conversation means being able to find and evaluate which voices matter for the topic and **thesis** of the paper, and then building upon and responding to those people.

The twentieth century rhetorician Kenneth Burke posits that there is an "unending conversation" occurring throughout history, and his illustration of this conversation is helpful in understanding how one joins a conversation of ideas:

> 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 has 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]

In this analogy, the other party-goers are the authors of primary and secondary texts that an author engages in a paper, and the person writing the research paper is the one joining the conversation. However, the student in this case has many more sources to choose from than just a few in a single conversation. There are many voices in hundreds of conversations, and it is up to you to choose which ones are most important and worth including in your argument.

1. Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1941), 110-111.

6.1 EVALUATING THE IMPORTANT VOICES

Deborah Bernnard; Greg Bobish; Jenna Hecker; Irina Holden; Allison Hosier; Trudi Jacobson; Tor Loney; Daryl Bullis; and Sarah LeMire

In 2010, a textbook being used in fourth grade classrooms in Virginia became big news for all the wrong reasons. According to an article in *The Washington Post*,[1] the book *Our Virginia,* by Joy Masoff,[2] had caught the attention of a parent who was helping her child do her homework. Carol Sheriff was a historian for the College of William and Mary and as she worked with her daughter using *Our Virginia*, she began to notice some glaring historical errors, not the least of which was a passage which described how thousands of African Americans fought for the South during the Civil War.

Further investigation into the book revealed that although the author had written textbooks on a variety of subjects, she was not a trained historian. The research she had done to write *Our Virginia,* and in particular the information she included about Black Confederate soldiers, was done through the internet and included sources created by groups like the Sons of Confederate Veterans, an organization which promotes views of history that de-emphasize the role of slavery in the Civil War.

How did a book with errors like these come to be used as part of the curriculum and who was at fault? Was it Masoff for using untrustworthy sources for her research? Was it the editors who allowed the book to be published with these errors intact? Was it the school board for approving the book without more closely reviewing its accuracy?

There are a number of issues at play in the case of *Our Virginia*, but there's no

1. Kevin Sieff, "Virginia 4th-Grade Textbook Criticized Over Claims on Black Confederate Soldiers," *The Washington Post*, October 20, 2010, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/19/AR2010101907974.html.
2. Joy Masoff, *Our Virginia: Past & Present,* (Windsor, CT: Five Ponds Press, 2010).

question that evaluating sources is an important part of the research process and doesn't just apply to internet sources. Using inaccurate, irrelevant, or poorly researched sources can affect the quality of your own work. Being able to understand and apply the concepts that follow is crucial to becoming a more savvy user and creator of information.

People who are adept at evaluating information are able to review the research process and compare and judge information and data. Individuals who evaluate information well:

Understand:

- The information and data landscape of their learning/research context;
- Issues of quality, accuracy, relevance, bias, reputation and credibility relating to information and data sources;
- How information is evaluated and published to help inform their personal evaluation process;
- The importance of consistency in data collection;
- The importance of citation in their learning/research context.

Are able to:

- Distinguish between different information resources and the information they provide;
- Choose suitable material on their search topic using appropriate criteria;
- Assess the quality, accuracy, relevance, bias, reputation and credibility of the information resources found;
- Assess the credibility of the data gathered;
- Read critically, identifying key points and arguments;
- Relate the information found to the original search strategy;
- Critically appraise and evaluate their own findings and those of others;
- Know when to stop.

Distinguishing Between Information Resources

Information is published in a variety of formats, each with its own special considerations when it comes to evaluation. When conducting your research,

consider the following formats and the different ways in which each format is developed and presented.

Social Media

Social media is a quickly rising star in the landscape of information gathering. Facebook updates, tweets, wikis, and blogs have made information creators of us all and have a strong influence not just on how we communicate with each other but also on how we learn about current events or discover items of interest. Anyone can create or contribute to social media and nothing that's said is checked for accuracy before it's posted for the world to see. So do people really use social media for research? Currently, the main use for social media, like tweets and Facebook posts, is as primary sources that are treated as the objects under study rather than sources of information on a topic. But now that the Modern Language Association (MLA) has a recommended way to cite a tweet, social media may, in fact, be gaining credibility as a resource.

Websites

In addition to social media, a common place to find information is websites. Commercial organizations, educational institutions, government entities, research think tanks, and more publish blogs, reports, and statistics that could be relevant to your research. However, evaluating the credibility of web sources can be challenging. Students are often taught in high school, as a general rule of thumb, to avoid .com websites as untrustworthy and to use .org and .edu domains instead. In research, it is important to critically evaluate all web sources for trustworthiness, accuracy, and currency, regardless of domain suffix. Websites are considered popular sources, even if published by an educational institution or a government entity. Some websites, including some government websites, may be considered primary sources, which could have value in research.

News Articles

These days, social media will generally be among the first to cover a big news story, with news media writing an article or report after more information has been gathered. News articles are written by journalists who either report on an event they have witnessed firsthand, or after making contact with those more directly

involved. The focus is on information that is of immediate interest to the public and these articles are written in a way that a general audience will be able to understand. These articles go through a fact-checking process, but when a story is big and the goal is to inform readers of urgent or timely information, inaccuracies may occur. In research, news articles are often best treated as primary sources, especially if they were published immediately after a current event.

Magazine Articles

While news articles and social media tend to concentrate on what happened, how it happened, who it happened to, and where it happened, magazine articles are more about understanding *why* something happened, usually with the benefit of at least a little hindsight. Writers of magazine articles also fall into the journalist category and rely heavily on investigation and interviews for research.
Fact-checking in magazine articles tends to be more accurate because magazines publish less frequently than news outlets and have more time to get the facts right. Depending on the focus of the magazine, articles may cover current events or just items of general interest to the intended audience. The language may be more emotional or dramatic than the factual tone of news articles, but the articles are written at a similar reading level so as to appeal to the widest audience possible. A magazine article is considered a popular source rather than a scholarly one which gives it less weight in a research context but doesn't take away the value completely.

Scholarly Articles

Scholarly articles are written by, and for, experts in a field and generally describe formal research studies or experiments conducted to provide new insight on a topic rather than reporting current events or items of general interest. You may have heard the term "peer review" in relation to scholarly articles. This means that before an article is published, it undergoes a review process in order to confirm that the information is accurate and the research it discusses is valid. This process adds a level of credibility to the article that you would not find in a magazine or news article. Scholarly articles tend to be long and feature specialized language that is not easily understood by someone who does not already have some level of expertise on the topic. Though they may not be as easy to use, they carry a lot of weight in a research context, especially if you are working in a field related to

science or technology. These sources will give you information to build on in your own original research.

Books

Books have been a staple of the research process since **Gutenberg** invented the printing press because a topic can be covered in more depth in a book than in most other types of sources. Also, the conventional wisdom for books is that anyone can write one, but only the best ones get published. This is becoming less true as books are published in a wider variety of formats and via a wider variety of venues than in previous eras, which is something to be aware of when using a book for research purposes. For now, the editing process for formally published books is still in place and research in the humanities, which includes topics such as literature and history, continues to be published primarily in this format.

Choosing Materials

When choosing a source for your research, what criteria do you usually use? Gauging whether the source relates to your topic at all is probably one. How high up it appears on the results list when you search may be another. Beyond that, you may base your decision at least partly on how easy it is to access.

These are all important criteria, to varying degrees, but there are other criteria you may want to keep in mind when deciding if a source will be useful to your research.

Quality

Scholarly journals and books are traditionally considered to be higher quality information sources because they have gone through a more thorough editing process that ensures the quality of their content. Generally, you also pay more to access these sources or may have to rely on a library or university to pay for access for you. Information on the Internet can also be of a high quality but there is less of a quality assurance process in place for much of that information. In the current climate, the highest quality information, even on the Internet, often requires a subscription or other form of payment for access.

Clues to a source's level of quality are closely related to thinking about how the source was produced, including what format it was published in and whether it is likely to have gone through a formal editing process prior to publication.

Accuracy

A source is accurate if the information it contains is correct. Sometimes it's easy to tell when a piece of information is simply wrong, especially if you have some prior knowledge of the subject. But if you're less familiar with the subject, inaccuracies can be harder to detect, especially when they come in subtler forms such as exaggerations or inconsistencies.

To determine whether a source is accurate, you need to look more deeply at the content of the source including where the information in the source comes from and what evidence the author uses to support their views and conclusions. It also helps to compare your source against another source. A reader of *Our Virginia* may not have reason to believe the information the author cites from the Sons of Confederate Veterans website is inaccurate, but if they compared the book against another source, the inconsistencies might become more apparent.

Relevance

Relevance has to do with deciding whether the source actually relates to your topic and, if it does, how closely it relates. Some sources may be an exact match; for others, you may need to consider a particular angle or context before you can tell whether the source applies to your topic. When searching for relevant sources, you should keep an open mind—but not too open. Don't pick something that's not really related just because it's on the first page or two of results or because it sounds good.

You can assess the relevance of a source by comparing it against your research topic or research question. Keep in mind that the source may not need to match on all points, but it should match on enough points to be usable for your research beyond simply satisfying a requirement for an assignment.

Bias

An example of bias is when someone expresses a view that is one-sided without

much consideration for information that might negate what they believe. Bias is most prevalent in sources that cover controversial issues where the author may attempt to persuade their readers to one side of the issue without giving fair consideration to the other side of things. If the research topic you are using has ever been the cause of heated debate, you will need to be especially watchful for any bias in the sources you find.

Bias can be difficult to detect, particularly when we are looking at persuasive sources with which we want to agree. If you want to believe something is true, chances are you'll side with your own internal bias without consideration for whether a source exhibits bias. When deciding whether there is bias in a source, look for dramatic language and images, poorly supported evidence against an opposing viewpoint, or a strong leaning in one direction.

Reputation

Is the author of the source you have found a professor at a university or a self-published blogger? If the author is a professor, are they respected in their field or is their work heavily challenged? What about the publication itself? Is it held in high regard or relatively unknown? Digging a little deeper to find out what you can about the reputation of both the author and the publication can go a long way toward deciding whether a source is valuable.

You can investigate the reputation of an author by looking at any biographical information that is available as part of the source. Looking to see what else the author has published and whether this information has positive reviews is also important in establishing whether the author has a good reputation. The reputation of a publication can also be investigated through reviews, word-of-mouth by professionals in the field, or online databases that keep track of statistics related to a journal's credibility.

Credibility

Credibility has to do with the believability or trustworthiness of a source based on evidence such as information about the author, the reputation of the publication, and how well the source is formatted. How likely would you be to use a source that was written by someone with no expertise on a topic or a source that appeared in a publication that was known for featuring low quality information? What if the

source was riddled with spelling and formatting errors? Looking at sources like these should inspire more caution.

Objectively, credibility can be determined by taking into account all of the other criteria discussed for evaluating a source. Knowing that some types of sources, such as scholarly journals, are generally considered more credible than others, such as self-published websites, may also help. Subjectively, deciding whether a source is credible may come down to a gut feeling. If something about a source doesn't sit well with you, you may decide to pass it over.

Identifying Key Points and Arguments

Evaluating information about the source from its title, author, and summary information is only the first step. The evaluation process continues when you begin to read the source in more detail and make decisions about how (or whether) you will ultimately use it for your own research.

When you begin to look more deeply at your source, pay close attention to the following features of a document.

Introduction

The purpose of the introduction to any piece that has one is to give information about what the reader can expect from the source as a whole. There are different types of introductions including forewords and prefaces that may be written by the author of the book or by someone else with knowledge of the subject. Introductory sections can include background information on why the topic was chosen, background on the author's interest in the topic, context pertaining to why the topic is important, or the lens through which the topic will be explored. Knowing this information before diving into the body of the work will help you understand the author's approach to the topic and how it might relate to the approach you are taking in your own research.

Table of Contents

Most of the time, if your source is a book or an entire website, it will be divided into sections that each cover a particular aspect of the overall topic. It may be

necessary to read through all of these sections in order to get a "big picture" understanding of the information being discussed, or it may be better to concentrate only on the areas that relate most closely to your own research. Looking over the table of contents or menu will help you decide whether you need the whole source or only pieces of it.

List of References

If the source you're using is research-based, it should have a list of references that usually appear at the end of the document. Reviewing these references will give you a better idea of the kind of work the author put into their own research. Did they put as much work into evaluating their sources as you are? Can you tell from the citations if the sources used were credible? When were they published? Do they represent a fair balance of perspectives or do they all support a limited point of view? What information does the author use from these sources and in what way does he or she use that information? Use your own research skills to spy on the research habits of others to help you evaluate the source.

Evaluating Your Findings

In the case of *Our Virginia,* the author used a biased source as part of her research and the inaccurate information she got from that source affected the quality of her own work. Likewise, if anyone had used her book as part of their research, it would have set off a chain reaction, since whatever information they cited from *Our Virginia* would naturally have to be called into question, possibly diminishing the value of their own conclusions.

Evaluating the sources you use for quality, accuracy, relevance, bias, and credibility is a good first step in making sure this doesn't happen, but have you ever thought about evaluating the sources used by your own sources? This takes extra time, but looking at the reference list, bibliography, or notes section of any source you use to gauge the quality of the research done by the author of that source can be an important extra step.

Knowing When to Stop

For some researchers, the process of searching for and evaluating sources is a

highly enjoyable, rewarding part of doing research. For others, it's a necessary evil on the way to constructing their own ideas and sharing their own conclusions. Whichever end of the spectrum you most closely identify with, here are a few ideas about the ever-important skill of knowing when to stop.

1. **You've satisfied the requirements for the assignment and/or your curiosity on the topic.** If you're doing research as part of a course assignment, chances are you've been given a required number of sources. Novice researchers may find this number useful to understand how much research is considered appropriate for a particular topic. However, a common mistake is to focus more on the number of sources than on the quality of those sources. Meeting that magic number is great, but not if the sources used are low quality or otherwise inappropriate for the level of research being done.
2. **You have a deadline looming.** Nothing better inspires forward motion in a research project than having to meet a deadline, whether it's set by a professor, an advisor, a publisher, or yourself. Time management skills are especially useful, but since research is a cyclical process that sometimes circles back on itself when you discover new knowledge or change direction, planning things out in minute detail may not work. Leaving yourself enough time to follow the twists and turns of the research and writing process goes a long way toward getting your work in when it's expected.
3. **You need to change your topic.** You've been searching for information on your topic for a while now. Every search seems to come up empty or full of irrelevant information. You've brought your case to a research expert, like a librarian, who has given advice on how to adjust your search or how to find potential sources you may have previously dismissed. Still nothing. It could be that your topic is too specific or that it covers something that's too new, like a current event that hasn't made it far enough in the information cycle yet. Whatever the reason, if you've exhausted every available avenue and there truly is no information on your topic of interest, this may be a sign that you need to stop what you're doing and change your topic.
4. **You're getting overwhelmed.** The opposite of not finding enough information on your topic is finding too much. You want to collect it all, read through it all, and evaluate it all to make sure you have exactly what you need. But now you're running out of room on your flash drive, your Dropbox/Google/One Drive account is getting full, and you don't know how you're going to sort through it all *and* look for more. The solution: stop looking. Go through what you have. If

you find what you need in what you already have, great! If not, you can always keep looking. You don't need to find everything in the first pass. There is plenty of opportunity to do more if more is needed!

From Theory to Practice

Looking back, the *Our Virginia* case is more complicated than it may have first appeared. It wasn't just that the author based her writing on research done through the Internet. It was complicated by the nature of the sources she used as well as the effect using those sources ultimately had on the quality of her own work. These mistakes happened despite a formal editing process that should have ensured better accuracy and an approval process by the school board that should have evaluated the material more closely. With both of these processes having failed, it was up to one of the book's readers, the parent of a student who compared the information against her own specialized knowledge, to figure it all out.

Now that you know more about the theory behind evaluating sources, it's time to apply the theory. The following section will help you put source evaluation into perspective using something you probably remember from elementary school – the five Ws and H. You'll also have the opportunity to try out your new skills with several hands-on activities.

The Five Ws

You evaluate sources regularly in your day-to-day life. You evaluate which movie to see this weekend, which new restaurant to try out, and which section of a required college class to take next semester. Evaluating sources in an academic context requires many of the same skills that you already employ.

When you begin evaluating sources, what should you consider? There is no single test or checklist that you can use to determine if a source is trustworthy or appropriate. Evaluating sources requires critical examination of each source, as well as the context in which you intend to use that source.

When evaluating sources, one set of criteria that you should consider are the five Ws and H. These questions can help you begin to suss out not only the quality of your source, but whether it is appropriate for your intended use case.

Who

Understanding more about your information's source helps you determine when, how, and where to use that information. Is your author an expert on the subject? Do they have some personal stake in the argument they are making? What is the author or information producer's background? When determining *who* is behind your source, consider the following:

- Who is the author? What are their credentials?
- What is the author's level of education, experience, and/or occupation?
- What qualifies the author to write about this topic?
- What affiliations does the author have? Could these affiliations affect their position?
- What organization or body published the information? Is it authoritative? Does it have an explicit position or bias? Is it scholarly?
- Was this information funded by a group or organization? If so, who funded it? Is there a conflict of interest or perception of bias?

What

Knowing the intended purpose of a piece of information is a key to evaluation. Understanding if the information has clear intentions, or if the information is fact, opinion or propaganda will help you decide how and why to use information. When determining *what* is the purpose of your source, consider the following:

- What information does the author present?
- Is the information clearly supported by evidence?
- Does the source have an obvious bias or prejudice?
- What information isn't presented? Does the author omit important facts or data that might disprove their argument?
- Is the article presented from multiple points of view?
- Is the author's language informal, joking, emotional, or impassioned?
- Is the source intended to inform, sell, persuade, or entertain?

Where

Determining where information comes from, if the evidence supports the

information, and if the information has been reviewed or refereed can help you decide how and whether to use a source. When determining from *where* a source derives its information, consider the following:

- Where does the information in the article come from?
- Where can I find more information about the topic?
- Is the source well-documented? Does it include footnotes, citations or a bibliography?
- Is information in the source presented as fact, opinion or propaganda? Are biases clear?
- Can you verify information from referenced information in the source?

When

One of the most important and interesting steps to take as you begin researching a subject is selecting the resources that will help you build your thesis and support your assertions. Many topics require you to pay special attention to how current your resource is—because they are time sensitive, because they have evolved so much over the years, or because new research comes out on the topic so frequently. When evaluating the currency of an article, consider the following:

- When was the item written and how frequently does the publication it is in come out?
- Is there evidence of newly added or updated information in the item?
- If the information is dated, is it still suitable for your topic?
- How frequently does information change about your topic?
- Has the information been updated recently?

Why

As you consider each source, consider the sheer quantity of information available to you. A simple Google search may retrieve billions of search results in response to a keyword search on your topic. Why is this source the best one to use for your particular topic and project? Remember that you're not looking for the first source you can find on a topic – you're looking for the one that is going to provide the strongest evidence for your information needs. When considering *why* you should use a particular source, consider the following:

- Why is this information better than other available sources?
- Why is this information considered high quality, scholarly, or trustworthy?
- Why does this article support or undermine your research hypothesis?
- Is the information written clearly and free of typographical and grammatical mistakes? Does the source look to be edited before publication? A clean, well-presented paper does not always indicate accuracy, but usually at least means more eyes have been on the information.

How

Understanding what resources are most applicable to your subject and why they are applicable can help you focus and refine your thesis. Many topics are broad and searching for information on them produces a wide range of resources. Narrowing your topic and focusing on resources specific to your needs can help reduce the piles of information and help you focus on what is truly important to read and reference. When determining *how* a source may be relevant to your topic, consider the following:

- How does this relate to what you already know?
- How do you intend to use this information?
- Does the item contain information relevant to your argument or thesis?
- Does the information presented support or refute your ideas?
- If the information refutes your ideas, how will this change your argument?

Conclusion

When you feel overwhelmed by the information you are finding, thinking through the 5Ws and H can help you determine which information is the most useful to your research topic. Remember that no test or checklist is guaranteed to tell you if a source is trustworthy, but considering these factors can help you better understand whether a source is appropriate for your topic and research project.

This section contains material from:

6.2 USING SOURCES IN YOUR PAPER

John Lanning; Amanda Lloyd; Robin Jeffrey; Melanie Gagich; and Terri Pantuso

Academic writing requires the use of signal phrases to properly embed quoted material and document information. While basic signal phrases require the use of the author's name and a strong verb, attribution tags emphasize different types of information related to the source in order to set up the quoted material and can help shape your reader's response to the information presented. In grammatical terms, an attribution tag can be viewed as an appositive, an adjectival clause following a noun that modifies the noun and provides contextual information. In the following examples, the signal phrases (appositives) are italicized.

Example

As Benjamin Franklin, *one of the Founding Fathers*, states, "Well done is better than well said."[1]

Example

The campaign slogan, "Yes we can," was highly successful for Barack Obama, *the 44th President of the United States*.

What you have to say is more important than the passage you are citing, so you want the information leading into your evidence/ support to work to your advantage. A basic signal phrase is a device used to smoothly integrate quotations and paraphrases into your essay and consists of an author's name and an active

1. Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard, 1737,* Founders Online, National Archives, accessed December 18, 2020, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-02-02-0028.

verb indicating how the author is presenting the material. It is important for beginning academic writers to use signal phrases to clearly attribute textual evidence to an author and to avoid interrupting the flow of an essay.

Referring to the Author within a Signal Phrase

In most instances, a signal phrase should contain only the last name of the author or authors of the source text (as opposed to the author's first *and* last name). APA style guidelines require no reference to a first name at any point in an essay and few if any gender specific pronouns. But in MLA papers, if you are referring to an author for the first time in your essay, you should include that author's first name. Any future signal phrase should refer to the author by last name only or with a pronoun when it's perfectly clear to whom the pronoun refers.

Examples

Ellen J. Langer observes, "For us to pay attention to something for any amount of time, the image must be varied" (39).[2]
Langer continues, "Thus, for students who have trouble paying attention the problem may be that they are following the wrong instructions" (39).
She then states, "To pay constant, fixed attention to a thought or an image may be a kind of oxymoron" (39).

Notice how each signal phrase verb is followed by a comma, which is then followed by one space before the opening quotation mark.

Varying Your Verbs

While it's important to use signal phrase verbs, you'll want to make sure that you vary them to avoid repetition (rather than simply using "states" throughout your entire essay for example) in order to maintain your readers' interest and to indicate

2. Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997).

the author's intended use of the excerpted material. See below for examples of strong signal phrase verbs.

Strong Signal Phrase Verbs		
acknowledges	counters	notes
admits	declares	observes
agrees	denies	points out
argues	disputes	reasons
asserts	emphasizes	refutes
believes	finds	rejects
claims	illustrates	reports
compares	implies	responds
compares	insists	suggests
comments	maintains	thinks
contends	mentions	writes

Table 6.1: Strong Signal Phrase Verbs

Why Use Signal Phrases and Attributive Tags?

While many students may see attributive tags as filler, they can provide the audience with valuable insight into how you, the writer, intend the quoted material to be read/viewed. In addition to setting up the source evidence, attribution tags can also be used as meaningful transitions moving your readers between your ideas and those of your support.

In most instances, the first time the author is mentioned in an MLA style essay, it is a good idea to provide an attributive tag as well as the author's first and last name. When using APA style, list the author's first initial and last name. Style will vary with studies including multiple authors.

While providing the author's credentials and title of the source are the most common attributions used, there are others we should be aware of.

Types of Attributive Tags (attributive tag is underlined in each example)

***Type*:** Author's credentials are indicated.

Example

Grace Chapmen, Curator of Human Health & Evolutionary Medicine at the Springfield Natural History Museum, explains...
Purpose: Presenting an author's credentials should help build credibility for the passage you are about to present. Including the author's credentials gives your readers a reason to consider your sources.

***Type*:** Author's *lack of* credentials is indicated.

Example

Matthew Spencer, whose background is in marriage counseling, not foreign policy, claims...
Purpose: Identifying an author's lack of credentials in a given area can help illustrate a lack of authority on the subject matter and persuade the audience not to adopt the author's ideas. Pointing to an author's lack of credentials can be beneficial when developing your response to counterarguments.

***Type*:** Author's social or political stance, if necessary to the content, is explained.

Example

Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Roland Hayes, prominent civil rights activist, preaches... Ralph Spencer, who has ties to the White Nationalist movement, denies...
Purpose: Explaining the author's social or political stance can help a reader to

understand why that author expresses a particular view. This understanding can positively or negatively influence an audience. Be careful to avoid engaging in logical fallacies such as loaded language.

***Type*:** Publisher of the source is identified.

Example

According to a recent *CNN* poll...
Purpose: Identifying the publisher of the passage can help reinforce the credibility of the information presented and you can capitalize on the reputation/ credibility of the publisher of the source material.

***Type*:** Title of the source is included.

Example

In "Understanding Human Behavior," Riley argues ...
Purpose: Informs the reader where the cited passage is being pulled from.

***Type*:** Information that establishes context is presented.

Example

In a speech presented during a Free Speech rally, Elaine Wallace encourages ...
Purpose: Presenting the context that the original information was presented can help the audience understand the author's purpose more clearly

Quoting

What are Direct Quotes?

Direct quotes are portions of a text taken word for word and placed inside of a work. Readers know when an author is using a direct quote because it is denoted by the use of quotation marks and an in-text citation.[3]

Example of Direct Quote

In his seminal work, David Bartholomae argues that "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion-invent the university "(4).

Direct quotes might also be formatted as a "block quote" which occurs if the borrowed language is longer than four (4) lines of text in MLA formatting, or more than 40 words in APA formatting. In MLA, A block quote requires the author to indent the borrowed language by 1/2 an inch, place the citation at the end of the block, and remove quotation marks.

Example of Block Quote

In his seminal work, David Bartholomae argues that

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion-invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. (4).

3. The following examples come from: David Bartholomae, "Inventing the University," *Journal of Basic Writing* 5, no. 3 (1986): 4-23.

Be careful when using direct quotes because failing to write the text exactly as it appears in the original is not an ethical use of direct quotes. Also, failing to bracket the quote with quotation marks and/or cite it inside the text is also unethical. Both mistakes are a form of plagiarism.

When Should I Use Direct Quotes?

Generally speaking, direct quotes should be used sparingly because you want to rely on your own understanding of material and avoid over-relying on another's words. You want your voice to be the dominant one in an argument. Over quoting does not reinforce your credibility as an author; however, according to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) you should use direct quotes when "the author you are quoting has coined a term unique to her or his research and relevant within your own paper."[4]

The Basics of Directly Quoting

1. All quoted material should be enclosed in quotation marks to set it off from the rest of the text. The exception to this is block quotes which require different formatting.
2. Quoted material should be an accurate word-for-word reproduction from the author's original text. You cannot alter any wording or any spelling. If you must do so, you must use a bracket or an ellipsis.
3. A clear signal phrase/attribution tag should precede each quotation.
4. A parenthetical citation should follow each quotation.

The Hard Part of Directly Quoting: Integrating Quotes into Your Writing

As the author of your essay, you should explain the significance of each quotation to your reader. This goes far beyond simply including a signal phrase. Explaining the significance means indicating how the quoted material supports the point you are making in that paragraph. Remember, just because you add a quote does not

4. "How to Use Quotation Marks," Purdue Online Writing Lab, accessed May 8, 2020, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/quotation_marks/index.html.

mean that you have made your point. Quotes never speak for themselves. When quoting material, ask yourself how and why does that quoted material make the point you think it does? Then, follow the quote with a sentence that adds clarity for your insertion of that quoted material. Table 6.2.1 contains some helpful phrases for explaining quoted materials where "X" represents the author's last name.

Helpful Phrases for Explaining Quoted Material
(quoted material). What X's point demonstrates is that . . .
(quoted material). Here, X is not simply stating _____, she is also demonstrating _____.
(quoted material). This is an example of _____because _____.
(quoted material). This statement clearly shows _____because _____.

Table 6.2.1. Phrases for Explaining Quoted Material

Sometimes, in order to smoothly integrate quoted material into your paper, you may need to remove a word or add a word to make the quote make sense. If you make any change to quoted material, it must be formatted correctly using an ellipsis or brackets. In the following, a portion of Hamlet's "To Be, or Not To Be" soliloquy is used as the exemplar:

Original quote: "To be, or not to be, that is the question"

- Use brackets [these are brackets] to change a word or add additional information.

Example

As Hamlet states, "To be, or not to be, that is the [essential] question.

- Use an ellipsis (this is an ellipsis...) to indicate omissions in the middle of a quote, not at the beginning or ending of quoted material.

Example

As Hamlet states, "To be, or not to be, that is the [essential] question."

When in doubt, strive to allow your **voice** – not a quote from a source – to begin each paragraph, precede each quote, follow each quote, and end each paragraph. Quotes that are integrated well into a paper allow you to control the paper. That is what a reader wants to see: your ideas and the way that you engage sources to shape and discuss your ideas.

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

While quoting may be the first thing that many people think of when they think about integrating sources, paraphrasing, summarizing, and citing data are also ways to incorporate information from outside materials into your essays or projects.

Paraphrasing

1. Paraphrases allow you to describe specific information from a source (ideas from a paragraph or several consecutive paragraphs) *in your own words*.
2. Paraphrases are like translations of an author' original idea. You retain the detail of the original thought, but you express it in your own way.
3. Paraphrases of the text should be expressed in your own words, with your own sentence structure, in your own way. You should not simply "word swap"; that is, replace a few words from the original with synonyms.
4. If you must use a few of the author's words within your paraphrase, they must have quotation marks around them.
5. Paraphrases often include attributive tags (or signal phrases) to let your readers know where the paraphrased material begins.
6. Paraphrased material should be followed by a parenthetical citation.
7. As with a quote, you need to explain to your reader why the paraphrased material is significant to the point you are making in your paper.

Summarizing

1. Summaries allow you to describe general ideas from a source. You do not

express detailed information as you would with a paraphrase.
2. Summaries are shorter than the original text.
3. Any summaries of the text should not include direct wording from the original source. All text should be in your words, though the ideas are those of the original author.
4. A signal phrase should let your readers know where the summarized material begins.
5. If you are offering a general summary of an entire article, there is no need to cite a specific page number.

6.3 MAKING SURE YOUR VOICE IS PRESENT

Kyle 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."[1] Voice in

1. MorrisHillPictures, "Bad Writing – Official Trailer," YouTube, April 13, 2010, accessed May 24, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raWLS2_PEfI

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).[2] 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.

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

2. Jane Austen. Pride and Prejudice (1813) Project Gutenberg, September 5, 2010, accessed May 24, 2011.

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 into 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 she expects 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."[3]

3. Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, with Readings* (New York: Norton, 2009), 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)[4]

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

4. Tom Romano, "Writing with Voice," *Voices from the Middle* 11 no. 2 (2003): 50-55, NCTE, accessed May 24, 2011.

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 she knows what she's doing with her 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 s/he/they remember most on the sentence level, and/or 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

5. Peter Elbow, "11. Revising by Reading Aloud. What the Mouth and Ear Know," in *Selected Works of Peter Elbow* (U of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2010), 5, accessed May 26, 2011, https://scholarworks.umass.edu/emeritus_sw/29/.

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,[6] an awesome site at https://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).[7]

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 her with an unexpected phrase. Writing an in-class essay? Read it over slowly in your

6. Gideon O. Burton, "Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric" Brigham Young University, n.d., accessed May 26, 2011, http://rhetoric.byu.edu/.
7. Michael E. Eidenmuller, "American Rhetoric: Rhetorical Figures in Sound," American Rhetoric, 2011, accessed May 26, 2011, https://www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricaldevicesinsound.htm.

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[8]—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?)

8. Teachertubewriting, "Word Chef Voice in Writing," YouTube, Sept. 29 2009, accessed May 30, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FqTim2PgYk.

VII. RESEARCHED WRITING

Introduction

Terri Pantuso

While in high school, chances are you were assigned a research paper at some point. You may have had to find your own resources for supporting a chosen topic or your teacher may have provided resources to you for analysis. These methods are excellent ways to introduce you to the concept of research. However, now that you are in college, you will be expected to do more of the preliminary work (eventually all) on your own; so how do you start? What makes a good research topic? How do you find the right sources when there are literally millions of hits on a given Google search?

In this section, we help you find answers to this process as well as model ways to locate sources. Keep in mind that you can always consult your librarians for help – that's what they want to do. But the elements in this section will provide a foundation for research strategies and ways to support your chosen topic.

7.1 DEVELOPING A RESEARCH QUESTION

Emilie Zickel and Terri Pantuso

> *I write out of ignorance. I write about the things I don't have any resolutions for, and when I'm finished, I think I know a little bit more about it. I don't write out of what I know. It's what I don't know that stimulates me. I merely know enough to get started.* —Toni Morrison[1]

Think of a research paper as an opportunity to deepen (or create) knowledge about a topic that matters to you. Just as Toni Morrison states that she is stimulated by what she doesn't yet know, a research paper assignment can be interesting and meaningful if it allows you to explore what you don't know.

Research, at its best, is an act of knowledge *creation,* not just an extended book report. This knowledge creation is the essence of any great educational experience. Instead of just listening to lectures, you get to design the learning project that will ultimately result in you experiencing, and then expressing, your own intellectual growth. You get to read what you choose, thereby becoming an expert on your topic.

That sounds, perhaps, like a lofty goal. But by spending some quality time brainstorming, reading, thinking or otherwise tuning into what matters to you, you can end up with a workable research topic that will lead you on an enjoyable research journey.

The best research topics are meaningful to you; therefore, you should:

- Choose a topic that you want to understand better;
- Choose a topic that you want to read about and devote time to;
- Choose a topic that is perhaps a bit out of your comfort zone;
- Choose a topic that allows you to understand others' opinions and how those

1. Toni Morrison, "Toni Morrison," in *Black Women Writers at Work*, ed. Claudia Tate (Continuum Publish Company, 1983), 130.

opinions are shaped;
- Choose something that is relevant to you, personally or professionally;
- Do not choose a topic because you think it will be "easy" – those can end up being quite challenging.

Brainstorming Ideas for a Research Topic

There are many ways to come up with a good topic. The best thing to do is to give yourself time to think about what you really want to commit days and weeks to reading, thinking, researching, more reading, writing, more researching, reading and writing on.

It can be difficult to come up with a topic from scratch, so consider looking at some information sources that can give you some ideas. Check out your favorite news sources or take a look at a library **databases** like *CQ Researcher* or *Point of Review Reference Center*.

As you browse through databases or **news sources**, ask yourself some of the following questions: Which question(s) below interest you? Which question(s) below spark a desire to respond? A good topic is one that moves you to think, to do, to want to know more, to want to say more. Here are some questions you might use in your search for topics:

1. What news stories do you often see, but want to know more about?
2. What (socio-political) argument do you often have with others that you would love to work on strengthening?
3. What are the key controversies or current debates in the field of work that you want to go into?
4. What is a problem that you see at work that needs to be better publicized or understood?
5. What is the biggest issue facing [specific group of people: by age, by race, by gender, by ethnicity, by nationality, by geography, by economic standing? choose a group]
6. What area/landmark/piece of history in your home community are you interested in?
7. What local problem do you want to better understand?
8. Is there some element of the career that you would like to have one day that

you want to better understand?
9. What would you love to become an expert on?
10. What are you passionate about?

From Topic to Research Question

Once you have decided on a research topic, an area for academic exploration that matters to you, it is time to start thinking about what you want to learn about that topic.

The goal of college-level research assignments is never going to be to simply "go find sources" on your topic. Instead, think of sources as helping you to answer a research question or a series of research questions about your topic. These should not be simple questions with simple answers, but rather complex questions about which there is no easy or obvious answer.

A compelling research question is one that may involve controversy, or may have a variety of answers, or may not have any single, clear answer. All of that is okay and even desirable. If the answer is an easy and obvious one, then there is little need for argument or research.

Make sure that your research question is clear, specific, researchable and limited (but not too limited). Most of all, make sure that you are curious about your own research question. If it does not matter to you, researching it will feel incredibly boring and tedious.

7.2 RESEARCHED POSITION PAPER

Terri Pantuso

Now that you have found a topic to research, it is time to begin the research process. Though you may have an idea of what you think your argument will be at this point, it's important to start your research with an open mind. It's often helpful to formulate your topic as a research question. Research questions are open-ended questions that you explore as you figure out the direction your topic will go and inform or shape your **thesis** statement. For example, if your topic is on first-generation students and financial aid, you might have a research question such as "What is the long-term impact of student loans on first-generation college students?" Using such a question as you begin your research leaves you a lot of flexibility to adjust your position, and therefore your thesis, as you uncover new information.

Using that research question as the foundation for your research, you can begin your proposal. This is oftentimes the first step in the process of writing a researched position paper. Basically, a researched position paper is one where you take a stance on a chosen topic and defend your position with **qualitative** and **quantitative** research found in **scholarly** or academic sources. While you might also include popular sources, you'll want to make certain you incorporate evidence from a body of scholars whose work can be used to support the position you are taking. The difference between a descriptive or narrative research paper and a position paper is the argument – you are doing more than simply reporting facts. In a researched position paper, you are placing yourself in dialogue with a scholarly community and taking a stance on a topic about which you feel strongly. The first formal step is the proposal.

A proposal is quite simply a method for thinking out loud on paper. While all instructors have their own specifications, typically a proposal is less formal than the rough draft and can range in length from ½-1 full page in length. In the proposal, you state the topic about which you are researching and why you are interested in it. Since this is the preliminary stage, it's okay to say that you do not know if you can defend your chosen position. The proposal is the place to begin exploration. It's a good place to talk about your research question and, based on the information

that you've found so far, where your thesis begins to grow. Some instructors may ask that you also state what you know about the topic, what potential sources you might use, and what you think you need to learn before fully developing your selected topic. In some courses, the proposal serves as a written dialogue between students and instructors and provides some foundational plans for the research process.

The next step is the annotated bibliography. Later in this section, we detail for you how to write an annotated bibliography which is basically the step where you locate sources to defend your position and then summarize those sources for their strengths and weaknesses as applied to your topic.

After the annotated bibliography, the formal writing process begins with a first rough draft. Typically, you will be given a page length or word count specification within the assignment parameters so that you'll have an idea of how much is expected of you at this stage. In the first rough draft, your focus should be on developing your thesis and supporting it throughout the body of your paper. While many students get stuck on the introduction, this isn't really the place to start your research. For this stage of the paper, you want to make sure the content surrounding your topic is strong with **topic sentences** connecting back to the thesis in every paragraph.

Sometimes, your instructor may ask for a second rough draft before final submission. If so, this is the place for you to take feedback from a peer reviewer or writing center tutor and fine tune your essay. Use the feedback you receive to check that your position is consistently supported throughout the essay and that you are using evidence correctly to support your position. Reading the draft out loud can also help you find missing elements or spaces for enrichment before the final draft submission, or the backwards/reverse outlining method discussed in section 2.4 might be helpful.

The final draft will be your best polished effort at defending your chosen topic and position after going through the rhetorical strategies defined by your instructor. Depending upon style format, you may or may not need an abstract in the final draft. An abstract is a brief summary of the topic you are discussing in the paper, but it does not give your conclusion. At the end of your final draft you'll need to include your Works Cited/References page. This will be easily compiled from your annotated bibliography but remember – the annotations do NOT go into the final Works Cited/References page. Only the citations are included in the final draft.

Keep in mind that nothing is ever perfect, but you want to strive to present a solid essay that utilizes scholarly, peer reviewed sources to defend and support the position you are taking on your chosen topic. For the rest of this section, we will provide information on how to find the best sources for your paper as well as how to develop the annotated bibliography.

7.3 DEVELOPING A RESEARCH STRATEGY

Deborah Bernnard; Greg Bobish; Jenna Hecker; Irina Holden; Allison Hosier; Trudi Jacobson; Tor Loney; Daryl Bullis; and Sarah LeMire

Sarah's art history professor just assigned the course project and Sarah is delighted that it isn't the typical research paper. Rather, it involves putting together a website to help readers understand a topic. It will certainly help Sarah get a grasp on the topic herself. Learning by attempting to teach others, she agrees, might be a good idea. The professor wants the website to be written for people who are interested in the topic and with backgrounds similar to the students in the course. Sarah likes that a target audience is defined, and since she has a good idea of what her friends might understand and what they would need more help with, she thinks it will be easier to know what to include in her site...well, at least easier than writing a paper for an expert like her professor.

An interesting feature of this course is that the professor has formed the students into teams. Sarah wasn't sure she liked this idea at the beginning, but it seems to be working out okay. Sarah's team has decided that their topic for this website will be 19th century women painters. Her teammate Chris seems concerned: "Isn't that an awfully big topic?" The team checks with the professor who agrees they would be taking on far more than they could successfully explain on their website. He suggests they develop a draft **thesis** statement to help them focus, and after several false starts, they come up with:

> The involvement of women painters in the Impressionist movement had an effect upon the subjects portrayed.

They decide this sounds more manageable. Because Sarah doesn't feel comfortable on the technical aspects of setting up the website, she offers to start locating resources that will help them to develop the site's content. The next time the class meets, Sarah tells her teammates what she has done so far:

"I thought I'd start with some **scholarly** sources, since they should be helpful, right? I put a search into the online **catalog** for the library, but nothing came up!

The library should have books on this topic, shouldn't it? I typed the search in exactly as we have it in our thesis statement. That was so frustrating. Since that didn't work, I tried Google, and put in the search. I got over 8 million results, but when I looked over the ones on the first page, they didn't seem very useful. One was about the feminist art movement in the 1960s, not during the Impressionist period. The results all seemed to have the words I typed highlighted, but most really weren't useful. I am sorry I don't have much to show you. Do you think we should change our topic?"

Alisha suggests that Sarah talk with a **reference librarian**. She mentions that a librarian came to talk to one of her other classes about doing research, and it was really helpful. Alisha thinks that maybe Sarah shouldn't have entered the entire thesis statement as the search, and maybe she should have tried **databases** to find articles. The team decides to brainstorm all the search tools and resources they can think of.

Here's what they came up with:

Brainstormed List of Search Tools and Resources

Search Tools and Resources
Wikipedia
Professor
Google search
JSTOR database

Based on your experience, do you see anything you would add?

Sarah and her team think that their list is pretty good. They decide to take it further and list the advantages and limitations of each search tool, at least as far as they can determine.

Brainstormed Advantages and Disadvantages of Search Tools and Resources

Search Tools and Resources		
Search Tool	**Advantages**	**Limitations**
Wikipedia	Easy access, list of references	Professors don't seem to like it, possibly misinformation
Professor	The expert!	Not sure we can get to office hours; we want to appear self-directed
Google search	Lots of results	We need a better search term
JSTOR database	Authoritative, scholarly articles	None that we know of

Alisha suggests that Sarah should show the worksheet to a librarian and volunteers to go with her. The librarian, Mr. Harrison, says they have made a really good start, but he can fill them in on some other search strategies that will help them to focus on their topic. He asks if Sarah and Alisha would like to learn more.

Let's step back from this case study and think about the elements that someone doing research should plan before starting to enter search terms in Google, Wikipedia, or even a scholarly database. There is some preparation you can do to make things go much more smoothly than they have for Sarah.

Self-Reflection

As you work through your own research quests, it is very important to be self-reflective. Consider:

- What do you really need to find?
- Do you need to learn more about the general subject before you can identify the focus of your search?
- How thoroughly did you develop your search strategy?
- Did you spend enough time finding the best tools to search?
- What is going really well, so well that you'll want to remember to do it in the future?

Another term for what you are doing is metacognition, or thinking about your thinking. Reflect on what Sarah is going through. Does some of it sound familiar based on your own experiences? You may already know some of the strategies presented here. Do you do them the same way? How does it work? What pieces are new to you? When might you follow this advice? Don't just let the words flow over you; rather, think carefully about the explanation of the process. You may disagree with some of what you read. If you do, follow through and test both methods to see which provides better results.

Selecting Search Tools

After you have thought the planning process through more thoroughly, think about the best place to find information for your topic and for the type of paper. Part of planning to do research is determining which search tools will be the best ones to use. This applies whether you are doing scholarly research or trying to answer a question in your everyday life, such as what would be the best place to go on vacation. "Search tools" might be a bit misleading since a person might be the source of the information you need. Or it might be a web **search engine**, a specialized **database**, an association—the possibilities are endless. Often people automatically search Google first, regardless of what they are looking for. Choosing the wrong search tool may just waste your time and provide only mediocre information, whereas other sources might provide really spot-on information and quickly, too. In some cases, a carefully constructed search on Google, particularly using the advanced search option, will provide the necessary information, but other times it won't. This is true of all sources: make an informed choice about which ones to use for a specific need.

So, how do you identify search tools? Let's begin with a first-rate method. For academic research, talking with a librarian or your professor is a great start. They will direct you to those specialized tools that will provide access to what you need. If you ask a librarian for help, they may also show you some tips about searching in the resources. This section will cover some of the generic strategies that will work in many search tools, but a librarian can show you very specific ways to focus your search and retrieve the most useful items.

If neither your professor nor a librarian is available when you need help, take a look at the TAMU Libraries website. There is a Help button in the top right corner of the

website that will direct you to assistance via phone, chat, text, and email. Under the Guides button, you'll find class- and subject-related guides that list useful databases and other resources for particular classes and majors to assist researchers. There is also a directory of the **databases** the library subscribes to and the subjects they cover. Take advantage of the expertise of librarians by using such guides. Novice researchers usually don't think of looking for this type of help and, as a consequence, often waste time.

When you are looking for non-academic material, consider who cares about this type of information. Who works with it? Who produces it or the help guides for it? Some sources are really obvious and you are already using them—for example, if you need information about the weather in London three days from now, you might check Weather.com for London's forecast. You don't go to a library (in person or online), and you don't do a research database search. For other information you need, think the same way. Are you looking for **anecdotal** information on old railroads? Find out if there is an organization of railroad buffs. You can search on the web for this kind of information or, if you know about and have access to it, you could check the Encyclopedia of Associations. This source provides entries for all U.S. membership organizations which can quickly lead you to a potentially wonderful source of information. Librarians can point you to tools like these.

Consider Asking an Expert

Have you thought about using people, not just inanimate sources, as a way to obtain information? This might be particularly appropriate if you are working on an emerging topic or a topic with local connections. There are a variety of reasons that talking with someone will add to your research.

For personal interactions, there are other specific things you can do to obtain better results. Do some background work on the topic before contacting the person you hope to interview. The more familiarity you have with your topic and its terminology, the easier it will be to ask focused questions. Focused questions are important if you want to get into the meat of what you need. Asking general questions because you think the specifics might be too detailed rarely leads to the best information. Acknowledge the time and effort someone is taking to answer your questions, but also realize that people who are passionate about subjects

enjoy sharing what they know. Take the opportunity to ask experts about sources they would recommend. One good place to start is with the librarians at the Texas A&M University Libraries. Visit the library information page for details on how to contact a librarian.[1]

Determining Search Concepts and Keywords

Once you've selected some good resources for your topic, and possibly talked with an expert, it is time to move on to identify words you will use to search for information on your topic in various databases and search engines. This is sometimes referred to as building a search **query**. When deciding what terms to use in a search, break down your topic into its main concepts. Don't enter an entire sentence or a full question. Different **databases** and **search engines** process such **queries** in different ways, but many look for the entire phrase you enter as a complete unit rather than the component words. While some will focus on just the important words, such as Sarah's Google search that you read about earlier in this chapter, the results are often still unsatisfactory. The best thing to do is to use the key concepts involved with your topic. In addition, think of synonyms or related terms for each concept. If you do this, you will have more flexibility when searching in case your first search term doesn't produce any or enough results. This may sound strange since, if you are looking for information using a Web search engine, you almost always get too many results. Databases, however, contain fewer items, and having alternative search terms may lead you to useful sources. Even in a search engine like Google, having terms you can combine thoughtfully will yield better results.

The worksheet in Figure 7.3.1[2] is an example of a process you can use to come up with search terms. It illustrates how you might think about the topic of violence in high schools. Notice that this exact phrase is not what will be used for the search. Rather, it is a starting point for identifying the terms that will eventually be used.

---

1. https://library.tamu.edu
2. "Concept Brainstorming," derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Example Search Term Brainstorming Worksheet

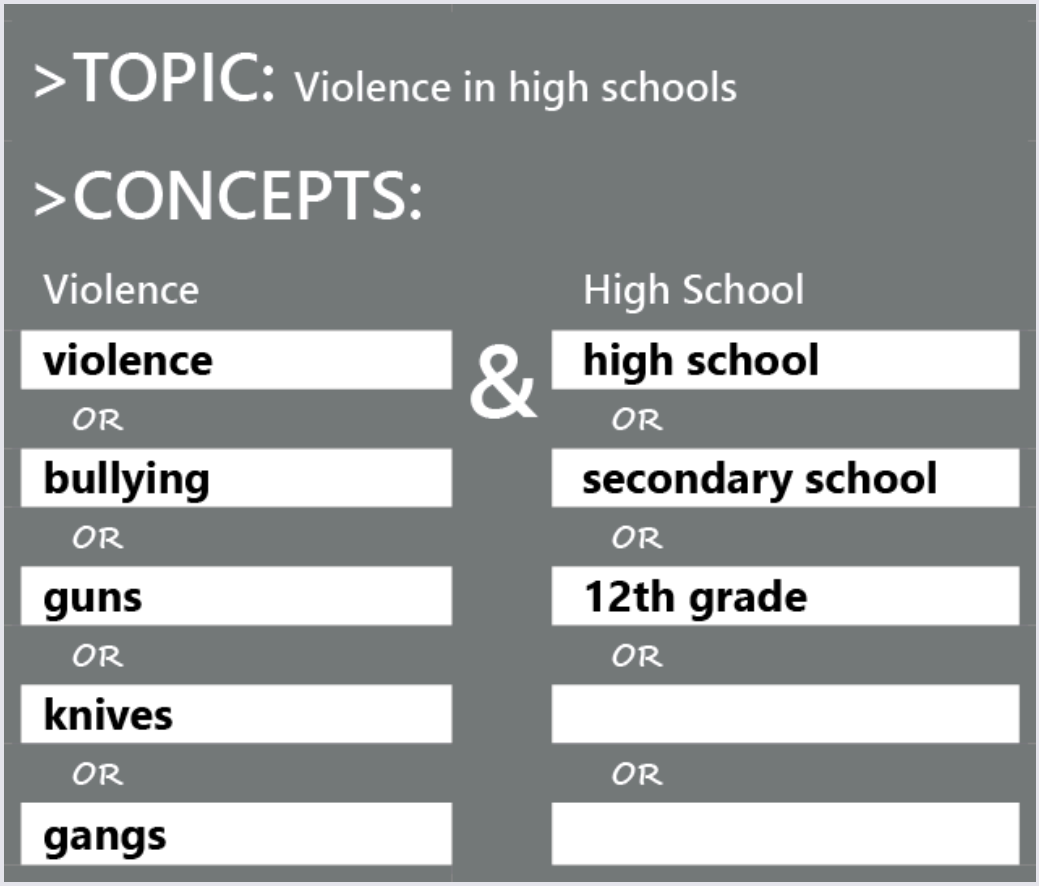


Figure 7.3.1: Concept Brainstorming

Exercises

Now, use a clean copy of the same worksheet (Figure 7.3.2)[3] to think about the topic Sarah's team is working on. How might you divide their topic into concepts and then search terms? Keep in mind that the number of concepts will depend

3. "Blank Concept Brainstorming Worksheet," derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

on what you are searching for and that the search terms may be synonyms or narrower terms. Occasionally, you may be searching for something very specific, and in those cases, you may need to use broader terms as well. Jot down your ideas, then compare what you have written to the information on the second, completed worksheet (Figure 7.3.3)[4] and identify three differences.

4. "Completed Concept Brainstorming Worksheet" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

>TOPIC:

The involvement of women painters in the Impressionist movement had an effect upon the subjects portrayed.

>CONCEPTS:

Women		Painters		Impressionist Movement		Subjects
	&		&		&	
OR		OR		OR		OR
OR		OR		OR		OR
OR		OR		OR		OR
OR		OR		OR		OR
OR		OR		OR		OR
OR		OR		OR		OR
OR		OR		OR		OR

Figure 7.3.2: Blank Concept Brainstorming Worksheet

>TOPIC:

The involvement of women painters in the Impressionist movement had an effect upon the subjects portrayed.

>CONCEPTS:

Women		Painters		Impressionist Movement		Subjects
women	&	**painters**	&	**Impressionist Movement**	&	**subjects**
OR		OR		OR		OR
woman		**painter**		**Impressionism**		**figure**
OR		OR		OR		OR
female		**artist**		**Impressionists**		**still life**
OR		OR		OR		OR
females		**artists**				**cityscape**
OR		OR		OR		OR
mother						
OR		OR		OR		OR
mothers						
OR		OR		OR		OR
Berthe Morisot						
OR		OR		OR		OR
Mary Cassatt (see below)						

Note: These are just two of the better known women Impressionists. Other names could be added or substituted.

Figure 7.3.3: Completed Concept Brainstorming Worksheet

Boolean Operators

Once you have the concepts you want to search, you need to think about how you will enter them into the search box. Often, but not always, Boolean operators will help you. You may be familiar with Boolean operators as they provide a way to link terms. There are three Boolean operators: ***AND***, ***OR***, and ***NOT***. (Note: Some databases require Boolean operators to be in all caps while others will accept the terms in either upper or lower case.

AND

We will start by capturing the ideas of the women creating the art. We will use *women painters and women artists* as the first step in our sample search. You could do two separate searches by typing one or the other of the terms into the search box of whatever tool you are using:

women painters women artists

You would end up with two separate results lists and have the added headache of trying to identify unique items from the lists. You could also search on the phrase:

women painters AND women artists

But once you understand Boolean operators, that last strategy won't make as much sense as it seems to. The first Boolean operator is *AND*. *AND* is used to get the intersection of all the terms you wish to include in your search. With this example,

women painters AND women artists

you are asking that the items you retrieve have both of those terms. If an item only has one term, it won't show up in the results. This is not what the searcher had in mind—she is interested in both artists and painters because she doesn't know which term might be used. She doesn't intend that both terms have to be used. Let's go on to the next Boolean operator, which will help us out with this problem.

OR

OR is used when you want at least one of the terms to show up in the search

results. If both do, that's fine, but it isn't a condition of the search. So *OR* makes a lot more sense for this search:

women painters OR women artists

Now, if you want to get fancy with this search, you could use both *AND* as well as *OR*:

women AND (painters OR artists)

The parentheses mean that these two concepts, painters and artists, should be searched as a unit, and the search results should include all items that use one word or the other. The results will then be limited to those items that contain the word *women*. If you decide to use parentheses for appropriate searches, make sure that the items contained within them are related in some way. With *OR*, as in our example, it means either of the terms will work. With *AND*, it means that both terms will appear in the document.

Exercise

Type both of the searches above in Google Scholar (scholar.google.com) and compare the results.

- Were they the same?
- If not, can you determine what happened?
- Which results list looked better?

Here is another example of a search string using both parentheses and two Boolean operators:

entrepreneurship AND (adolescents OR teens)

In this search, you are looking for entrepreneurial initiatives connected with people in their teens. Because there are so many ways to categorize this age group, it makes sense to indicate that either of these terms should appear in the results along with entrepreneurship.

Exercise

The search string above isn't perfect. Can you pick out two problems with the search terms?

NOT

The third Boolean operator, *NOT*, can be problematic. *NOT* is used to exclude items from your search. If you have decided, based on the scope of the results you are getting, to focus only on a specific aspect of a topic, use *NOT*, but be aware that items are being lost in this search.

For example, if you entered

entrepreneurship AND (adolescents OR teens) NOT adults

you might lose some good results.

Exercise

Why might you lose some good results using the search above?

Other Helpful Search Techniques

Using Boolean operators isn't the only way you can create more useful searches. In this section, we will review several others.

Truncation

In this search:

entrepreneurs AND (adolescents OR teens)

you might think that the items that are retrieved from the search can refer to entrepreneurs and to terms from the same root, like entrepreneurship. But

because computers are very literal, they usually look for the exact terms you enter. While some search engines like Google are moving beyond this model, library databases tend to require more precision. Truncation, or searching on the root of a word and whatever follows, is how you can tell the database to do this type of search.

So, if you search on:

entrepreneur AND (adolescents OR teens)*

You will get items that refer to *entrepreneur*, but also *entrepreneurship*.

Look at these examples:

adolescen educat**

Think of two or three words you might retrieve when searching on these roots. It is important to consider the results you might get and alter the root if need be. An example of this is *polic**. Would it be a good idea to use this root if you wanted to search on *policy* or *policies*? Why or why not?

In some cases, a symbol other than an asterisk is used. To determine what symbol to use, check the help section in whatever resource you are using. The topic should show up under the truncation or stemming headings.

Phrase Searches

Phrase searches are particularly useful when searching the web. If you put the exact phrase you want to search in quotation marks, you will only get items with those words as a phrase and not items where the words appear separately in a document, website, or other resource. Your results will usually be fewer, although surprisingly, this is not always the case.

Exercise

Try these two searches in the search engine of your choice:

1. *essay exam*

2. *"essay exam"*

Was there a difference in the quality and quantity of results?

If you would like to find out if the database or search engine you are using allows phrase searching and the conventions for doing so, search the help section. These help tools can be very, well, helpful!

Advanced Searches

Advanced searching allows you to refine your search query and prompts you for ways to do this. Consider the basic Google search box. It is very minimalistic, but that minimalism is deceptive. It gives the impression that searching is easy and encourages you to just enter your topic without much thought to get results. You certainly do get many results, but are they really good results? Simple search boxes do many searchers a disfavor. There is a better way to enter searches.

Advanced search screens show you many of the options available to you to refine your search and, therefore, get more manageable numbers of better items. Many web search engines include advanced search screens, as do databases for searching research materials. Advanced search screens will vary from resource to resource and from web search engine to research database, but they often let you search using:

- Implied Boolean operators (for example, the "all the words" option is the same as using the Boolean *AND*);
- Limiters for date, domain (.edu, for example), type of resource (articles, book reviews, patents);
- Field (a field is a standard element, such as title of publication or author's name);
- Phrase (rather than entering quote marks) Let's see how this works in practice.

Practical Application: Google Searches

Go to the advanced search option in Google. You can find it at http://www.google.com/advanced_search

Take a look at the options Google provides to refine your search. Compare this to the basic Google search box. One of the best ways you can become a better searcher for information is to use the power of advanced searches, either by using these more complex search screens or by remembering to use Boolean operators, phrase searches, truncation, and other options available to you in most search engines and databases.

While many of the text boxes at the top of the Google Advanced Search page mirror concepts already covered in this section (for example, "this exact word or phrase" allows you to omit the quotes in a phrase search), the options for narrowing your results can be powerful. You can limit your search to a particular domain (such as .edu for items from educational institutions) or you can search for items you can reuse legally (with attribution, of course!) by making use of the "usage rights" option. However, be careful with some of the options as they may excessively limit your results. If you aren't certain about a particular option, try your search with and without using it and compare the results. If you use a search engine other than Google, check to see if it offers an advanced search option: many do.

Subject Headings

In the section on advanced searches, you read about field searching. To explain further, if you know that the last name of the author whose work you are seeking is Wood, and that he worked on forestry-related topics, you can do a far better search using the author field. Just think what you would get in the way of results if you entered a basic search such as *forestry AND wood*. It is great to use the appropriate Boolean operator, but oh, the results you will get! But what if you specified that *wood* had to show up as part of the author's name? This would limit your results quite a bit.

So what about *forestry*? Is there a way to handle that using a field search? The answer is yes. Subject headings are terms that are assigned to items to group them. An example is cars—you could also call them autos, automobiles, or even more specific labels like SUVs or vans. You might use the Boolean operator *OR* and string these all together. But if you found out that the sources you are searching use *automobiles* as the subject heading, you wouldn't have to worry about all these related terms, and could confidently use their subject heading and get all the results, even if the author of the piece uses *cars* and not *automobiles*.

How does this work? In many databases, a person called an indexer or cataloger scrutinizes and enters each item. This person performs helpful, behind-the-scenes tasks such as assigning subject headings, age levels, or other indicators that make it easier to search very precisely. An analogy is tagging, although indexing is more structured than tagging. If you have tagged items online, you know that you can use any terms you like and that they may be very different from someone else's tags. With indexing, the indexer chooses from a set group of terms. Obviously, this precise indexing isn't available for web search engines—it would be impossible to index everything on the web. But if you are searching in a database, make sure you use these features to make your searches more precise and your results lists more relevant. You also will definitely save time.

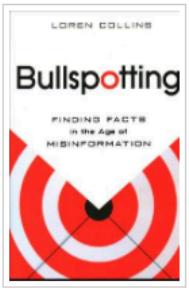
You may be thinking that this sounds good. Saving time when doing research is a great idea. But how will you know what subject headings exist so you can use them? Here is a trick that librarians use. Even librarians don't know what terms are used in all the databases or online catalogs that they use, so a librarian's starting point isn't very far from yours. But they do know to use whatever features a database provides to do an effective search. They find out about them by acting like a detective.

You've already thought about the possible search terms for your information needs. Enter the best search strategy you developed which might use Boolean operators or truncation. Scan the results to see if they seem to be on topic. If they aren't, figure out what results you are getting that just aren't right and revise your search. Terms you have searched on often show up in bold face type so they are easy to pick out. Besides checking the titles of the results, read the abstracts (or summaries), if there are any. You may get some ideas for other terms to use. But if your results are fairly good, scan them with the intent to find one or two items that seem to be precisely what you need. Get to the **full record** (or entry), where you can see all the details entered by the indexers. Figure 7.3.4[5] is an example from the Texas A&M University Libraries' Quick Search, but keep in mind that the catalog or database you are using may have entries that look very different.

5. "Full Record Entry for a Book" is a reproduction from July 2019 of a Texas A&M University Libraries catalog entry from the Texas A&M University Libraries Quick Search. https://libcat.tamu.edu/vwebv/searchBasic.

Figure 7.3.4: Full record entry for a book

Bullspotting : finding facts in the age of misinformation / Loren Collins.



Language:	English
Authors:	Collins, Loren, 1978-
Publication Information:	Amherst, N.Y. : Prometheus Books, 2012.
Publication Date:	2012
Physical Description:	267 pages ; 23 cm.
Publication Type:	**Book**
Document Type:	Bibliographies; Non-fiction
Subject Terms:	Critical thinking Internet literacy
Abstract:	Summary: Explains how to use critical thinking to identify common features and trends among **misinformation** campaigns.
Content Notes:	Baloney detection -- Denialism -- Conspiracy theories -- Rumors -- Quotations -- Hoaxes -- Pseudoscience -- Pseudohistory -- Pseudolaw -- What's **the** harm?
Notes:	Includes bibliographical references (pages 249-261) and index.
ISBN:	9781616146344 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1616146346 (pbk. : alk. paper)
LCCN:	2012023390
OCLC:	ocn793581735 793581735
Accession Number:	tamug.4054897
Database:	LibCat

Once you have the "full" record (which does not refer to the full text of the item, but rather the full descriptive details about the book, including author, subjects, date, and place of publication, and so on), look at the subject headings and see what words are used. They may be called descriptors or some other term, but they should be recognizable as subjects. They may be identical to the terms you entered but if not, revise your search using the subject heading words. The result list should now contain items that are relevant for your needs.

It is tempting to think that once you have gone through all the processes around the circle, as seen in the diagram in Figure 7.3.5[6], your information search is done

6. "Planning Model" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne

and you can start writing. However, research is a **recursive** process. You don't start at the beginning and continue straight through until you end at the end. Once you have followed this planning model, you will often find that you need to alter or refine your topic and start the process again, as seen here:

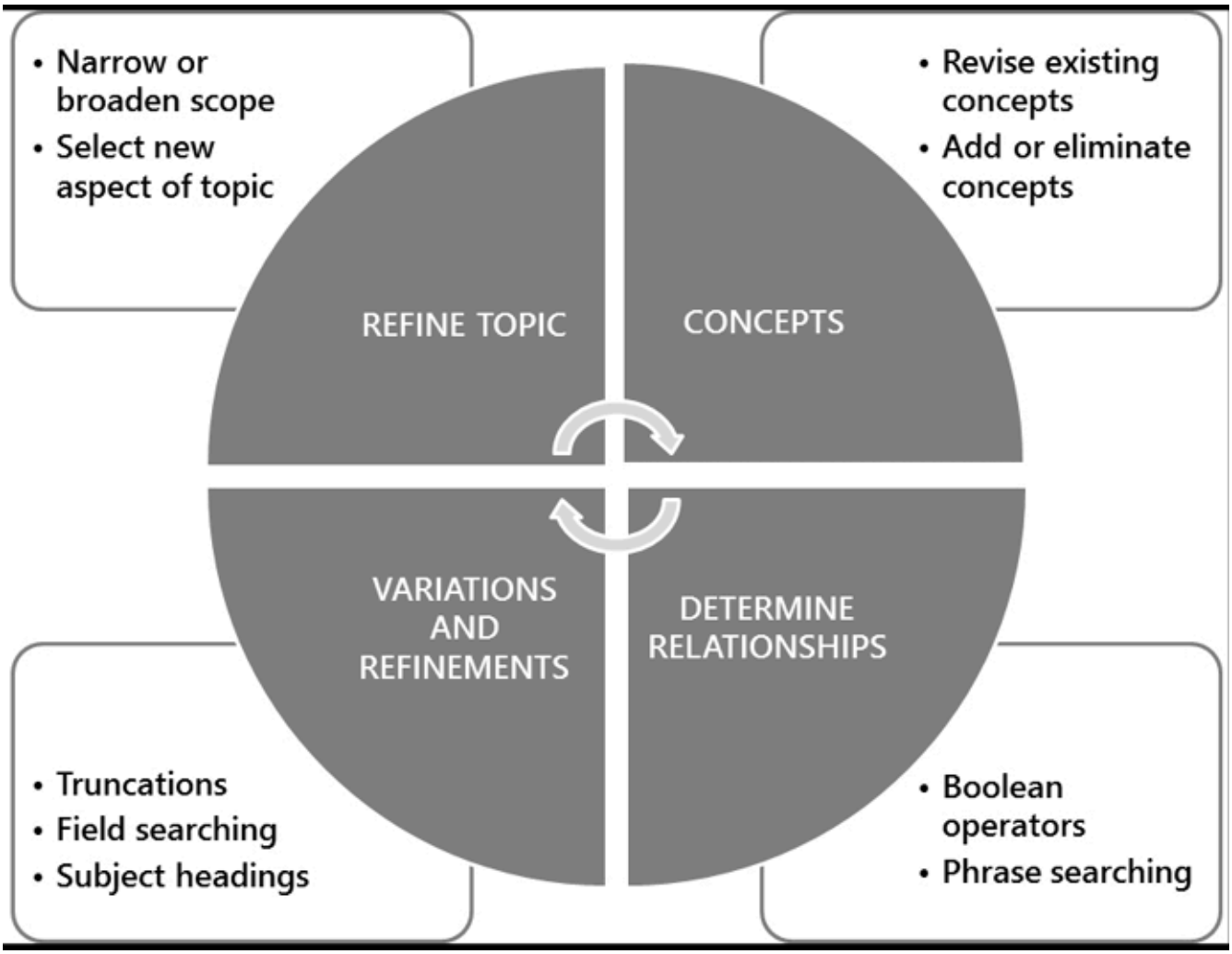


Figure 7.3.5: Planning Model

This revision process may happen at any time before or during the preparation of your paper or other final product. The researchers who are most successful do this, so don't ignore opportunities to revise.

So let's return to Sarah and her search for information to help her team's project.

Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Sarah realized she needed to make a number of changes in the search strategy she was using. She had several insights that definitely led her to some good sources of information for this particular research topic. Can you identify the good ideas she implemented?

7.4 FINDING SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Deborah Bernnard; Greg Bobish; Jenna Hecker; Irina Holden; Allison Hosier; Trudi Jacobson; Tor Loney; Daryl Bullis; Sarah LeMire; and Terri Pantuso

Harry and Emma Dennis have lived in Texas for 25 years. They work as teachers in the Fort Worth Independent School District. Lately, they have been closely following the debate about hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in Texas and are concerned about their ability to influence the course of fracking in the future. Although they don't own much land, they are worried about the possible adverse effects on drinking water, disruption to their environment, and the influx of people that fracking-related jobs will bring into their city. Emma Dennis is considering running for public office in her town to have a more powerful voice in the fracking debate. To receive the backing of her local political party, Emma needs to present some persuasive arguments against hydraulic fracking that are well thought out and scientifically sound. She needs to engage in substantial research on this issue so that she can present herself as an expert.

At this point, all that Emma really knows about fracking is what she has heard from neighbors and news shows. How will she proceed with her research? Emma's intentions are commendable and she knows she will have to fill in the information gaps in her fracking-issue-knowledge before she can be taken seriously as a candidate for city office. Knowing that you don't have sufficient information to solve an information need is one important aspect of information literacy. It enables you to obtain that missing information.

Different Information Formats and Their Characteristics

In addition to knowing that you are missing essential information, another component of information literacy is understanding that the information you seek may be available in different formats such as books, journal articles, **government**

documents, blog postings, and news items. Each format has a unique value. Figure 7.4.1[1] below represents a common process of **information dissemination**. When an event happens, we usually hear about it from news sources—broadcast, web, and print. More in-depth exploration and analysis of the event often comes from government studies and scholarly journal articles. Deeper exploration, as well as an overview of much of the information available about the event, is often published in book format.

1. "Information Sources from Less In-depth to More In-depth" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

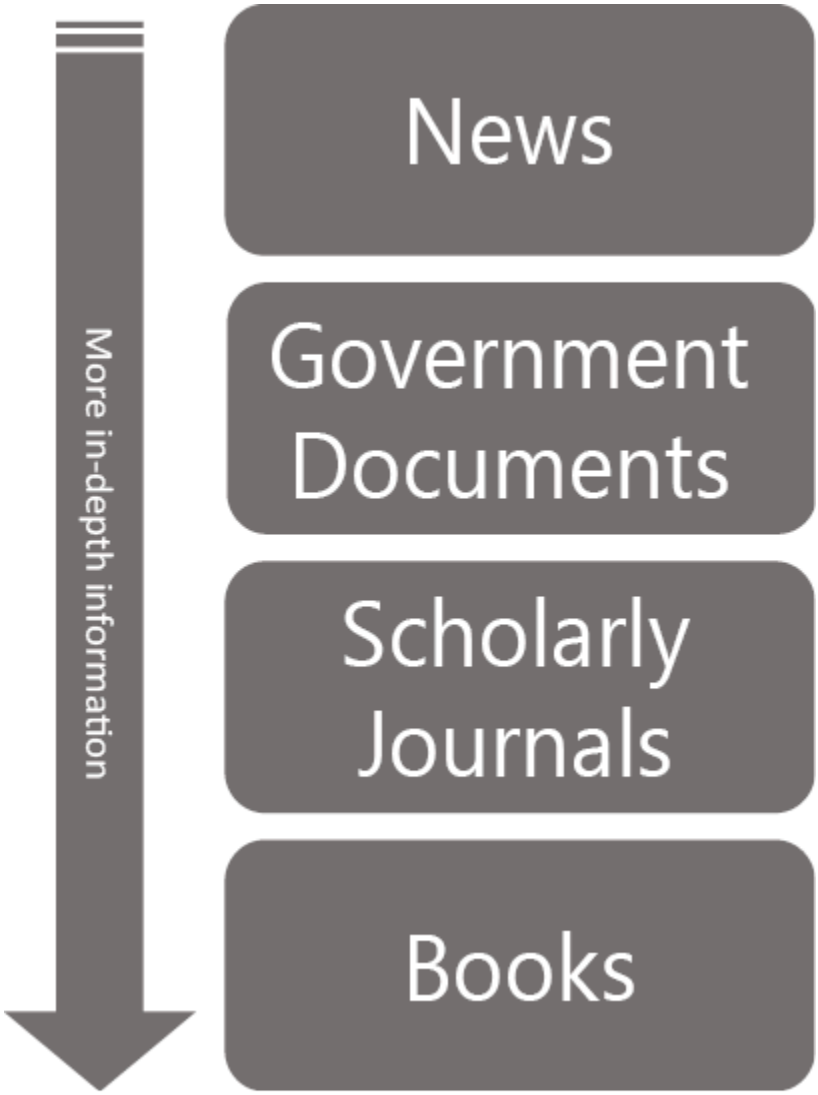


Figure 7.4.1: Information sources from less in-depth to more in-depth

Emma realizes that she needs to obtain an overview of the whole fracking debate. She needs to determine how severe the consequences of fracking could be and what is actually involved in the fracking process. Where can she find such an overview and how can she trust that the overview is accurate and complete?

Emma believes that she can find this information online and uses Google to search the World Wide Web. She quickly finds that there is an overwhelming amount of online information about fracking. Her search has resulted in more than 11,000,000 sites. Emma knows that she doesn't have time to look through all of these resources, and those that she does examine do not provide a comprehensive overview of the issues. She also notices that many of the sites are obviously advocating their own point of view.

A better first step for Emma to take is to identify a library that contains academic resources so that she will have access to more scholarly treatments of the subject. Emma can use the Texas A&M University Libraries' Quick Search or Worldcat.org which will allow her to search numerous academic libraries at once.

Library Catalogs

A library catalog is a database that contains all of the items located in a library as well as all of the items to which the library has access. It allows you to search for items by title, author, subject, and keyword. A keyword is a word that is found anywhere within the record of an item in the catalog. A catalog record displays information that is pertinent to one item, which could be a book, a journal, a government document, or a video or audio recording.

If you search by subject in an academic library catalog you can take advantage of the controlled vocabulary created by the Library of Congress. **Controlled vocabulary** consists of terms or phrases that have been selected to describe a concept. For example, the Library of Congress has selected the phrase *motion picture* to represent films and movies. So, if you are looking for books about movies, you would enter the phrase *motion picture* into the search box. Controlled vocabulary is important because it helps pull together all of the items about one topic. In this example, you would not have to conduct individual searches for movies, then motion pictures, then film; you could just search once for motion pictures and retrieve all the items on movies and film. You can discover subject terms in item catalog records.

Many libraries provide catalog discovery interfaces that provide cues to help refine a search. This makes it easier to find items on specific topics. For example, if Emma enters the search terms *hydraulic fracturing* into a **catalog** with a **discovery interface**, the results page will include suggestions for refinements including several different aspects of the topic. Emma can click on any of these suggested refinements to focus her search.

Using this method, Emma finds several good resources on her topic. Now, she needs to locate them. The Texas A&M University Libraries' Quick Search will show where the book is located and whether the book is checked out.

Why should Emma choose books instead of another **format**? Books can provide an

overview of a broad topic. Often, the author has gathered the information from multiple sources and created an easy to understand overview. Emma can later look for corroborating evidence in government documents and journal articles. Books are a good information resource for this stage of her research.

Once Emma starts to locate useful information resources, she realizes that there are further gaps in her knowledge. How does she decide which books to use? She needs the most current information because she certainly doesn't want to get caught citing outdated information.

Looking at the publication date will help her to choose the most recent items. How can she get these books? She is not a Texas A&M University student or faculty member.

Interlibrary loan services at her public library will allow her to access books from an academic library or the college in her area may allow community members to borrow materials. There is a wealth of knowledge contained in the resources of academic and public libraries throughout the United States. Single libraries can't hope to collect all of the resources available on a topic. Fortunately, libraries are happy to share their resources and they do this through interlibrary loan. Interlibrary loan allows you to borrow books and other information resources regardless of where they are located. If you know that a book exists, ask your library to request it through their interlibrary loan program. This service is available at academic libraries and at most public libraries.

Checking for Further Knowledge Gaps

Emma has had a chance to review the books that she chose and although her understanding of the issues associated with fracking has improved, she still needs more specific information from the point of view of the energy industry, the government, and the scientific community. Emma knows that if she doesn't investigate all points of view, she will not be able to speak intelligently about the issues involved in the fracking debate. Where will she get this information? Because this information should be as current as possible, much of it will not be available in book format. Emma will need to look for scholarly journal articles and government documents. It is not likely that the public library will have the depth and scope of information that Emma now needs. Fortunately, Emma has just enrolled in a class at Texas A&M University and is able to use the resources at this

academic library. However, when Emma visits the library, she finds that the amount of information available is overwhelming. There are many databases that will help Emma find journal articles on almost any topic. There are also many kinds of government information, some in article format, some as documents, and some as published rules and regulations. Emma suddenly feels out of her element and doesn't have any idea of where to start her research.

Databases

Emma should start her search for journal articles with research databases. Research databases contain records of journal articles, documents, book chapters, and other resources. Online library catalogs differ from other research databases in that they contain only the items available through a particular library or library system. Research databases are often either broad or comprehensive collections and are not tied to the physical items available at any one library. Many databases provide the full text of articles and can be searched by subject, author, or title. Another type of database provides just the information about articles and may provide tools for you to find the full text in another database. The databases that contain resources for a vast array of subjects are referred to as general or multidisciplinary databases. Other databases are devoted to a single subject and are known as subject-specific databases. Databases are made up of:

- **Records.** A record contains descriptive information that is pertinent to one item which may be a book, a chapter, an article, a document, or other information unit.
- **Fields.** These are part of the record and they contain information that pertains to one aspect of an item such as the title, author, publication date, and subject.
- **The subject field can sometimes be labeled subject heading or descriptor.** This is the field that contains controlled vocabulary. Controlled vocabulary in a database is similar to controlled vocabulary in a Library Catalog, but each database usually has a unique controlled vocabulary unrelated to Library of Congress classifications. Many databases will make their controlled vocabulary available in a thesaurus. If the database you are searching does not have a thesaurus, use the subject field in a record to find relevant subject terms.

Below in Figure 7.4.2[2] is Emma's search in the Quick Search database on the library homepage. The Quick Search includes sources from a number of different databases as well as the library catalog, so it's a good place to start if you're not quite sure which database to try. Emma typed the word *fracking* in the search box, but when she looks at her results, she sees that the term *hydraulic fracturing* is listed as a subject term. This tells Emma that hydraulic fracturing may be the term the library uses for fracking. She can add *hydraulic fracturing* to her search terms by entering *fracking* OR *hydraulic fracturing* in the search box. Once she has revised her search to include the controlled vocabulary term, she will want to limit her search results to the most relevant sources.

2. "TAMU Libraries Quick Search Results" is a July 2019 screen capture of the Texas A&M University Libraries catalog search results listing at https://libcat.tamu.edu/vwebv/searchAdvanced.

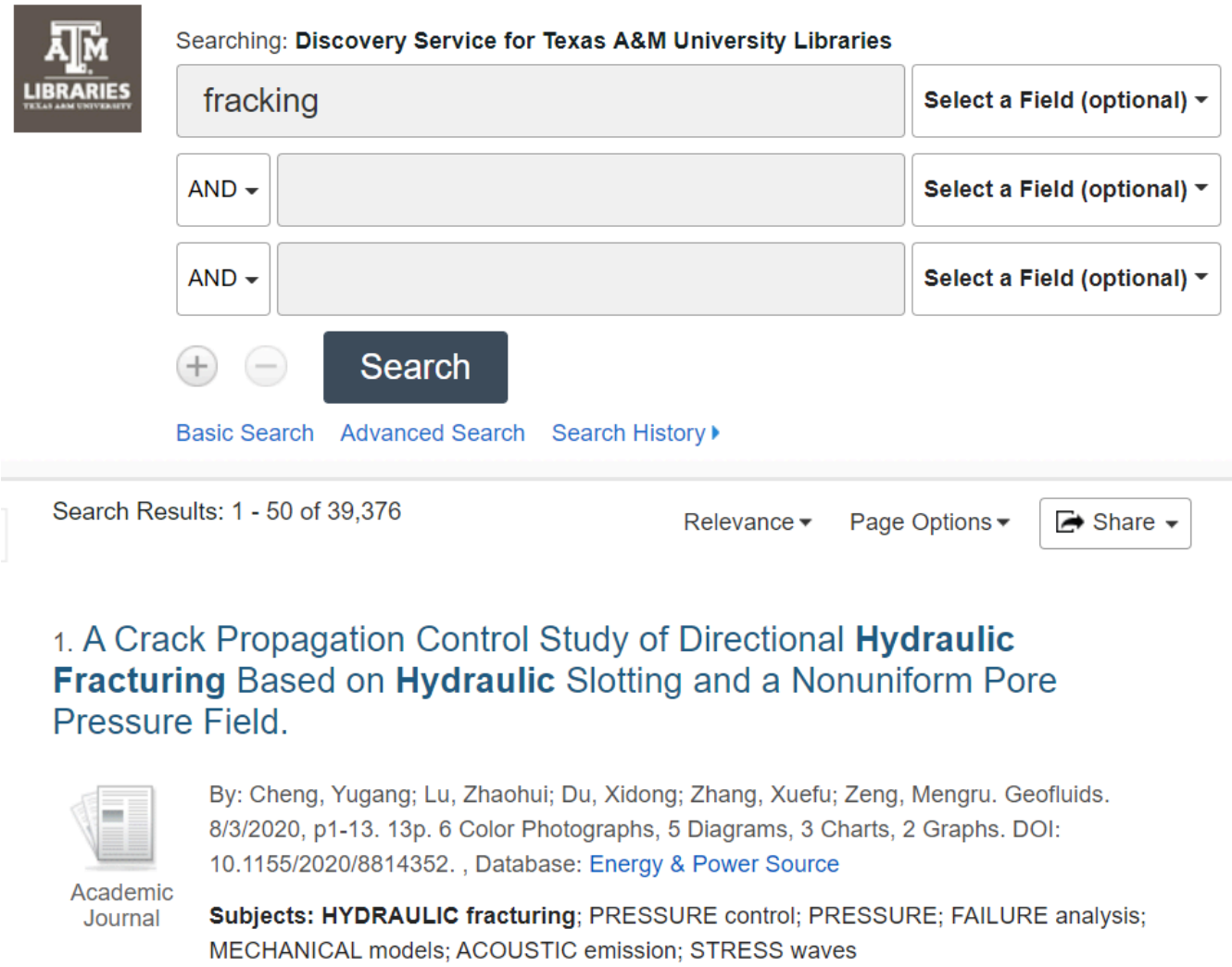


Figure 7.4.2: TAMU Libraries Quick Search Results

Boolean Operators

One way to limit a database search is to use the Boolean operators discussed earlier in section 7.3. Remember that Boolean operators are the words *AND*, *OR,* and NOT and you can use them in a database search to narrow or broaden your search results. You can usually find these words in the advanced search **query** area of a database.

AND

And will narrow your search. For example, if you are interested in freshwater fishing you would enter the terms *fish AND freshwater*. Your results would then

include records that only contained both of these words. The green overlapping area in Figure 7.4.3[3] represents the results from the *fish AND freshwater* search.

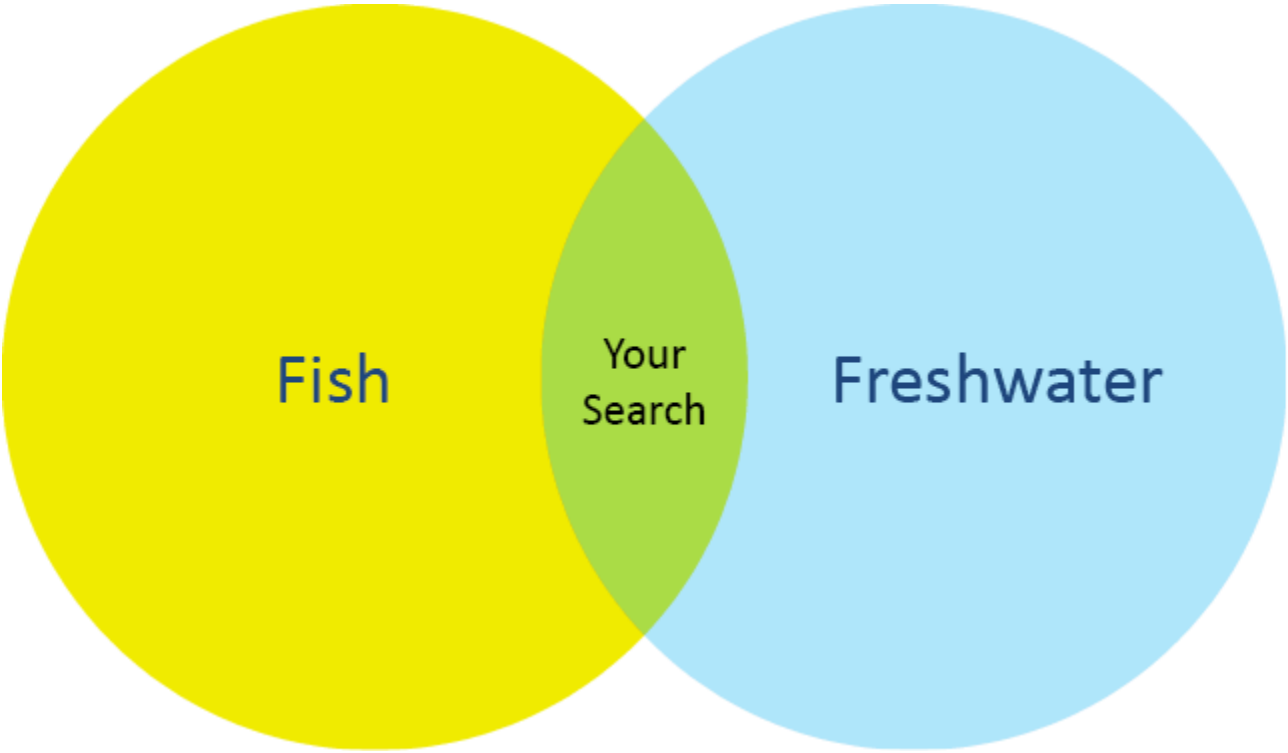


Figure 7.4.3: AND Venn Diagram

OR

OR will broaden your search and is usually used with synonyms. If you are interested in finding information on mammals found in the Atlantic Ocean, you could enter the terms *whales OR dolphins*. The circles below in Figure 7.4.4[4] represent the *OR* search. All of the records that contain one or another, or both of your search terms, will be in your results list.

---

3. "AND Venn Diagram" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.
4. "OR Venn Diagram" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

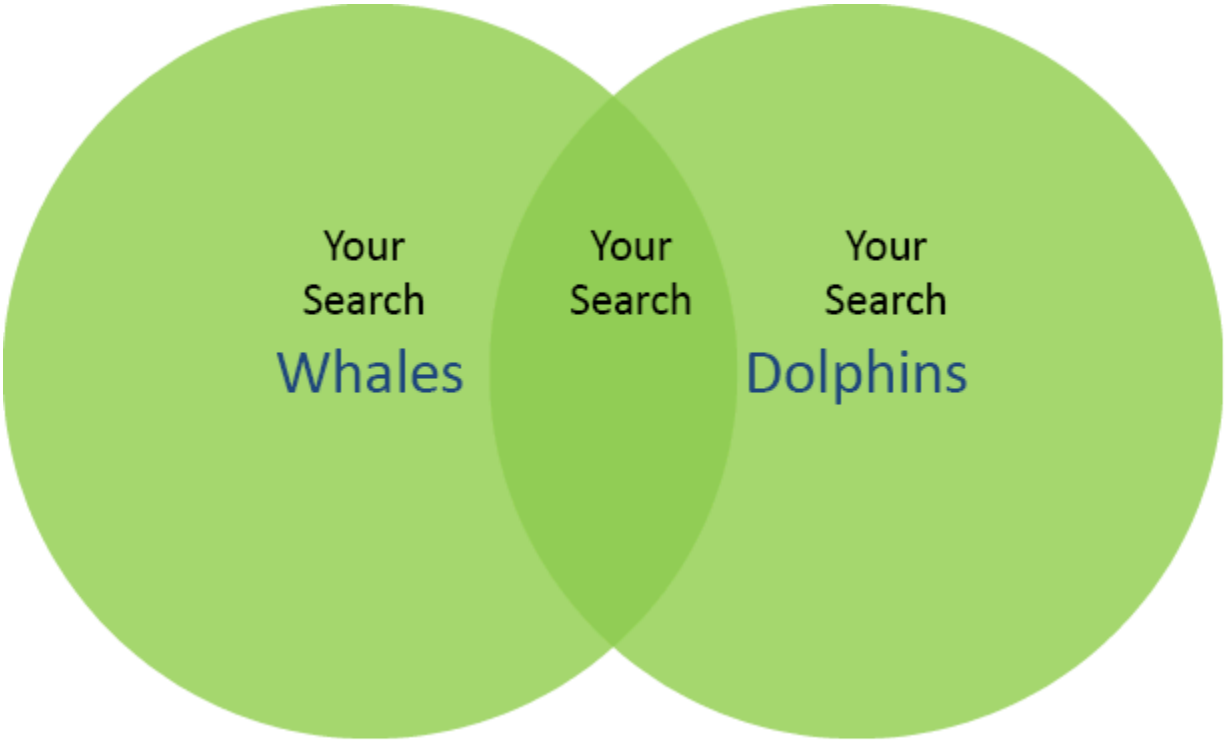


Figure 7.4.4: OR Venn Diagram

NOT

NOT will eliminate a term from your results. If you were looking for information on all Atlantic Ocean fish except Bluefish, you would enter *fish NOT bluefish*. The larger green circle in Figure 7.4.5[5] represents the results that you would retrieve with this search.

5. "NOT Venn Diagram" derived in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

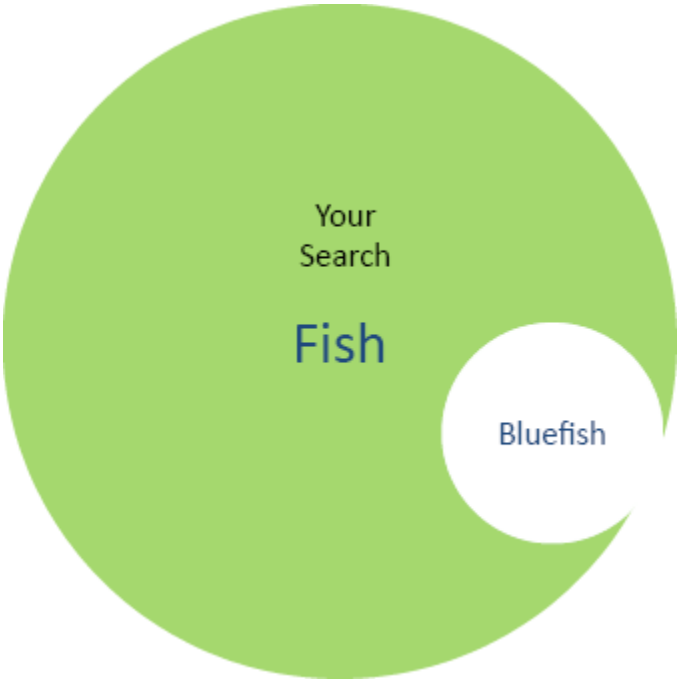


Figure 7.4.5: NOT Venn Diagram

Let's go back to Emma's search in the TAMU Libraries' Quick Search Database. If you remember, she searched the controlled vocabulary term, *hydraulic fracturing*. She can use *AND* with the phrase "*Bartnett Shale"* to focus and limit her results. Emma's search query is now *hydraulic fracturing AND "Bartnett Shale*." You can see this represented below in Figure 7.4.6 [6] The overlapping area represents the records this search will retrieve.

6. "Venn Diagram of Emma's Search" was derived by Sarah LeMire in 2019 from: Deborah Bernnard et al., *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, eds. Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), https://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

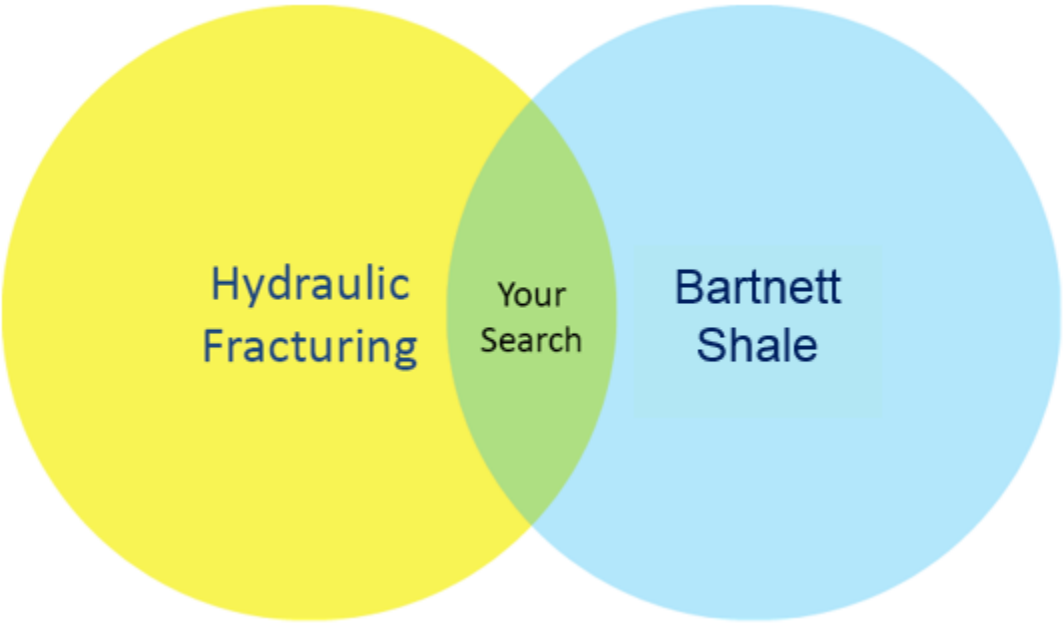


Figure 7.4.6: Venn Diagram of Emma's Search

Database searching can seem confusing at first, but the more you use databases, the easier it gets and most of the time, the results you are able to retrieve are superior to the results that you will get from a simple internet search.

Other Information Sources

After taking some time to think about her goal, which is to present a persuasive argument on why she would be a good candidate for public office, Emma decides to concentrate on obtaining relevant government information. After all, she hopes to become part of the government, so she should have some knowledge of the government's role in the fracking issue.

Government information consists of any information produced by local, state, national, or international governments and is usually available at no cost. However, sometimes it is reproduced by a commercial entity with added value. Look for websites that are created by official government entities, such as the U.S. Department of the Interior at http://www. doi.gov/index.cfm and Thomas, the congressional website at Thomas.loc.gov. Texas' website can be found at https://texas.gov/. It contains information from all Texas government branches. As Emma will discover, you can usually find a wealth of reliable information in government sources.

Even though she has narrowed the scope of her search for information resources, Emma is still confronted with a myriad of information formats. With help from a reference librarian, Emma discovers a research guide on government information available in the library. She notices that there is a section for Texas that she can explore.

She breathes a sigh of relief when she finds a link to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's website, which has many documents and regulations on the topic of Hydraulic Fracturing. The reference librarian continues to assist Emma to find the most useful information as she navigates through the site. Since this information is freely available to the public, Emma is able to access the site from home and spends many hours reading the documents.

7.5 USING THE RIGHT SOURCES FOR YOUR PROJECT

Emilie Zickel; Robin Jeffrey; Yvonne Bruce; Sarah LeMire; and Terri Pantuso

Selecting the right type of source for your information needs is an important aspect of researched writing. The right source can provide evidence and add credibility to your position, but the wrong source can undermine your position. The context of your project is key to choosing the right source; even a completely specious source can be the right source if it's evidence in support of a paper about specious sources. For most of your projects though, you'll likely be looking for high-quality sources, especially scholarly sources.

Types of Evidence in Academic Arguments

All academic writers use evidence to support their **claims**. However, as writing tasks vary across disciplinary fields, different types of evidence are required. Often a combination of different types of evidence is required in order to adequately support and develop a point.

To clarify, evidence is what a writer uses to support or defend his or her argument, and only valid and credible evidence is enough to make an argument strong.

Evidence is not simply "facts." Evidence is not simply "quotes."

As you develop your research-supported essay, consider not only what types of evidence might support your ideas but also what types of evidence will be considered valid or credible according to the academic discipline or academic audience for which you are writing. The following are some examples of credible evidence by academic discipline:

Evidence in the Humanities: Literature, Art, Film, Music, Philosophy

- Scholarly essays that analyze original works;
- Details from an image, a film, or other work of art;
- Passages from a musical composition;
- Passages of text, including poetry.

Evidence in the Humanities: History

- Primary sources (photos, letters, maps, official documents, etc.);
- Other books or articles that interpret primary sources or other evidence.

Evidence in the Social Sciences: Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology

- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies;
- Results from one's own field research (including interviews, surveys, observations, etc.);
- Data from one's own experiments;
- Statistics derived from large studies.

Evidence in the Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics

- Data from the author of the paper's own experiments;
- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies.

What remains consistent no matter the discipline in which you are writing, however, is that evidence NEVER speaks for itself. Quality evidence must be integrated into your own argument or claim in order to demonstrate that the evidence supports your **thesis**. In addition, be alert to evidence that seems to contradict your claims or offers a counterargument to it. **Rebutting** that counter argument can be powerful evidence for your claim. You can also make evidence that isn't *there* an integral part of your argument, too. If you can't find the evidence you think you need, ask yourself why it seems to be lacking, or if its absence adds a

new dimension to your thinking about the topic. Remember, *evidence* is not the piling up of facts or quotes. Evidence is only one component of a strong, well supported, well argued, and well written composition.

Scholarly Sources

While reading academic/scholarly journal articles can be one of the more intimidating aspects of college-level research projects, there are several aspects to the purpose, format, and style of scholarly/academic journal articles that are rather straightforward and patterned. Knowing the template that scholarly articles follow can enhance your reading and comprehension experience and make these intimidating reading materials much less daunting. Moreover, understanding the purpose of scholarly publication can help you to understand what matters most in these articles.

The term ***scholarly*** is one that can be quite confusing. Some professors will use it broadly to mean any source that is reputable and academic in nature, while other professors will use it more narrowly to refer specifically to sources that have gone through a peer review process. Generally speaking, sources may fall on a spectrum between popular and scholarly, with peer-reviewed research articles and monographs fitting most clearly under the scholarly category. Always check with your professor to be sure how they are defining scholarly sources for the purposes of your class.

Basic Format

Information in academic journal articles is presented in a formal, highly prescribed format, meaning that scholarly articles tend to follow a similar layout, pattern, and style. The pages often look stark, with little decoration or imagery. We see few photos in scholarly articles. The article title is often fairly prominent on the first page, as are the author(s)' name(s). Sometimes there is a bit of information about each author, such as the name of his or her current academic institution or academic credentials. At either the top or bottom of the first few pages, you can find the name of the scholarly journal in which the article is published.

Abstract

On the first page of the article, you will often find an abstract, which is a summary of the author's research question, methods and results. While this abstract is useful to you as a reader because it gives you some background about the article before you begin reading, you should not cite this abstract in your paper. Please read these abstracts as you are initially seeking sources so that you can determine whether or not reading the article will be useful to you, but do not quote or paraphrase from the abstract.

Works Cited

At the end of academic articles, you will find a list of Works Cited (sometimes called a List of References). This is generally quite long, and it details all of the work that the author considered or cited in designing his or her own research project or in writing the article. Helpful hint: reading the Works Cited in an article that you find to be particularly illuminating or useful can be a great way to locate other sources that may be useful for your own research project. If you see a title that looks interesting, see if you can access it via your university's library.

Literature Review

Scholarly sources often contain Literature Reviews in the beginning section of the article. They are generally several paragraphs or pages long. Some articles are *only* Literature Reviews. These Literature Reviews generally do not constitute an author's own work. Instead, they are summaries and syntheses of other scholars' work that has previously been published on the topic that the author is addressing in his or her paper. Including this review of previous research helps the author to communicate his or her understanding of the context out of which his or her research comes.

Like the abstract, the Literature Review is another part of a scholarly article from which you should generally not quote. Often, students will mistakenly try to cite information that they find in this Literature Review section of scholarly articles. But that is sort of like citing a SparkNotes version of an essay that you have not read. The Literature Review is where your author, in his or her own words, describes previous research. He or she is outlining what others have said in their own articles,

not offering his or her own new insight (and what we are interested in in scholarly articles is the new information that a researcher brings to the topic). If you find that there is interesting information from the sources that your author discusses in the Literature Review, then you should locate the article(s) that the author is summarizing and read them for yourself. That, in fact, is a great strategy for finding more sources.

The "Research Gap"

Somewhere near the end of the Literature Review, authors may indicate what has not been said or not been examined by previous scholars. This has been called a "research gap" – a space out of which a scholar's own research develops. The "research gap" opens the opportunity for the author to assert his or her own research question or **claim**. Academic authors who want to publish in scholarly research journals need to define a research gap and then attempt to fill that gap because scholarly journals want to publish new, innovative and interesting work that will push knowledge and scholarship in that field forward. Scholars must communicate what new ideas they have worked on: what is their new hypothesis, or experiment, or interpretation or analysis.

The Scholar(s) Add Their New Perspective

Then, and sometimes for the bulk of an academic article, the author discusses their original work and analysis. This is the part of the article where the author(s) add to the conversation, where they try to fill in the research gap that they identified. This is also the part of the article that is the primary research. The author(s) may include a discussion of their **research methodology** and results, or an elaboration and defense of their reasoning, interpretation or analysis. Scholarly articles in the sciences or social sciences may include headings such as "Methods," "Results," and "Discussion" or synonyms of those words in this part of the article. In arts or humanities journal articles, these headings may not appear because scholars in the arts and humanities do not necessarily perform lab-based research in the same way as scientists or social scientists do. Authors may reference others' research even in this section of original work and analysis, but only to support or enhance the discussion of the scholar's own discussion. This is the part of the scholarly article that you should cite from, as it indicates the work your author or authors have done.

Conclusion

To conclude a scholarly journal article, authors may reference their original research question or hypothesis once more. They may summarize some of the points made in the article. We often see scholars concluding by indicating how, why, or to whom their research matters. Sometimes, authors will conclude by looking forward, offering ideas for other scholars to engage in future research. Sometimes, they may reflect on why an experiment failed (if it did) and how to approach that experiment differently next time. What we do not tend to see is scholars merely summarizing everything they discussed in the essay, point by point. Instead, they want to leave readers with a sense of why the work that they have discussed in their article matters.

As you read scholarly sources, remember:

- To look for the author's research question or hypothesis;
- To seek out the "research gap": why did the author have this research question or hypothesis?
- To identify the Literature Review;
- To identify the point at which the author stops discussing previous research and begins to discuss his or her own;
- Most importantly: remember to always try to understand what new information this article brings to the scholarly "conversation" about this topic?

Types of Sources: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary

The determination of a text as "popular" or "scholarly/academic" is one way to classify it and to understand what type of information you are engaging with. Another way to classify sources is by considering whether they are primary, secondary or tertiary. **Popular** sources can be primary, secondary, or tertiary. **Scholarly** sources, also, can be primary, secondary, or tertiary.

What is a Primary Source?

Primary sources are texts that arise directly from a particular event or time period. They may be letters, speeches, works of art, works of literature, diaries,

direct personal observations, newspaper articles that offer direct observations of current events, survey responses, tweets, other social media posts, original scholarly research (meaning research that the author or authors conduct themselves) or any other content that comes out of direct involvement with an event or a research study.

Primary research is information that has not yet been critiqued, interpreted or analyzed by a second (or third, etc.) party.

Primary sources can be popular (if published in newspapers, magazines or websites for the general public) or academic (if written by scholars and published in scholarly journals).

Examples of primary sources:

- Journals, diaries
- Blog posts
- A speech
- Data from surveys or polls
- Scholarly journal articles in which the author(s) discuss the methods and results from their own original research/experiments
- Photos, videos, sound recordings
- Interviews or transcripts
- Poems, paintings, sculptures, songs or other works of art
- Government documents (such as reports of legislative sessions, laws or court decisions, financial or economic reports, and more)

What is a Secondary Source?

Secondary sources summarize, interpret, critique, analyze, or offer commentary on primary sources.

In a secondary source, an author's subject is not necessarily something that he or she directly experienced. The author of a secondary source may be summarizing, interpreting or analyzing data or information from someone else's research or offering an interpretation or opinion on current events. Thus, the

secondary source is one step away from that original, primary topic/subject/research study.
Secondary sources can be popular (if published in newspapers, magazines or websites for the general public) or academic (if written by scholars and published in scholarly journals).
Examples of secondary sources:

- Book, movie or art reviews
- Summaries of the findings from other people's research
- Interpretations or analyses of primary source materials or other people's research
- Histories or biographies
- Political commentary

What is a Tertiary Source?

Tertiary sources are syntheses of primary and secondary sources. The person/people who compose a tertiary text are summarizing, compiling, and/or paraphrasing others' work. These sources sometimes do not list an author.
Tertiary sources can be popular or academic.
Examples of tertiary sources include:

- Encyclopedias
- Fact books
- Dictionaries
- Guides
- Handbooks
- Wikipedia

Thinking about Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sources and your Research Strategy

- What kinds of primary sources would be useful for your research project?

Why? Where will you find them? Are you more interested in popular primary sources or scholarly primary sources — and why?

- What kinds of secondary sources could be useful for your project – and why? Are you more interested in popular secondary sources or scholarly secondary sources – and why?
- What kinds of tertiary sources might you try to access? In what ways would this tertiary source help you in your research?

7.6 WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Emilie Zickel; Melanie Gagich; and Terri Pantuso

As you are gathering sources in your research, you will want to keep track of which information comes from what source. While other strategies have been discussed such as note taking, some researchers use an annotated bibliography for long term reference purposes. As the name implies, an annotated bibliography is the bibliographical reference of a given source along with key information from that source that you may use for future reference. As assignment parameters will vary by instructor, generally speaking the annotations are 150-200 words in length per source and do not include quoted material. The purpose of the annotations is to summarize the material within the context of your **thesis** statement.

Annotated Bibliographies follow a common structure and format. Below is an explanation of the elements and format of an annotated bibliography.

Components of an Annotated Bibliography

An annotation often offers a summary of a source that you intend to use for a research project as well as some assessment of the source's relevance to your project or quality and credibility. There are two key components for each source: the citation and the annotation.

The Annotated Bibliography Samples page[1] on the Purdue OWL offers examples of general formatting guidelines for both an MLA and an APA Annotated Bibliography.

1. "Annotated Bibliography Samples," Purdue Online Writing Lab, accessed December 20, 2021, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/annotated_bibliography_samples.html.

Citation

You will provide the full bibliographic reference for the source: author, title, source title, and other required information depending on the type of source. This will be formatted just as it would be in a typical Works Cited for an MLA paper or a References page for an APA paper.

Annotation

Tone and Style

Some elements can vary depending on the style you are using (e.g., APA or MLA). Be sure to review your style guide along with your assignment sheet. Generally speaking, use the following as a guide:

- Use signal phrases to refer to the author(s).
- Always maintain a neutral tone and use the third-person point of view and correct tense according to style guide (present tense for MLA, past tense for APA) (i.e., *Tompkins asserts...*).
- Keep the focus of the summary on the text, not on what you think of it, and try to put as most of the summary as you can in your own words. If you must use exact phrases from the source that you are summarizing, you must quote and cite them.
- Annotations should not be a replication of the abstract provided by the source.

What to Include in Annotations

1. After the bibliographical information, begin to discuss the source. Begin with a general summary of the source. Describe the key sections of the text and their corresponding main points. Try to avoid focusing on details; a summary covers the essential points and typically does not include quoted material.
2. Evaluate the source's credibility or relevance. Is the author an expert on the topic? How do you know? Is the source peer-reviewed or otherwise credible in nature? How do you know? What makes this source a good one to use?
3. Discuss how you plan to integrate the source in your paper. Do you need to point out similarities or differences with other sources in the annotated bibliography? How does it support (or refute) your intended thesis?

Review your Annotated Bibliography assignment sheet for additional content requirements**.** Instructors often require more than a simple summary of each source, and specific requirements may vary. Any (or all) of these aspects *may* be required in an annotated bibliography, depending on how or if your instructor has designed this assignment as part of a larger research project.

7.7 FROM ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY TO ROUGH DRAFT: HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR POSITION

Terri Pantuso

Now that you've completed your annotated bibliography, you may find yourself struggling with how to begin the rough draft of the researched position paper assignment. A researched position paper is simply an argumentative essay in which you take a position on a chosen topic and defend it with secondary sources. While it may be easy for you to state your position and reasons for your argument, you may find it difficult to incorporate your secondary sources into your own draft and still maintain your own voice. Now is the time to break out the scissors.

In this exercise, you are becoming part of the academic discussion, or **discourse** community, on your chosen topic. Now that you have located sources that either agree or disagree with your position, it's time to see how those sources inform your **thesis**. If your annotated bibliography is printed on continuous pages, cut the annotations apart making certain to leave the bibliographical information with each annotation. Once you have done this, arrange the annotations on a table in front of you and imagine that each source is a person standing before you speaking. The topic about which they are speaking is the information contained in your annotation.

Now imagine that your best friend just walked up behind you and asked, "Hey, what are you all discussing?" Your one or two sentence answer is your thesis. That response sums up the gist of the argument being discussed and makes clear your position on the topic. Even if you had a working thesis beforehand, it's okay to revise it at this point to more clearly match the debate being presented by your sources. It's still your position – after all, you chose the sources.

Next, in selecting how to arrange the sources to create a rough draft, imagine the conversation again. Which one of the sources provides the strongest support for your position? Which one offers a counterargument? Which one(s) provide evidence which gives the argument **logos** credibility? As you hear the conversation

in your head, arrange your annotations to begin to visualize the outline for your rough draft. However, do not copy/paste the annotations into your rough draft. Instead, incorporate the information you've identified into your own argument making sure to be cognizant of **syntax**.

VIII: ETHICS

Introduction

Kathy Anders

When we talk about writing, it is important to understand how to write ethically, that is, with an eye to what is morally acceptable. To develop an intuitive understanding of the nature of ethical concerns in writing, it helps to start with the proposition that "information has value."[1] This means that your writing and any texts you create have value, and so do the works of others. One example of a text with a substantial monetary value is *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkein,[2] which has earned profits for the author, publishing house, editors, printers, film studios, actors, etc. associated with the many written and audiovisual texts that have been developed from that novel. Academic texts have value in a number of ways, from being research that other companies will pay for to earning authors jobs and promotions. For students, the value of a paper is often tied to what type of grade the student will earn for it.

Once we understand that information has value, it's a bit easier to understand what it is morally acceptable to do with it. If we accept that a term paper has value for a student because of the grade it will earn that student in a given class, then it is clear that someone else should not change the paper without the author's knowledge, nor should someone steal the paper and turn it in as their own work.

Linked to ethical concerns about information are legal ones. Much of the work done at universities is governed not only by the ethics of academia, but by the law as well, particularly as a form of intellectual property. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), describes intellectual property this way:

> Intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce. IP

1. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2016).
2. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1937).

> is protected in law by, for example, patents, copyright and trademarks, which enable people to earn recognition or financial benefit from what they invent or create. By striking the right balance between the interests of innovators and the wider public interest, the IP system aims to foster an environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish.[3]

For writing courses, **copyright** is generally the most significant of these types of intellectual property.

Again breaking apart the idea of intellectual property helps create a more intuitive understanding about how to fairly use and create information. Note here the term "property," and think about some of society's laws and concepts concerning property. Property belongs to someone; it has an owner. It can be bought and sold, and it can be stolen. These things are all true of intellectual property, as well.

Apart from the legal protections afforded to intellectual property, there are contextual ethics that apply to different writing situations. What is acceptable in one situation might not be in another. For example, let's say your roommate has a standard grocery list every week. One week, you are grocery shopping and you copy the list, but you do not say that your roommate was the original author or cite her shopping list. Is this unethical, given the context? No, is not, given the standard ethical principles of our society, and, presumably, the ethics of your relationship with your roommate. However, say your roommate took the same class that you are now taking and you use parts of her term paper in your own without giving her credit or indicating which parts of the text you are quoting. Is this unethical? Yes, because this action violates the ethics of the academic community.

In this chapter we are going to focus mostly upon the ethical principles of the academic community, particularly those concerning plagiarism. Then we will also look at how to properly give credit to others through citation.

Pantuso, Terri, Sarah LeMire, and Kathy Anders, eds. *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. Rev. 2nd ed. College

3. WIPO, "What is Intellectual Property?," accessed July 3, 2019, https://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/.

8.1 MANAGING INFORMATION

Deborah Bernnard; Greg Bobish; Jenna Hecker; Irina Holden; Allison Hosier; Trudi Jacobson; Tor Loney; Daryl Bullis; and Kathy Anders

In the modern world, it is wonderful to have access to information. It empowers us to have data and knowledge that leads us throughout our busy days and helps us organize our leisure time more efficiently. GPS devices and mobile phones help us locate unfamiliar destinations where we can find places to eat, to stay, and to get entertainment. All of this information is at our fingertips due to modern technology. To some degree, we all take advantage of this technology and use this information to our advantage.

But there are other types of information that we need, not just the kind that provides directions. We seek such information when we are ill and need to look up medical advice. We seek out information when looking for jobs or places to live. We even seek information when in school as very few subjects require only the use of a textbook. In our intellectual work, we need to search for information and then use it because every paper or project produced in college is a product of someone's creativity.

So how should we handle this product of creativity (a.k.a. information)? Let's think about a simple example: apple picking in the fall. It is a popular thing to do. People go to a farm, get bags or baskets, gather apples, and then line up to weigh and to pay for them. The farmers' hard work of growing the crops is being rewarded with the monetary payment from the customers.

Now imagine a different situation. You worked hard and wrote a very good paper and your roommate just copied a couple of paragraphs and inserted them into her own paper because the topics were related. Was this fair? How were you rewarded for your hard work? Just like the farmer was paid for the apples, your roommate should not take your work without making it clear that it was you who wrote it. She should not use your intellectual capital without attribution to you. What she did was an act of plagiarism—intellectual theft.

Imagine that you publish an article in your college newsletter. This article is your

intellectual personal property and you hold the **copyright**, which means that no one has the right to reproduce all or any part of it (i.e. copy it) without your permission. If your roommate wants to distribute copies of your article, she would need to ask your permission in order to respect your copyrights. If, in another scenario, your roommate decides to use some information from your article in her paper, she should provide a citation (the information that will help the reader identify and find your article should they decide to do so). If she is using direct quotes from your article, again, she would need to put double quotes around your words and provide information about the author (you, in this instance) to avoid plagiarism. This avoids intellectual theft and gives credit where credit is due.

However, copyright[1] and plagiarism are just two aspects of ethical authorship with which you need to concern yourself. All writers must respect copyright, i.e. the rights of the author, and avoid plagiarism. However, depending upon what type of information you are using or creating, you may have to make considerations about other forms of intellectual property. Have you heard of **patents**? If you are planning a career in science and technology-related fields then you also have to learn more about patents. Patents deal with creators' rights to their invention of new machinery or processes. But machinery and processes are not the only things subject to patent laws. Plants and designs can also be patented. For more information on patent law,[2] consult the United States Patent and Trademarks Office (USPTO) http://www.uspto.gov/patents/law/. Additionally, trademarks and trade secrets are other forms of intellectual property with which you may have to deal.

In addition to being aware of intellectual property concerns regarding copyright, patents, **trademarks**, and **trade secrets**, you need to be mindful of **open access** issues which relate to valuable research data and academic publications posted online for everybody to read. This textbook is an example of an open access resource. While it is available widely on the web, you cannot always use the data from open access sources. You often need to ask the author for permission. Many open access publications use **Creative Commons** licensing, which gives advance permission for certain types of usage but may prohibit some other uses.

---

1. United States Copyright Office, Copyright Law of the United States and the Related Laws Contained in the Title 17 of the United States Code, Circular 92 (May 2021). https://www.copyright.gov/title17/title17.pdf
2. *Consolidated Patent Laws*, USC 35 (March 2021). https://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/consolidated_laws.pdf.

There is a lot to learn about using information legally and ethically, but this knowledge will empower you in your academic work and ultimately allow you to succeed. The following examples and tips will get you off to a good start.

Unintentional Plagiarism

Have you ever thought about why teachers and professors seem to spend way too much time urging everyone to be sure to cite all of their sources properly? You've heard it all before: footnote this, endnote that, put this in the bibliography, capitalize this word, where are the italics, the commas, periods, hanging indents, yada yada yada! It's enough to make you give up and just wing it. But hold on a second while you gather your thoughts. Why do your professors always spend so much time urging you to do something that seems to have little practical purpose?

Scenario

Jackie was working on her 10-page research paper at the last minute. It was 3:30 am and her paper was due in class at 9:00 am. She finished the last sentence at 5:15 am, did a spellcheck and voila! Done! Groggy yet awake she went to class, turned in the paper and waited for her grade. She received an email from her professor that read, "There are some major issues with your research paper that I need to discuss with you. Please see me." Uh oh. What could it be?

When she nervously went to see him, Professor Muntz told Jackie that she hadn't cited any of her sources, and because she included a lot of direct quotes in her paper, she was guilty of plagiarism. She received an F on her paper and may be referred to the school administration for academic dishonesty.

Was she really guilty of something that bad? In fact, yes she was. In this chapter we will discuss the importance of managing your information sources and some tips on how to easily and effectively avoid Jackie's pitfall.

Real World Cases

Students often feel that they are being singled out in regard to plagiarism and

academic dishonesty. But that is far from the case. There are numerous examples of scholars and other professionals who have been caught plagiarizing. One such person is Doris Kearns Goodwin, a famous historian who wrote the noted *Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (2006). She included material in an earlier book, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (1987), from three other sources without citing it, according to an article written by Michael Nelson.[3] Although she has since published other works, her reputation has been tarnished, and people may not take her work as seriously because of this. Unfortunately, as Nelson points out in his article, she is not the only well-known historian caught plagiarizing.

Another example, with a dramatic outcome, is that of Eugene Tobin. He was the president of Hamilton College in New York State, when it was discovered that he had included plagiarized material in speeches he had given over the course of almost a decade. He resigned from his position as the head of this prestigious institution, admitting his guilt.[4] Other college presidents and administrators have also been caught violating academic trust: if you try a search using the terms *plagiarism* and *college president*, you may be dismayed at the number of results.

Like some of the historians Nelson cites in his article, many students fall into a trap when they do research because they fail to mention where they found all of their information. Thousands of students in schools, colleges, and universities are guilty of committing plagiarism, but often they don't know they are plagiarizing.

Let's look at plagiarism and how to avoid it, and then continue on to some other intellectual property issues you may need to deal with.

What is Plagiarism?

In short, plagiarism is when you use words, thoughts, or ideas that belong to someone else without giving them credit. In the classroom (and in the world of publishing), documenting your information sources is the only way others can tell how thorough and careful you've been in researching your topic. If you don't tell readers where your information came from, they may think (and many do) that

3. Michael Nelson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Phony: Six Famous Historians and Their Critics," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 78, no. 3 (2002): 377–394.
4. Maurice Isserman, "Plagiarism: A Lie of the Mind," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 49, no. 34 (2003): B12.

you either made up the information or "stole" it. Failing to cite your sources is plagiarism.

By managing the sources in your papers, you encourage others to do the same and you can be a go-to expert for your friends and classmates when they need help with how to find out how to cite sources properly. The information and advice you impart may help them avoid serious difficulties. Some students truly don't know that they are doing something wrong when they **paraphrase** information without citing the information source. They might feel that paraphrasing the words of someone who is clearly an expert on the topic is the best way to write an accurate paper. And because they aren't quoting it directly, it doesn't need quote marks or attribution, does it? While the penalties they receive might (and this is a big "might") be less severe than someone who buys a paper online or copies and pastes big sections of material into their work, the penalties could still be substantial. Raising your friends' awareness so they won't face this situation would be a kind thing to do.

When to Cite

Now that you have gathered all of your information resources, you need to be mindful about how you used them in your research project. There are some very firm rules about what constitutes plagiarism:

- If you copy a sentence or paragraph verbatim (exactly) from a book, article, website, blog posting, or anywhere online or in print, you must provide information on the author and the publication in which the sentence or paragraph appears. This is known as "citing a source."
- If you use some of the exact phrases in a sentence or paragraph, even if you are not copying the whole sentence or paragraph, you must cite your source.
- If you use original information that you have obtained from an interview or conversation with someone, you must cite your source.
- If you do not use the exact sentence or phrase but paraphrase it, or use the ideas inherent in the exact sentence or phrase, you must cite your source.
- If you reprint images, maps, diagrams, charts, or tables, you must cite your source.
- If you embed video files or audio files into your work, you must cite your source.

When Are Citations Not Needed?

- You do not need to provide citations for commonly known dates and facts. One guideline is that if a fact appears in more than five sources it is commonly known. However, if it was **not** common knowledge to you, and you use a source, then go ahead and cite it.
- You do not need to provide citations for common turns of phrase or idioms, such as "One in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Five Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. **Consider your need for information.** If you are contemplating intentionally plagiarizing something, ask yourself what information you need to finish your assignment and consider alternate means for finding it. Your professor, the Writing Center, and the TAMU Libraries are great places to go to get more information.
2. **Give yourself time.** Make sure that you leave enough time to complete your assignment. If you give yourself enough time to complete your assignment you will be able to ask for help when necessary and will not feel the pressure to "cut and paste" in sections of writing.
3. **Take notes.** When you are researching, always drop in the last name of the author, or even just a note saying "CITE," in your writing. Take down as much bibliographic data as you can at the moment. This way you can keep track of your ideas and where they came from. You can format your citations later in the **revision** process.
4. **Ask for help.** If you are unsure about what you need to cite and what you don't, ask your professor, a librarian, or a Writing Center consultant. Here is the address for the TAMU Libraries contact information: library.tamu.edu. Links for contacting librarians by phone, chat, text, or email are at the bottom of the page. The Writing Center's website is writingcenter.tamu.edu. You can make an appointment to speak with a consultant.
5. **Ask questions about texts and talk to people.** You may feel like you don't understand the assignment or the text and think that the only way to complete your work is to plagiarize. If this is the case, contact the professor (through email or by going to his/her office hours) to talk about the assignment and/or the text. Your professor is there to help you, and one-on-one meetings are available if you feel like you don't want to ask

questions in class. If you don't want to talk to your professor, bounce ideas off of a friend, family member, or classmate. Talking about your readings is a great way to start coming up with ideas.

8.2 ETHICAL ISSUES AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Deborah Bernnard; Greg Bobish; Jenna Hecker; Irina Holden; Allison Hosier; Trudi Jacobson; Tor Loney; Daryl Bullis; Yvonne Bruce; and Kathy Anders

Ethical treatment of information assumes that you are treating an author's rights appropriately and avoiding an act of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism. As a creator of information yourself, you should understand the importance of respecting other authors' rights and following the general rules set forth in legal documents.

There are many examples of intellectual property issues that you can find in the media. For example, in June 2013 the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the law that had previously allowed gene patenting.[1] It might sound strange, but up until now if you were a scientist who studied the human genome and happened to discover a new gene, under the earlier law, you could patent it, thus assuring that whenever a person needed to have a medical test involving the gene they would have to pay you as a patent holder. These types of tests usually weren't covered by insurance companies and were very expensive. Challenges to the Supreme Court ruling continued for years, as recently as 2019.[2]

As an information creator, you want to be respectfully treated by others. That is why you should constantly strive to improve your ability to practice fair treatment of other authors' works, including being **cognizant** of copyright, patents, and other issues associated with intellectual property.

1. Association for Molecular Pathology et al. v. Myriad genetics, Inc. et al. 569 U.S. (2013), https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/12-398_1b7d.pdf.
2. Kelly Servick, "Controversial U.S. Bill Would Lift Supreme Court Ban on Patenting Human Genes," *Science*, June 4, 2019, https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/06/controversial-us-bill-would-lift-supreme-court-ban-patenting-human-genes.

Academic Integrity

You have already learned about plagiarism, often enemy number one when it comes to academic success involving research and writing. But there are other issues under the larger umbrella of academic dishonesty. First of all, every academic institution has a set of academic regulations that explain what is expected of students. Students are required to make themselves familiar with these rules.

Other examples of dishonesty that are mentioned in academic regulations are multiple submissions (one may not submit one project for two different classes), cheating on examinations, and forgery. The Aggie Honor System Rules state "Misconduct in research or scholarship includes fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data."[3] If you have questions about what practices are, or are not, academically ethical, it is important to ask your professor what is acceptable for a given type of work.

It is imperative to understand that everybody has to be accountable for their own work and respectful of the work of others. Future scholarship depends on the accuracy and integrity of prior scholarship. That is why when doing research one must use the information produced by other people responsibly, i.e. provide citations within the text and a list of references at the end of the paper with full citation information that will allow retrieval of the document. Remember what you have learned in this chapter about managing your sources and citation style. If you are diligent about applying this knowledge and careful about giving credit where credit is due, you should have no worries.

Other Considerations for Using Sources Ethically

Students are often concerned with the details of correct citation—when to include an author's name in parentheses, how to format an MLA bibliography, how to

3. Aggie Honor System Office, "20.1.2.3 Definitions of Academic Misconduct," Honor System Rules, accessed December 17, 2020, https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/Rules-and-Procedures/Rules/Honor-System-Rules.

indicate a quotation within a quotation—and while these are all important and helpful to know, what is more important is understanding the larger ethical principles that guide choosing and using sources. Here are a few of these larger ideas to keep in mind as you select and **synthesize** your sources:

- **You must represent the topic or discipline you are writing about fairly.** If nine out of ten sources agree that evidence shows the middle class in the United States is shrinking, it is unethical to use the tenth source that argues it is growing without acknowledging the minority status of the source.
- **You must represent the individual source fairly.** If a source acknowledges that a small segment of the middle class in the United States is growing but most of the middle class is shrinking, it is unethical to suggest that the former is the writer's main point.
- **You must acknowledge bias in your sources.** It is unethical to represent sources that, while they may be credible, offer extreme political views as if these views are mainstream.
- **Just because your source is an informal one, or from Wikipedia, or the dictionary doesn't mean that you don't have to acknowledge it.** Quoting a dictionary definition is still quoting: you need quotation marks. Wikipedia is not "common knowledge": cite it.
- **You must summarize and paraphrase in your own words.** Changing a few words around in the original and calling it your summary or paraphrase is unethical. How would you feel if you recognized what you worked so hard to write in someone else's paper? "I changed some words," they'd say. But you would still recognize your *style*. Don't steal someone else's.

This section contains material from:
Bernnard, Deborah, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis. *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014. http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/.

Bruce, Yvonne. "Using Sources Ethically." In *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel. Cleveland: MSL Academic Endeavors. Accessed July 2019. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/9-1-what-is-plagiarism/.

8.3 KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR SOURCES

Deborah Bernnard; Greg Bobish; Jenna Hecker; Irina Holden; Allison Hosier; Trudi Jacobson; Tor Loney; Daryl Bullis; and Sarah LeMire

---

Try this the next time you do research. If you find some great articles on your topic, collect the following information about each as soon as you realize they will be helpful resources:

- Author name(s)
- Title of the article
- Name of the journal
- The volume number
- The issue number
- The date of the issue
- The name of the database where you found the article

Or, if you found a book, note the following once you think it might contain useful information:

- Author name(s)
- Title of book
- Place of publication
- Publisher's name
- Year of publication

Or, if you found a website you want to use, collect the following details before you leave the site:

- Author name(s)
- Title of article or webpage
- Title of overall website
- The date of the webpage (if any)
- The URL (or web address)

You might be able to get some of this information with a simple screenshot, but be sure to fill in any missing elements.

This information is often referred to as bibliographic information or metadata. It consists of essential information that identifies the information resource used to inform a research project.

You may not use every single item that you found when you gathered your sources, but having a list of all of the sources you considered will help you keep track of everything you use for your paper.

As you read each source, write down any of the authors' ideas, quotes, or thoughts you want to use and be sure to write down page numbers, if the source provides them. When you put your paper together, you will then have all the information you need to properly cite any quote, idea, or thought that came from each source.

Reference Management Software

Many researchers take the time to gather all of this information before they start writing. However, when they are ready to compile their footnotes or bibliography they can't find their preliminary notes. It may be the case that some notes are in one notebook, other notes are in a file in their computer and still others are missing entirely. Fortunately, software has been developed that helps researchers manage their source material. You may have heard of some of these reference management products. Endnote, RefWorks, Mendeley, and Zotero, among others, all help manage the information gathering and retrieval process.

In addition to providing one central location for all of your references, these reference managers can:

- import bibliographic information directly from a library catalog database,
- provide additional space for personal notations,
- create a bibliography or list of references in a variety of citation styles such as APA, MLA, Chicago, and more.

Some academic libraries, including Texas A&M University Libraries, provide access to Endnote or RefWorks. Zotero is available free for use without a library subscription.

Citation Styles

Citing sources and avoiding plagiarism should always be an author's intent, but it is easy to get confused about how to cite. The three styles that are used most often are APA (American Psychology Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), and Chicago. There are no hard and fast rules about when to use each style. Professors often have a preference for one style over another, so make sure that you check with your instructor about which style they prefer.

Creating properly formatted citations has become easier in recent years with the introduction of reference management software and citation generators. A citation generator is software that will help to correctly format your citations. There are also free citation generators available online. You can search the web to retrieve them. These generators are handy to use but they often contain errors so it is important to check the results for accuracy. The following resources are useful tools for all writers.

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*
- *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*

You can find these three manuals, as well as several others, at Evans Library.

Where to Go For Help

Even if you are a very organized person and have diligently collected bibliographic information on all of the information resources that you consulted during the research process, you may misplace essential information on a resource. You may think that since you can't find this information, you will be unable to use it. But there is another option—consult a librarian. Librarians have comprehensive knowledge about how information is organized and retrieved. They also have a wealth of information resources at their fingertips. Even if you can't retrace your steps to find the missing data, it is likely that a librarian will be able to help you find the bibliographic information you need. Librarians can also help you determine when and how to cite your work. They may even be able to help you navigate citation generators and reference managers. Librarians at the Texas A&M University

Libraries are available to help you in person, by telephone, and via email and chat. Consult the library website, library.tamu.edu, for contact information.

8.4 CITATION FORMATTING

Sarah LeMire

Most students are familiar with at least one or two citation styles – perhaps you have used MLA format in the past, or have some experience using Chicago style. There are actually thousands of citation styles. They typically contain most of the same information, but they each present citation information a little bit differently. Some citation formats include the author's full name, while others use only initials. Some citation formats use title case, meaning they capitalize the first letter of every word; other citation formats use sentence case, in which they only capitalize the first letter of the sentence and any proper nouns. There are many subtle formatting differences between citation styles, and it takes careful attention to detail to ensure that you have each of your citations formatted correctly.
In the following sections, you'll find a set of examples to get you started using two common citation styles: American Psychological Association, or APA, format, and Modern Languages Association, or MLA, format. These sections are not intended to be a citation manual for either citation style. For in-depth questions, consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* or the *MLA Handbook*

8.5 APA FORMAT

Sarah LeMire

Properly formatted APA citations include two main elements: the reference list entry and the in-text citation. Below you will find sample citations for a variety of commonly-used reference types. For additional questions, consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.)

Reference List

The reference list is found at the end of your paper or project, and it includes all of the sources used when developing your paper or project. References are listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name, and each reference will have a hanging indent to make it easier to visually distinguish between each reference.

No Author

If there is no author, the title moves into the place of the author. The reference should then be alphabetized by the first word in the title within the reference list.

Example

Down the Line. (1895). In *The Olio: An Annual* (pp. 54-58). The Corps of Cadets of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas.

Single Author

In APA style, when there is a single author, you should list them with the last name first, followed by the first and (if available) middle initial.

Example

Clark, D. T. (2009). Lending Kindle e-book readers: First results from the Texas A&M University project. *Collection Building*, *28*(4), 146-149. https://doi.org/10.1108/01604950910999774

Two Authors

When there are two authors, list both and connect them with an ampersand (&). Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example

Rutledge, L., & LeMire, S. (2016). Beyond disciplines: Providing outreach to underserved groups by demographic. *Public Services Quarterly*, *12*(2), 113-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2016.1157565

Three to Twenty Authors

When there are between three and twenty authors, list each one and use an ampersand (&) before the final author. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example

LeMire, S., Graves, S. J., Hawkins, M., & Kailani, S. (2018). Libr-AR-y Tours: Increasing engagement and scalability of library tours using augmented reality. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, *25*(3), 261-279. https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2018.1480445

Twenty-One or More Authors

When there are more than twenty authors, list the first 19 authors, then add an ellipsis (...) and the last author's name. The ellipsis (...) will take the place of author names between author number 19 and the final author. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example

Agnese, R., Anderson, A. J., Asai, M., Balakishiyeva, D., Thakur, R. B., Bauer, D. A., Beaty, J., Billard, J., Borgland, A, Bowles, M.A., Brandt, D., Brink, P.L., Bunker, R., Cabrera, B., Caldwell, D.O., Cerdeno, D.G., Chagani, H., Chen, Y., Cherry, M., … Zhang, J. (2014). Search for low-mass weakly interacting massive particles with SuperCDMS. *Physical Review Letters*, *112*(24), 241-302. https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevLett.112.241302

Institutional Author

Sometimes the author isn't a person – instead, it's authored by an organization. In this case, you'll list the organization as the author.

Example

Texas A&M University. (2019). *Aggie traditions.* https://www.tamu.edu/traditions/index.html

Book

Books list the author, followed by the year and the title in italics. APA also includes the publisher name. If the book is accessed electronically, also include the digital object identifier, or doi.

Example

Dromgoole, G. (2005). *Aggie savvy: practical wisdom from Texas A&M*. State House Press.

Article from Database

Articles from online databases like JSTOR or Project Muse databases include the

author names, year of publication, and article title in sentence case. The journal title is put in italics, as is the journal volume number. The issue is in parentheses, followed by the page range.

To help the reader access the article, always include the doi (permanent url) if there is one available. It is generally listed near the top of the article. It may appear as doi: or https://dx.doi.org/ followed by a sequence of numbers and/or letters. The doi number typically starts with the number 10, as in the example below. If there is a doi available, include it in your citation using the format https://doi.org/[insert doi number].

Example

Rutledge, L., & LeMire, S. (2016). Beyond disciplines: Providing outreach to underserved groups by demographic. *Public Services Quarterly*, *12*(2), 113-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2016.1157565

Newspaper article

If a newspaper article is found in a database such as *Newspaper Source* or *Access World News*, do not include the database name or URL. If the article is found through the open web, include the URL.

If an article is from an online newspaper (e.g., *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*), italicize the name of the newspaper. If the article is from an online news website (e.g., BBC News, CNN, Reuters), italicize the name of the article and not the site.

Example from an online newspaper

Boren, C. (2018, November 25). It took seven overtimes for Texas A&M to beat LSU in the craziest college football game of the year. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/ 2018/11/25/ it-took-seven-overtimes-texas-am-beat-lsu-craziest-college-football-game-year/

Example from an online news website

Holcombe, M. (2019, July 18). *Texas A&M's new program opens the door to college education for students with disabilities*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/18/us/texas-am-program- disabilities/index.html

Website

Example

Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs. (2019). *Residence life*. https://reslife.tamu.edu/

YouTube video

Example

Texas A&M University. (2019, September 8). *Fearless on every front* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlRup0e8kTk

Interview

In APA format, an unpublished interview is not included in the reference list. This is because the interview is not available for the reader to view. Instead, interviews are cited only in-text.

Lecture

In APA format, if you are citing your professor's lecture slides or content, you should point the reader to a digital copy of that content if possible. If housed in a course management system, direct the reader to the login page for that system.

Example

Pantuso, T. (2019, September 10). *Visual rhetoric* [PowerPoint slides]. eCampus. https://ecampus.tamu.edu/

In-Text Citations

APA in-text citations use the last name(s) of the author, followed by a comma and the year of publication. If a direct quotation, also include the page number where that quotation can be found. In APA format, you can also embed the in-text quotation directly into your sentence (e.g., Smith (2001) found that...) which then obviates the need for a parenthetical at the end of the sentence, except in the case of a direct quotation.

No Author

As with the reference list, the in-text citation will use the title if there is no author available. Use the first few words of the title if it is long and place it in quotation marks.

Example

("Down the Line," 1895).

Single Author

Example (no direct quotation)

(Clark, 2009)

Example (direct quotation)

(Clark, 2009, p. 42)

Note: If quoting a source that does not contain page numbers, provide a paragraph number, section number, or other way to help the reader find the quoted passage (e.g., Clark, 2009, para. 4).

Two Authors

When there are two authors, list the last names of both connected by an ampersand. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example

(Rutledge & LeMire, 2016).

Three or More Authors

When there are three or more authors, list the first author's last name, followed by *et al*. This is a Latin phrase meaning "and others" and is used in some citation formats as a way to abbreviate a list of names.

Example

(Tribble et al., 2002).

Institutional Author

As with the reference list, you'll list the organization as the author in the in-text citation.

Example

(Texas A&M University, 2019).

8.6 MLA FORMAT

Sarah LeMire

Just like APA format, properly formatted MLA citations include two main elements: the works cited entry and the in-text citation. Below you will find sample citations for a variety of commonly-used reference types. For additional questions, consult the MLA Handbook (9th ed).

Works Cited

The Works Cited page operates just like the Reference list in APA format. It is found at the end of your paper or project, and it includes all of the sources used when developing your paper or project. References are listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name, and each reference will have a hanging indent to make it easier to visually distinguish between each reference.

No Author

If there is no author, the title moves into the place of the author. The reference should then be alphabetized by the first word in the title within the reference list.

Example

"Down the Line." *The Olio: An Annual,* The Corps of Cadets of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, 1895, pp. 54-58.

Single Author

In MLA style, when there is a single author, you should list them with the last name first, followed by the full first and (if available) middle name or initial.

Example

Lyke, Austin. "Institutional Effects of Higher Education Acquisitions: The Case of Texas A&M School of Law." *AERA Open*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2018, pp. 1-11. *Sage Journals*, https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858418816092.

Two Authors

When there are two authors, the first author with their last name first, followed by their first name and (if available) middle name or initial. The name order is reversed with the second author, and the word *and* is used to connect the two. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example

James, Adrian, and Lori Moore. "Understanding the Supplemental Instruction Leader." *Learning Assistance Review*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2018, pp. 9-29. *ERIC*, eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1170156.

Three or More Authors

When there are more than three authors, list the first author's last name, followed by *et al*. This is a Latin phrase meaning "and others" and is used in some citation formats as a way to abbreviate a list of names.

Example

LeMire, Sarah, et al. "Taking a Fresh Look: Reviewing and Classifying Reference Statistics for Data-Driven Decision Making." *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2018, pp. 230-234. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/refuseserq.55.3.230.

Institutional Author

Sometimes the author isn't a person – instead, it's authored by an organization. In this case, you'll list the organization as the author. If the organization and the

publisher are the same, only list the organization as the publisher and use the title as the author.

Example

Stats in Brief: What High Schoolers and Their Parents Know about Public 4-year Tuition. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Nov. 2018.

Book

In MLA format, books list the author, followed by the title in italics. MLA, unlike APA, does not typically include the place of publication. If the book is accessed electronically, note that it is an e-book (usually after the title).

Example

Dromgoole, Glenn. *Aggie Savvy: Practical Wisdom from Texas A&M*. State House Press, 2005.

Article from Database

You will commonly access articles from online databases like JSTOR or Project Muse databases, as opposed to finding them directly via a journal or in print. In this case, MLA format requires that you include the name of the article, name of the journal, *and* the name of the database in your citation.

To help the reader access the article, always include the doi (permanent url) if there is one available. It is generally listed near the top of the article. It may appear as doi: or https://dx.doi.org/ followed by a sequence of numbers and/or letters. The doi number typically starts with the number 10, as in the example below. If there is a doi available, include it in your citation using the format https://doi.org/[insert doi number]. If a permalink is available instead of a doi, it can be used instead.

Example

Rutledge, Lorelei, and Sarah LeMire. "Broadening Boundaries: Opportunities for Information Literacy Instruction Inside and Outside the Classroom." *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2017, pp. 347-362. *Project Muse*, https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2017.0021.

Newspaper article

Example

Boren, Cindy. "It Took Seven Overtimes for Texas A&M to Beat LSU in the Craziest College Football Game of the Year," *Washington Post*, 15 Nov. 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2018/11/25/it-took-seven-overtimes-texas-am-beat-lsu-craziest-college-football-game-year/ Accessed 6 Jul. 2019.

Website

Example

"About Us." *Aggie Shields*, 2019, www.aggieshields.org/about-us/

YouTube video

Example

"Fearless on Every Front." *YouTube*, uploaded by Texas A&M University, 8 Sept. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlRup0e8kTk

Interview

Unlike APA style, MLA does include unpublished interviews in the Works Cited. Key details to include are the name of the person interviewed and the date of the interview.

Example

Anders, Kathy. Personal interview. 14 Jul. 2019.

Lecture

MLA format also includes lectures and lecture slides in the Works Cited.

Example

Pantuso, Terri. Lecture. Rhetoric and Composition, 10 Sept. 2019, Texas A&M University.

In-Text Citations

MLA in-text citations use the last name(s) of the author followed by a space and the page number for the source material, when available. Only use the page number if the source is paginated (e.g., a book chapter or article that has a page number in the corner). Do not include a page number for web sources that are not paginated.

In MLA format, you can also embed the author name directly into your sentence (e.g., Smith found that...), in which case the parenthetical at the end of the sentence should include only the page number.

No Author

As with the Works Cited entry, the in-text citation will use the title if there is no author available. Use the first few words of the title if it is long, and place it in quotation marks.

Example

(“Down the Line” 56).

Single Author

Example

(Lyke 4)

Two Authors

When there are two authors, list the last names of both connected by an ampersand. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example

(James and Moore 19).

Three or More Authors

When there are more than three authors, list the first author’s last name, followed by *et al*. This is a Latin phrase meaning “and others” and is used in some citation formats as a way to abbreviate a list of names

Example

(LeMire et al. 261).

Institutional Author

As with the reference list, you'll list the organization as the author in the in-text citation.

Example (document is paginated)

(Texas A&M University 14).

Example (document is not paginated)

(Texas A&M University).

GLOSSARY

Allude

To hint at, insinuate, imply, or suggest. An allusion is a direct or indirect reference that is well-known by the majority of the public. For example, “We are not in Kansas anymore” is an allusion to The Wizard of Oz.

Alluring

Attractive, tempting, or seductive; to have an appealing and charismatic quality.

Analogous

Corresponding or related to two ideas. An analogy refers to a comparison made to the similarity between two items, ideas, events, and phenomena. Forrest Gump’s famous saying that “life is like a box of chocolates—you never know what you are going to get” is an example of an analogy.

Analysis

The process of critically examining, investigating, or interpreting a specific topic or subject matter in order to come to an original conclusion.

Anecdote

A short account or telling of an incident or story, either personal or historical; *anecdotal evidence* is frequently found in the form of a personal experience rather than objective data or widespread occurrence.

Antecedent

The thing that comes before, events prior to the current event, or the previous item that was mentioned.

Arbiter

A mediator, moderator, or go-between; someone who has the power to pass judgement on an issue.

Arbitrary

To be subject to the judgment of a whim, chance, or personal preference; the opposite of a standardized law, regulation, or rule.

Aristotle

A classical Greek philosopher and orator who lived from 384-322 B.C. A student of Plato, he is known for creating his own branch of philosophy known as Aristotelianism which is based on the use of inductive reasoning and deductive logic in order to study nature and natural law. Aristotle also wrote on various subjects including biology, physics, ethics, poetry, politics, linguistics, mathematics, and rhetoric. Aristotle's rhetorical triangle is based on ethos, pathos, and logos and is considered the basis for understanding the rhetorical situation.

Articulate

Clear or lucid speech; the expression of an idea in a coherent or logical manner; the communication of a concept in a way that is easily understandable to an audience.

Assertion

Pronouncement, affirmation, or endorsement; a declaration or statement of belief, usually positive in nature.

Assumption

Taking something for granted; an expected result; to be predisposed towards a certain outcome.

Asynchronous

Occurring at a different time; not occurring at the same time; *asynchronous learning* refers to work that can be done by a student independently without real-time interaction or guidance from an instructor.

Audience

The person or group of people who view and analyze the work of a writer, researcher, or other content creator.

Bias

To have a particular opinion or attitude about a subject that is based in feeling, inclination, or tendency rather than researched facts; preconceived notions.

Catalog

A library catalog is a database of records for the items a library holds and/or to which it has access. Searching a library catalog is not the same as searching the web, even though you may see a similar search box for both tools. Library catalog searches can return information that you would not find on the open web, and the searching process will likely take longer to refine.

Chronological

The sequence of events that occur linearly or consecutively in time.

Claim

An arguable statement; a point that a writer, researcher, or speaker makes in order to prove their thesis.

Classify

To organize or arrange.

Cliché

A stereotyped or corny phrase, expression, or idea that has lost its original meaning from overuse, usually over a long period of time. The saying “time flies when you’re having fun” is an example of a cliché.

Climax

The highest or most intense point in a sequence of events that lead to some resolution, settlement, judgement, or ending; the peak or culmination. In fiction, the climax of a story usually occurs when the characters make the decisions, fight the battle, or enter into the romantic relationship that will impact the ending of that story.

Cognizant

Having awareness.

Coherent

A logical, rational, lucid, or understandable expression of an idea, concept, or notion; consistent and harmonious explanation.

Commentary

A form of an analysis that involves original thought, explanation, or critique about an observation made by a commentator (writer, speaker, or other content creator).

Compel

To influence or convince; to produce a certain or specific result through the use of force.

Concession

An acknowledgement of at least one aspect of the other side of the argument that admits or accepts validity or legitimacy.

Conduit

Someone or something that allows something tangible, such as money, or intangible, such as ideas, to go from one place to another; can also indirectly refer to a catalyst for change.

Conjure

To produce, seemingly out of thin air, an object, idea, or being.

Connotation

The common understanding of a word's meaning; the meaning associated with a certain word. The opposite of connotation is denotation which refers to the dictionary definition of a word. For example, "Christmas" is defined as a holiday celebrated on December 25th of every year, but, for most Americans, "Christmas" refers to a holiday season in which carols are sung, eggnog is drunk, families gather together, and gifts are exchanged.

Content

The subject matter; the information contained within a text; the configuration of ideas that make up an argument.

Context

The set of circumstances that frame a particular idea or argument; the background information that is necessary for an audience to know about in order to understand why or how a text was written or produced.

Controlled vocabulary

An agreed-upon term or phrase use to consistently describe an item or concept. For instance, "carbonated beverages" is a controlled vocabulary term for a soda/pop/soft drink.

Copyright

An intellectual property right whereby the rights holder has the right to copy and distribute, among other rights, original works of authorship that are literary, musical, artistic, or choreographic. There are additional categories of material that are covered as well.

Correlation

The connection or interrelationship between two or more objects or subjects.

Creative Commons

Creative Commons is a foundation that has developed licenses for copyright holders to share and license their copyrighted works to others under certain terms, such as providing attribution for the work and using it non-commercially.

Credentials

The measurable achievements that grant someone the authority to discuss, write about, or lecture on a specific topic, idea, or concept; the awarding of privilege to a specific person or group of people based on their accomplishments.

Criteria

The standards or rules of judgement, grading, or other types of scrutiny.

Database

A database is an organized collection of data in a digital format. Library research databases are often composed of academic publications like journal articles and book

chapters, although there are also specialty databases that have data like engineering specifications or world news articles.

Daunting

Intimidating, threatening, or fear-inducing.

Declaration

Assertion or announcement of belief, understanding, or knowledge; a formal statement or proclamation.

Digress

To ramble, meander, or stray from the topic at hand. A digression is a passage or section or writing that is off topic or does not work toward proving the thesis.

Discern

To distinguish, perceive, or figure out usually through intuition, instinct, or inference; to discover information indirectly.

Discourse

To enter into a dialogue or conversation about a topic; to consider a subject formally in speech or writing. *Public discourse* refers to the speeches, publications, media attention, social media posts, and other statements that discuss the public good, the function of government, and the role of the individual in society.

discovery interface

A discovery interface type of library catalog search that appears similar to a search engine. It often searches article databases in addition to catalog holdings such as books and videos.

Dissect

To analyze closely or minutely; to scrutinize every aspect. Unlike the fields of biology, anatomy, or medicine, in rhetoric and writing, dissect does not refer to the cutting apart of a physical body but to the taking apart the body of an argument or idea piece by piece to understand it better.

Divergent

To be different, diverse, or dissimilar; to deviate from a plan or practice.

Emphatic

A strong expression or emphasis either in speech, writing, or action.

Engage

To occupy or attract the attention of someone or something.

Essentials

The essence of something; those things that compose the foundational elements of a thing; the basics.

Extraneous

Irrelevant, unneeded, or unnecessary.

Format

With regard to texts, format refers to how words and/or images are arranged on a page. With regard to information and library searches, format refers to the medium of the information, such as a book, ebook, article, audio recording, etc.

Fraudulent

Involving deception, dishonesty, or duplicity.

Full record

A full record for a library item is all of the bibliographic information entered into the catalog for that particular work. Common entries in a full record will include the name of the work, the author, the publisher, the place of publication, the number of pages, the format, subject terms, and sometimes chapter titles.

Government documents

Government documents are texts and information produced by government agencies. They can include research data, policy papers, maps, recommendation reports, statistics and forecasts, census and demographic data, meeting transcripts, and more.

Gutenberg

Johannes Gutenberg lived from about 1400 to 1468 in Germany. A printer, publisher, inventor, and goldsmith, he is credited with creating the first movable-type printing press in Europe. That is, without Gutenberg's contributions, printing and publishing in the Western world would not have been possible. The Gutenberg Bible is considered the first printed text in Europe and was produced in the early-to-mid 1450s. Before this, texts had to be hand-copied for public consumption, a timely and expensive process that allowed only the wealthy few access to books.

Heterogeneous

To be composed or made up of various parts or aspects; the opposite of homogeneous.

Hierarchy

A system involving rank. *Hierarchical* refers to a system that involves a hierarchy. For example, the military is a hierarchical system in which some people outrank others.

Homogenous

To be composed or made up of similar parts or aspects; the opposite of heterogeneous.

Hook

Usually the first sentence or portion of a text that is meant to capture the reader's attention and keep them interested in reading.

Humanistic

A human-centered approach or perspective to an issue.

Humanities

Also known as *the* humanities; a branch of learning concerned with answering the question: what does it mean to be human? Or, in other words, an area of study concerned with understanding human beings and their culture. Traditionally, the humanities includes, among others, the areas of history, literature, ethics, fine arts, philosophy, and religious studies.

Idiom

A phrase that is not traditionally associated with the meaning that the words provide;

idioms cannot be literally translated into another language. For example, when someone is “feeling under the weather,” they are feeling ill.

Imply

To hint; to suggest indirectly without mentioning the topic explicitly. An *implied argument* is one that does not obviously appear to be an argument but is nevertheless persuasive.

Incumbent

The person who currently holds an office or position. The term is usually associated with political office.

Indefinite

Without a defined number or limit; unlimited, infinite, or undetermined.

Information dissemination

This is how information is spread throughout a community. Information dissemination is a process, and usually information will be shared with others in changing formats over time.

Informative

To give or relay information; explanatory.

Integrate

To combine, merge, blend, or consolidate different parts to make a whole.

Intercept

To interrupt, stop, or prevent someone or something from coming to pass or getting from one place to the other.

Intermittent

Ceasing and beginning or stopping and starting in a recurrent, cyclical or periodic pattern.

Introspective

To reflect or think on one's self, being, mental, physical, or emotional state insightfully or analytically.

Irrelevant

Not relevant; unimportant; beside the point; not relating to the matter at hand.

Jargon

The specialized language and vocabulary associated with a specific profession, trade, or group of people; words not commonly used outside the context in which they are normally found and with whom they are associated.

Linear

Relating to lines; a way of explaining information logically and/or sequentially; can refer to the chronological relaying of information.

Logos

Logos is a rhetorical appeal to reason or logic such that the apparent truth of the argument is what is persuasive. It is one of three types of rhetorical appeals described by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle.

Medium

The way in which information is shared; how knowledge is presented to an audience. Examples of different mediums include an essay, article, research paper, video, song, social media post, or painting.

Metaphor

A figure of speech that involves an implied or indirect comparison between two things that are not similar. For example, "you are my sunshine" is a metaphor.

Mode

The manner or way in which something is done or completed; method, process, or technique; the form that something takes.

Nebulous

Cloudy, hazy, or murky; ambiguous, imprecise, or vague.

News source

A news source is a story or article that runs in a journalism publication or outlet. News sources tend to be about current events, but there are also opinion pieces and investigative journalism pieces that may cover broader topics over a longer period of time.

Objective

Impartiality or fairness; dispassionate or detached. Also refers to the goal, aim, or intention that someone or a group of people hope to achieve.

Omit

To remove, delete, eliminate, leave out, or fail to mention a particular piece of information; can be done intentionally or unintentionally.

Open access

Open access is a term that identifies information that licensed to be available without a fee to the user. Open access content makes information that would commonly be kept behind a paywall available to the public at no cost, and often gives the public rights to use that content in different ways (such as redistribution). Although many materials are available to view online for free, copyright typically limits how the user can use that content.

Orator

An eloquent speaker who seeks to convince the public, usually in a professional capacity. Modern day orators include political and religious leaders. In ancient Greece, an orator was a celebrated public figure who was considered well educated and a master of rhetoric. *Oration* is a formal public speech usually given in a stylized or elevated manner; examples include a religious sermon, a presidential address, or a graduation speech.

Parameter

The bounds, limits, or confines of something.

Paraphrase

To take someone else's words or ideas, such as a quotation, and to rephrase it in different words. Unlike a summary which is a holistic view of someone else's work, a paraphrase refers to a specific part of someone's work.

Phenomenon

A remarkable or notable occurrence or event, especially one that is rare or exceptional in nature. The plural of phenomenon is *phenomena*.

Plato

A classical Greek philosopher and orator who was born in the 420s B.C. and died in 348/347 B.C.; the exact dates of his birth and death are unrecorded. A student of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle, he is known for his dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy as well as his theory of Forms. He founded the Academy, the first institution of higher education in Western history. Plato continues to be extremely influential in scholarship today and is considered the founder of Western religious thought and spirituality.

Popular

Popular sources are texts that are intended for broad, or popular, audiences. Magazine articles, news stories, blog posts, non-academic books, and podcasts are all examples of popular sources. Popular sources are not peer-reviewed, but some can be high quality.

Pose

To present or put forward an idea.

Premise

The basic assumptions or understanding on which an argument is based or from which conclusions are drawn. A *major premise* is a statement of universal truth or common knowledge. A *minor premise* is a statement related to a major premise but concerns a specific situation.

Process

The method or operation by which something is done or accomplished; a series of continuous actions that result in the achievement of a goal. The *writing process* refers to the sequence of steps that result in an essay, research paper, or other piece of writing.

Prolific

The production or presence of large quantities or amounts of something that contain a high quality.

Prose

Writing that is produced in sentence form; the opposite of poetry, verse, or song. Some of the most common types of prose include research papers, essays, articles, novels, and short stories.

Proximity

To be close to, next to, or adjacent to; nearness or closeness.

Qualitative

Research that is based on the interpretation of open-ended, non-numeric data, such as writings, interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Quantitative

Research that is based on numerical data and analyzing it using statistical or mathematical analyses.

Query

With relation to a database, a query is a call for results. Most times a query is a search term entered into a search box.

Rational

Logical, reasonable, or sensible; having good sense; to be sane or lucid; usually refers to a state of mind.

Rationale

The explanation, justification, or motivation for something; the reasons why something was done.

Rebuttal

A counterstatement or counterargument; to offer evidence that opposes the argument that is being made.

Recipient

A receiver or beneficiary.

Recursive

A form of returning back to or reoccurrence, usually as a procedure or practice that can be repeated.

Reference librarian

A librarian who specializes in helping the public find information. In academic librarians, reference librarians often have subject specialties.

Reiterate

Repeat, rehash, or restate something that has already been conveyed; to echo a sentiment or idea that was stated earlier in a different way or manner.

Repercussions

Consequences; the impact, usually negative, of an action or event.

Replicate

To copy, duplicate, or reproduce.

Research methodology

The design of a research study, including its theoretical foundation. This section often includes a description of the research methods, or how the research data was collected and analyzed.

Resonate

To resound, reverberate, or vibrate; to produce a positive emotional response about a subject.

Revision

An altered version of a written work. *Revising* means to rewrite in order to improve and make corrections. Unlike editing, which involves minor changes, revisions include major and noticeable changes to a written work.

Rubric

The explicit set of criteria, point distribution, and expectations set forth by a grader. A rubric is almost always standardized out of fairness for all the people whose work is being graded.

Scholarly

When something is described as scholarly, that means that has been written by and for the academic community. The term scholarly is commonly used as shorthand to indicate that information that has been *peer reviewed* or examined by other experts of the same academic field or discipline. Sometimes, the terms *academic,* scholarly, and peer reviewed are confused as synonyms; peer reviewed is a narrower term referring to an item that has been reviewed by experts in the field prior to publication, while academic is a broader term that also includes works that are written by and for academics, but that have not been peer reviewed.

Search engine

An online software tool used to find information on the web. Many popular online search engines return query results by using algorithms to return probable desired information.

Secondary Sources

Sources that provide information on a primary source; the presentation of non-original data; the analysis of someone else's research.

Senior Thesis

A lengthy research paper written as part of a graduation requirement for someone who is close to completing their undergraduate requirements for their major and is in their final year of undergraduate study. Like a master's thesis or a doctoral dissertation, a senior thesis is written to demonstrate mastery over specific subject matter.

Sequential

Sequence; the order in which things occur.

Sophists

A group of ancient Greek philosophers, rhetoricians, teachers, and orators who were accused by their contemporaries, including Plato, of being more concerned with winning arguments than discussing the truth.

Stagnant

Motionless, inactive, idle, or sluggish; a lack of development, growth, or advancement.

Stoic

Detached, aloof, apathetic, or unemotional.

Style

The choices that a writer makes in order to make their argument or express their ideas; putting different elements of writing together in order to present an argument. Style refers to the way an argument is framed, written, and presented.

Subjective

To take the position or side of the subject (rather than the object) which is the one doing the observing (rather than being observed); the belief, preference, or understanding of an individual.

Substantiate

Justify, affirm, or corroborate; to show evidence of; to back up a statement, idea, or argument.

Subtle

Delicate, faint, or mild; requiring discernment, perception, or awareness to detect.

Succinct

To express an idea in as few words as possible; concise, brief, or to the point.

Summary

A brief and concise statement or series of statements that outlines the main point(s) of a longer work. To *summarize* is to create a brief and concise statement or series of statements that outlines the main point(s) of a longer work.

Superlative

The highest level, point, or degree of comparison almost to the point of exaggeration. Examples of words considered superlatives include: magnificent, transcendent, outstanding, peerless, superb, and unparalleled.

Syllogism

A type of logic or reasoning associated with Aristotle involving a conclusion based on statements called premises which lead to a conclusion. A major premise is a statement of universal truth or common knowledge. A minor premise is a statement related to a major premise but concerns a specific situation. Together, major premises and minor premises form a conclusion. For example, "all dogs are mammals (major premise) and all dogs are mammals (minor premise), so, therefore, all dogs are animals (conclusion)."

Syntax

The order, pattern, structure, or arrangement of words in a sentence or phrase that is deliberately used by a writer.

Synthesis

The fusion, combination, or integration of two or more ideas or objects that create new ideas or objects.

Testimony

Verbal or written proof from an individual; the statement made by a witness that is understood to be truth. Testimony can be a formal process, such as a testimony made in official court proceedings, or an informal process, such as claiming that a company's product or service works.

Thesis

A statement, usually one sentence, that summarizes an argument that will later be explained, expanded upon, and developed in a longer essay or research paper. In undergraduate writing, a thesis statement is often found in the introductory paragraph of an essay. The plural of thesis is *theses*.

Tone

The feeling or attitude of the writer which can be inferred by the reader, usually conveyed through vocabulary, word choice, and phrasing; associated with emotion.

Topic Sentence

The sentence that relays the main idea or the point of the paragraph in which it is contained; usually the first sentence of a body paragraph which gives the reader an idea of what ideas will be discussed in that paragraph.

Trade secret

An intellectual property right concerning secret information, including processes, techniques, or formulas, among other things, that has an economic benefit to the rights holder by virtue of it being unknown to others. One might think of soda formulas, for example.

Trademark

An intellectual property right that relates to a symbol or slogan that represents a company, product, or service.

Trait

Qualities, features, or attributes relating to something, particularly personal characteristics.

Transitions

In writing, transitions refer to words or phrases that help with the flow of an argument; these words and phrases link the ideas in one sentence to those of another sentence.

Trope

A stereotypical or predictable literary convention or device such as a plot point (the damsel in distress), a figure of speech (metaphor, idiom, etc.), or theme or motif (red roses represent true love).

Vehement

Passionate, opinionated, or zealous; demonstrating strong emotions or feelings.

Verbiage

Use of words, particularly referring to the overuse or redundancy of them.

Vital

Necessary or critical for existence; indispensable or integral.

Voice

An ambiguous or amorphous quality to writing comprising the vocabulary, word choice,

tone, point of view, syntax, attitude, emotion, and style of a writer. Because writing is a personal and individual exercise, every writer has their own unique voice.