

Academic Writing for Success Canadian Edition 2.0

ACADEMIC WRITING FOR SUCCESS CANADIAN EDITION 2.0

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Loyalist College
Belleville On



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FORWARD

Academic Writing for Success – Canadian Edition 2.0 is a text that provides instruction in steps, builds writing, reading and critical thinking skills. This book addresses each concept with clear, concise, and effective examples that are immediately reinforced with exercises and opportunities to demonstrate learning.

Each chapter allows students to demonstrate mastery of the principles of quality writing. This book addresses a range of writing levels and abilities, helping each student prepare for the work they will do in other courses. Constant reinforcement is provided through examples and exercises, and the text involves students in the learning process through reading, problem solving, practicing, listening, and experiencing the writing process.

Thought provoking scenarios and examples provide challenges and opportunities for collaboration and interaction. These exercises are especially helpful for working with groups of students. Clear exercises teach sentence and paragraph writing skills that lead to common English composition and research essays and reports.

Features

- Each chapter begins with an opportunity to reflect on the subject with a number of questions.
- Exercises are integrated into each segment. Each concept is immediately reinforced as soon as it is introduced to keep students on track.
- Exercises are designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration. This allows for peer-peer engagement, development of interpersonal skills, and promotion of critical thinking skills.
- Exercises that involve self editing and collaborative writing are featured. This feature develops and promotes student interest in the knowledge areas and content
- Each chapter ends with opportunities for further reflection, with activities that can be performed independently or during class time, based on instructor preferences.

Inclusivity Statement

This book takes an inclusive approach to communication. It has the following goals:

- To meet the needs of a diverse student population, including English language learners, students from diverse cultural backgrounds, mature students, and students who are LGBTQ+, neurodiverse and/or disabled. The author has taken care to include activities, examples and reflection exercises tailored to a wide range of students, and to collaborate with communicators from diverse backgrounds. This commitment extends to accessibility compliance.
- To encourage students to reflect on their own attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about communication, and to

connect their learning to other courses and/or their workplace experience. Each chapter begins with a ‘Explore Your Understanding’ section so that students can reflect individually or in a learning journal and ends with “Activities for Further Reflection” that an instructor can assign.

- To prepare students for a diverse workforce by including the voices of communicators from many different backgrounds.

Thank You

This book is a remix of two Open Educational Resources, *Writing for Success – 1st Canadian HSP Edition* by Tara Horkoff and *Business Writing for Everyone* by Arley Cruthers. Both textbooks were made in collaboration with other authors and student editors and were remixed with additions by Carrie Fraser. I would like to thank the previous authors for providing such excellent resources to build this book from.

I would like to thank Tricia Bonner – Flexible Learning and Open Education Strategist, Rachel Hewton – reviewer, Kathleen Rankine – Faculty, and Lauren Stitt – student reviewer, for their contributions to this project. I would also like to thank Neil Kerby, Amanda Baskwill, and Tom Deakin for their support of this project.

ATTRIBUTION

Academic Writing for Success – Canadian Edition 2.0 was created by Carrie Fraser. It is a remix of two Open Educational Resources, *Business Communication For Everyone* written by Arley Cruthers, and *Writing for Success – Canadian Edition* by Tara Horkoff. The content from these two sources was modified, and some content was removed from each textbook. Additions were written by Carrie Fraser. Chapters from the previous books were adapted and remixed from other open textbooks, and when this has happened, it is indicated at the end of each chapter. This textbook is licensed under a [Creative Commons-Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

In *Academic Writing for Success – Canadian Edition*, examples have been changed to Canadian references, and information throughout the book, as applicable, has been revised to reflect Canadian content and language. The author has also changed names to reflect her classroom composition and has added examples that reflect her students' diverse experiences. Gender-neutral language (they/their) has been used intentionally. In addition, while general ideas and content may remain unchanged from the sources from which this adapted version is based, word choice, phrasing, and organization of content within each chapter may have changed to reflect this author's stylistic preferences.

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The textbook has been designed for easy accessibility. It includes:

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- **Accessible images.** All images in this text that convey information have alternative text. Images that are decorative have empty alternative text.
- **Accessible links.** All links use descriptive link text.

The following considerations have been made for each element:

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- Content is organized under headings and subheadings that are used sequentially.

Images

- Images that convey information include alternative text descriptions.
- Images and text do not rely on colour to convey information.
- Images that are purely decorative include alternative text that explains that they are only decorative.

Tables

- Tables include row and/or column headers that have the correct scope assigned.
- Tables include titles or captions.
- Tables do not have merged or split cells.
- Tables have adequate cell padding.

Links

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At Loyalist, we empower our students with wraparound support services and hands-on training to succeed on any path they choose. Our academic programs are responsive and innovative, designed to solve pressing social and economic challenges and meet the evolving needs of our regional industry and community partners. Our graduates enter the workforce equipped with the knowledge they need to be better global citizens, and with future-focused skills to lead change in their fields. With a presence in Belleville, Bancroft, Port Hope, Tyendinaga and Toronto, we believe our institutional responsibility extends beyond the classroom to seeing the big picture for the communities we serve. Our expertise in applied research and deep connections to local industry support economic development, to the benefit of businesses, entrepreneurs, changemakers and innovators. Our commitment to decolonization, and the pursuit of a more inclusive, equitable world, means we hold ourselves accountable to the diverse perspectives, cultures and experiences that shape our communities.

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- **HTML.** An HTML file can be opened in a browser. It has very little style so it doesn't look very nice, but some people might find it useful.

For more information about the accessibility of this textbook, see the Accessibility Statement.

How can I use the different formats?

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

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The online version of this textbook includes interactive H5P activities that will give you immediate feedback. If you are using a print, PDF, or eBook version of this textbook, interactivity is not supported. Instead, offline versions of the activities are provided where possible, as well as a link to where you can access the interactive content online.

Even if you decide to use a PDF or a print copy to access the textbook, you can access the webbook and download any other formats at any time.

CHAPTER 1: DRAFTING A PROFESSIONAL EMAIL



“Aerial view of woman using computer laptop and a smartphone on wooden table” by Rawpixel Ltd is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

In this section, you will:

- Examine tips for writing professional emails.
- Discuss instant messaging in the workplace.
- Evaluate the rules of Netiquette and why they are important.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- Have you ever written or received an email that resulted in a miscommunication? What could have been done differently?
- How do you determine which emails you should read first? Are there emails you decide not to open? Why?
- What do you think are important rules or guidelines to follow when instant messaging and posting online?

WRITING EMAILS

Most students and workers use email on a daily basis. While it may be used like text messaging, or synchronous chatting, and it can be delivered to a cell phone, email remains an asynchronous communication tool. In business, email has largely replaced print hard copy letters for external (outside the company) correspondence, as well as taking the place of memos for internal (within the company) communication (Guffey, 2008). Email can be useful for messages that have more content than a text message, but it is still best used for fairly brief messages.

Emails may be informal in personal contexts, but this form of communication requires attention to detail, awareness that your email reflects you, and a professional tone so that it may be forwarded to any third party if needed. Email often serves to exchange information within organizations. Although email may have an informal feel, remember that when used for business, it needs to convey professionalism and respect. Never write or send anything that you wouldn't want read in public or in front of a supervisor or manager.

TIPS FOR WRITING EMAILS

If you're struggling to decide what to include in an email, err on the side of not wasting the reader's time. Many readers get hundreds of emails a day. Readers will usually spend only a few seconds scanning an email for relevant information before moving on to the next one.

Unless your email is sensitive or you are breaking bad news, it's nearly always a good idea to state the main point of the email clearly and to clearly tell the audience what you want them to do.

It may be helpful for you to think of this as building a frame around your email. In the first part of the frame, you open by telling the reader why you're writing. Then, in the body, you give the main message. In the bottom part of the frame, you end by telling the reader what to do next.

Here are some more tips for sending successful emails:

- Proper salutations should demonstrate respect and avoid mix-ups in case a message is accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. For example, use a salutation like “Dear Ms. X” (external) or “Hi Barry” (internal).
- Subject lines should be clear, brief, and specific. This helps the recipient understand the essence of the message. For example, “Reference List Assignment Question” or “COMM1048 Textbook Information.”
- Close with a signature. Identify yourself by creating a signature block that automatically contains your name and business contact information. It is becoming increasingly common for businesses to add First Nations Land Acknowledgements to their email signatures.
- Be brief.
- Use a clear format. Include line breaks between sentences or divide your message into brief paragraphs for ease of reading.
- Your email should have one purpose. If you find yourself covering more than one topic in your email, you should consider sending multiple emails so that your reader does not miss important information.
- Reread, revise, and review. Catch and correct spelling and grammar mistakes before you press “send.” It will take more time and effort to undo the problems caused by a hasty, poorly written email than to get it right the first time.
- Reply promptly. Watch out for an emotional response—never reply in anger—but make a habit of replying to all emails within 24 hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information in 48 or 72 hours.
- Use “Reply All” sparingly. Do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial email unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.
- If you include a link, test it to make sure it is complete.
- Announce email attachments in your message.

- Give feedback or follow up. If you don't get a response in 24 hours, e-mail or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message, so your recipient may never have received it.

Sample Standard Email

To: Harriet Smith, Professor, Loyalist College

From: Prabhjot Kaur, Student

Sent: Monday, 10/25/2023 8:14 AM

Subject: Email Assignment – COMM1048

Harriet,

I am a student in your COMM1048 College Writing course and I have a few questions about the upcoming Email Assignment.

Which attachments would you like included on the email? I know that you would like a copy of our certificate, but was wondering if there is anything else you would like attached. I am also wondering what the due date for the assignment is.

I appreciate your time and look forward to receiving your reply.

Thank you,

Prabhjot

Prabhjot Kaur, Student, DSW Program

Loyalist College

(111) 222-3333 ext. 4444

In today's job market, writing emails has become a means by which many people find employment. Emails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers' inboxes are inundated with countless emails daily. If even the subject line of an email contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked and someone else's email will take priority.

The best thing to do after you proofread your email to an employer and run the spell checker is to have someone go over it with you.

Test Your Knowledge

To test your knowledge, let's edit the email that Philip sent at the beginning of the chapter.



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=26#h5p-1>

INSTANT MESSAGES & NETIQUETTE

Writing Instant Messages

It may seem weird to learn about instant messaging in a textbook, given that you probably are very familiar with it. It is important to think about instant messaging in this context because it is transforming workplaces, and major differences exist between using instant messaging with friends and using it with colleagues. Fans of instant messaging say it reduces the high volume of emails, allows people to get their questions answered quickly and enables people across multiple offices to talk without the need for meetings. Opponents say that instant messaging is distracting, that it results in too many side conversations and it's not a secure medium.

To use instant messaging effectively, you should:

- Avoid sending anything you wouldn't be okay with others reading. Sometimes, miscommunications happen because people use too many text-message acronyms, which makes their messages seem sloppy and confusing. When in doubt, err on the side of speaking clearly and plainly.
- Respond promptly.
- Adjust your tone and level of formality to your audience. Before communicating on a new channel, take a minute to watch your colleagues interact. How do people use grammar? Do they use GIFs? Is every message on-topic or do people chat about their lives? Every organization has a slightly different culture around Slack. Often miscommunications arise because people treat Slack like Facebook or Twitter.
- Consider who needs to see your message. Are you posting in the right channel?
- Since your coworkers might get notifications on their phones, only post during business hours.
- Don't message everyone in the group unless you really need to talk to everyone in the group.
- Don't criticize people. In fact, you should usually keep your tone positive.

Netiquette

We create personal pages, post messages, and interact via mediated technologies as a normal part of our lives, but how we conduct ourselves can leave a lasting image, literally. Several years ago, when the internet was a new phenomenon, Virginia Shea laid out a series of ground rules for communication online that continue to serve us today.

VIRGINIA SHEA'S RULES OF NETIQUETTE

- Remember the human on the other side of the electronic communication.
- Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life.
- Know where you are in cyberspace.
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
- Share expert knowledge.
- Respect other people's privacy.
- Don't abuse your power.
- Be forgiving of other people's mistakes (Shea, 1994).

One of the really difficult things about this particular moment in workplace communication is that many people have to be online for their jobs, but risk online is unevenly distributed. For example, one 11-year study found that 71% of victims in online harassment cases were women¹. Racialized people also experience more online harassment. A Pew study found that 25% of black Americans had been harassed because of their race online.² LGBTQ2S+ youth are also three times more likely to experience online harassment.³

When you post online, it's great to upload standards of professionalism, but it's also important to think about the wider context around you. For example, you might use Twitter to follow experts in your field from diverse backgrounds and open yourself up to perspectives you might not have considered.

1. <https://womensmediacenter.com/speech-project/research-statistics>

2. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/>

3. <https://www.glsen.org/news/out-online-experiences-lgbt-youth-internet>

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Emails have a wide range of purposes. If you're sending a longer email, consider using an email frame that tells the reader why you're writing, provides follow-up details, then ends by telling the reader what to do next.
- When using instant messaging in the workplace, use clear, plain language and don't say anything that you wouldn't be comfortable with someone else reading. Be aware of the conventions of different instant messaging channels.
- The rules of netiquette are important to foster a positive and respectful online environment, promoting effective communication and collaboration among colleagues.

Activities for Further Reflection

- Consider how you would instant message the following people: your parent, your boss, your child, your best friend, your coworker. Reflect on what is different about the way that you would communicate to these people?
- Draft an email to one of your peers explaining an upcoming assignment. Be sure to include all elements of a professional email.
- Set up an email signature for your student email including all elements discussed in this chapter.

References

Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2010). *Business communication essentials: A skills-based approach to vital business English* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Guffey, M. (2008). *Essentials of business communication* (7th ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Shea, V. (1994). *Netiquette*. San Francisco, CA: Albion Books.

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CHAPTER 2: RESEARCHING WITH INTEGRITY



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In this section, you will:

- Define academic integrity
- Identify strategies for citing, including in-text citations and references
- Evaluate sources for trustworthiness
- Identify when to summarize, paraphrase, and directly quote information from research sources.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

- Why do you think the rules that we have around source use exist? Why do we cite sources?
- How does your culture handle using other people's ideas and words? Who "owns" an idea? How do you respectfully use someone's words?
- What questions do you have about citations?
- What does "academic integrity" mean to you?
- How have you found sources to support your research in the past?

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Let's take a look at a common definition of plagiarism. This one comes from Loyalist College's AOP 216:

Presenting and using another's published or unpublished work, including theories, concepts, data, source material, methodologies or findings, including graphs or images, as one's own, without appropriate referencing and, if required, without permission.

Plagiarism can be intentional (knowingly using someone else's work and presenting it as your own) or unintentional (inaccurately or inadequately citing ideas and words from a source).

While academic integrity calls for work resulting from your own effort, scholarship requires that you learn from others. So in the world of "academic scholarship" you are actually expected to learn new things from others AND come to new insights on your own. There is an implicit understanding that as a student you will be both using other's knowledge as well as your own insights to create new scholarship. To do this in a way that meets academic integrity standards you must acknowledge the part of your work that develops from others' efforts. You do this by citing the work of others. You plagiarize when you fail to acknowledge the work of others and do not follow appropriate citation guidelines.

Before we talk about how to cite, let's take a minute to think about the stakes. Unfortunately, citation is an area where the stakes are high during your college career. As a student, you're expected to learn by making mistakes. However, citation mistakes can have heavy consequences for students who commit what are called academic integrity violations.

You must take full responsibility for your work, acknowledge your own efforts, and acknowledge the contributions of others' efforts. Working/writing with integrity requires accurately representing what you contributed as well as acknowledging how others have influenced your work.

It's worth noting that other cultures have different – equally valid – definitions of academic integrity. By making you aware of what we mean by academic integrity in this context, you can be aware of the expectations that are being placed on you as a student in Canada.



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=41#h5p-2>

H5P: Plagiarism

1. Jane read three articles late last night. She includes some details from them in her essay, but she can't remember which information came from which article. She includes the article information generally at the end of her essay to be safe.
a) plagiarism b) not plagiarism
2. Eloise is stressed out and doesn't know where to start with her paper. She finds one online that looks a lot like the topic she is supposed to write about. She gathers some ideas from it, and sets about writing her own paper. Some of the main points she examines were in the paper she found online. She doesn't disclose that in her References list.
a) plagiarism b) not plagiarism
3. Lamar feels in over his head about his topic. He knows his instructor doesn't like Wikipedia, but he reads its article on his topic to get an overview. When he does, he finds lots of interesting articles from reputable sources in the References section. He starts looking them up, and he's suddenly really excited as he learns about his topic more deeply.
a) plagiarism b) not plagiarism

Answer Key

1. A

2. A

3. B

REFERENCING OTHER'S WORK

What is Referencing?

Imagine that you've just arrived for a meeting about a group project. You and your friend are early, so you chat about the project.

"I think we should do our project about caring for aging parents," you say. Your friend tells you this is a great idea.

The rest of your group members arrive, and you begin to brainstorm ideas for your project. Before you can share your idea, your friend speaks up.

"I've been thinking that we should do our project on how to care for aging parents," they say.

Everyone thinks it's a great idea and they compliment your friend.

If this happened to you, how would you feel? Probably, you would feel angry that your friend passed your idea off as their own, even if they didn't use your exact words. Would you feel differently if the friend had told the group that it was your idea? Probably, right?

Referencing, also known as citing, is giving credit. This is done with your in-text citations and reference page. If your sources are well-cited, you've told the audience whose ideas/words belong to whom and exactly where to go to find those words.

Think of referencing as a way of saying thank you. Lots of scholars, like Jesse Stommel and Pete Rorabaugh, say that it's easier to understand citation when you think of it as saying thank you to those who have given you great ideas. In a blog post, Stommel says no one has truly original ideas, but that we should practice "citation, generosity, connection, and collaboration" to work with sources ethically.¹

Why Cite Sources?

There are many good reasons to cite sources.

1. <https://hybridpedagogy.org/the-four-noble-virtues-of-digital-media-citation/>

To Avoid Plagiarism & Maintain Academic Integrity

Misrepresenting your academic achievements by not giving credit to others indicates a lack of academic integrity. This is not only looked down upon by the scholarly community, but it is also punished. When you are a student this could mean a failing grade or even expulsion from college.

To Acknowledge the Work of Others

One major purpose of citations is to simply provide credit where it is due. When you provide accurate citations, you are acknowledging both the hard work that has gone into producing research and the person(s) who performed that research.

To Provide Credibility to Your Work & to Place Your Work in Context

Providing accurate citations puts your work and ideas into an academic context. They tell your reader that you've done your research and know what others have said about your topic. Not only do citations provide context for your work but they also lend credibility and authority to your claims.

To Help Your Future Researching Self & Other Researchers Easily Locate Sources

Having accurate citations will help you as a researcher and writer keep track of the sources and information you find so that you can easily find the source again. Accurate citations may take some effort to produce, but they will save you time in the long run. So think of proper citation as a gift to your future researching self!

Ethical Citation Beyond Giving Credit

Citation is also a time to think about what kind of sources you value and who you cite. One way to ensure that you have a thorough view of the issue is to look intentionally for scholars from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Sometimes, when you're busy, it's easy to reach for the first few sources that pop up in the database. But if all of these scholars are of the same demographic, (for example, if they're all white males between 45 and 60), you're likely missing an important perspective. Being intentional about who you cite will help you do more thorough analysis.

Challenges in Referencing

Besides the clarifications and difficulties around citing that we have already considered, there are additional challenges that might make knowing when and how to cite difficult for you.

You Learned How to Write In A Different School System.

Citation practices are not universal. Different countries and cultures approach using sources in different ways. If you're new to the Canadian school system, you might have learned a different way of citing. For example, some countries have a more communal approach to sources. Others see school as "not real life," so you don't need to cite sources in the same way that you would on the job.

Not Really Understanding the Material You're Using

If you are working in a new field or subject area, you might have difficulty understanding the information from other scholars, thus making it difficult to know how to paraphrase or summarize that work properly. It can be tempting to change just one or two words in a sentence, but this is still plagiarism.

Running Out of Time

When you are a student taking many classes, working and/or taking care of family members, it may be hard to devote the time needed to doing good scholarship and accurately representing the sources you have used. Research takes time. The sooner you can start and the more time you can devote to it, the better your work will be.

When to Cite Sources

Citation and source use are all about balance. If you don't use enough sources, you might struggle to make a thorough argument. If you cite too much, you won't leave room for your own voice in your writing.

To illustrate this point, think of a lawyer arguing a case in a trial. If the lawyer just talks to the jury and doesn't call any witnesses, they probably won't win the case. After all, a lawyer isn't an expert in forensics or accident reconstruction or Internet fraud. The lawyer also wasn't there when the incident occurred. That's where witnesses come in. The witnesses have knowledge that the lawyer doesn't.

But if the lawyer just lets the witnesses talk and sits there quietly, they'll likely also lose the case. That's because the lawyer is the one who's making the overall argument. The lawyer asks the witnesses questions and shows how the testimony of different witnesses piece together to prove the case.

To cite sources, you should make two things clear:

- The difference between your words and the source's words.
- The difference between your ideas and the source's ideas.

This diagram illustrates the difference:

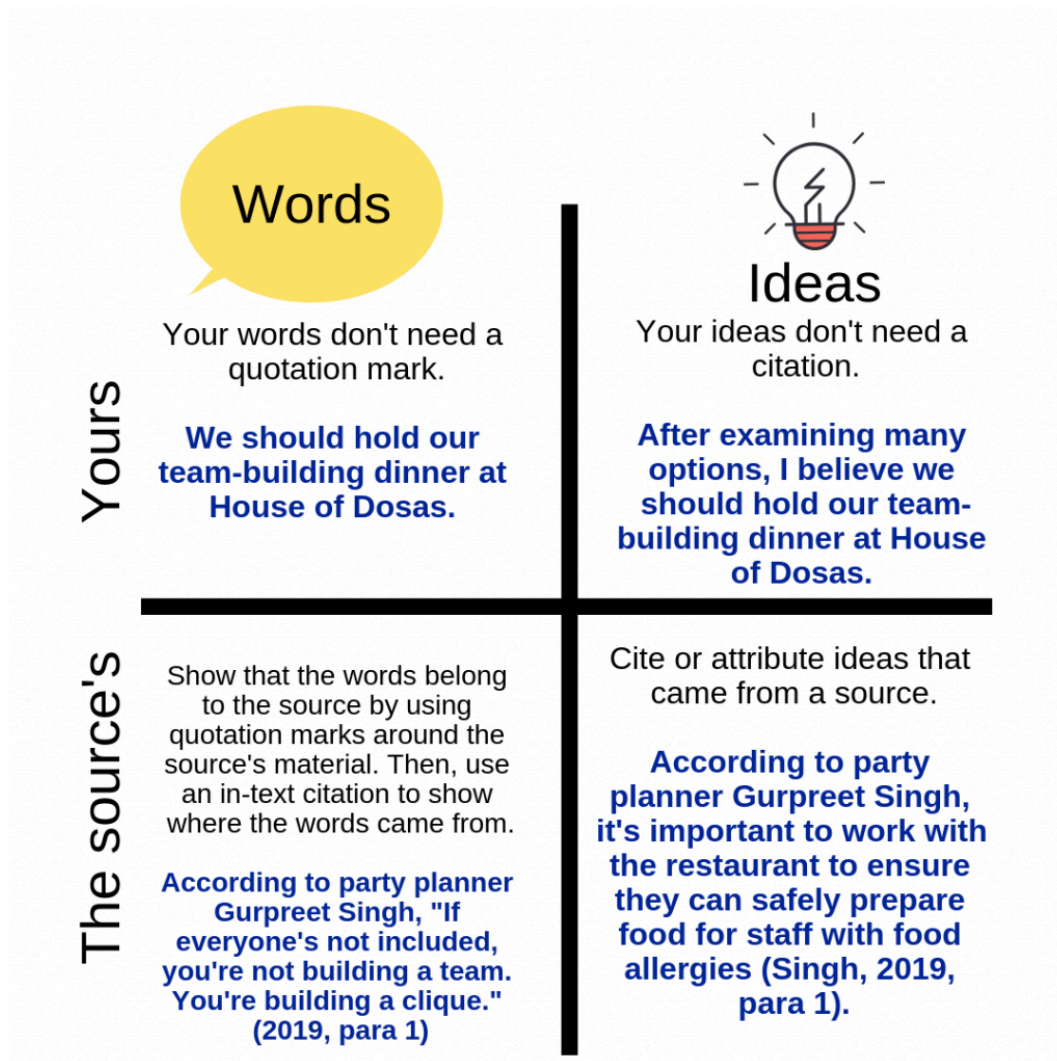


Figure 2.1 Description of when to use quotations and citations between your and the source's words and ideas. [\[Image Description\]](#)

Attributing A Source's Words

When you quote someone in your document, you're basically passing the microphone to them. Inviting another voice into your piece means that the **way** that person said something is important. Maybe that person is an expert and their words are a persuasive piece of evidence. Maybe you're using the words as an example. Either way, you'll likely do some sort of analysis on the quote.

When you use the source's words, put quotation marks around them. This creates a visual separation between what you say and what your source says. You also don't just want to drop the quote into the document with no explanation.

Instead, you should build a “frame” around the quote by explaining who said it and why it’s important. In short, you surround the other person’s voice with your own voice.

Tip: The longer the source, the more analysis you’re likely going to do.

Here’s an example of a way to integrate a quote within a paragraph.

According to Haudenosaunee writer Alicia Elliot, “We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages.” (Elliot, 2019) **Here, Elliot shows that when Indigenous people have the opportunity to learn Indigenous languages, which for generations were intentionally suppressed by the Canadian government, they can connect with their culture in a new way.**

As you can see, Elliot’s words are important. If you tried to paraphrase them, you’d lose the meaning. Elliot is also a well-known writer, so adding her voice into the document adds credibility. If you’re writing about Indigenous people, it’s also important to include the voices of Indigenous people in your work.

You can see that in this example, the author doesn’t just pass the microphone to Alicia Elliot. Instead, they surround the quote with their own words (bolded), explaining who said the quote and why it’s important.

Attributing the Source's Ideas

When the source’s ideas are important, you’ll want to paraphrase or summarize. For example, Elliot goes on to say that when over half of Indigenous people in a community speak an Indigenous language, the suicide rate goes down (Elliot, 2019). Here, it’s the idea that’s important, not the words, so you should **paraphrase** it.

What is paraphrasing? Paraphrasing is when you restate an idea in your own words. It’s this last bit — the “own words” part – that is confusing. What counts as your own words?

When you’re paraphrasing, you should ask yourself, “Have I restated this in a way that shows that I understand it?” If you simply swap out a few words for synonyms, you haven’t shown that you understand the idea. For example, let’s go back to that Alicia Elliot quote: “We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages.” What if I swapped out a few words so it said “We know our cultures have **value** and **importance**, and that culture lives and **exhales** inside our languages.”?

Does this show that I understand the quote? No. Elliot composed that line with a lot of precision and thoughtfulness. Switching a few words around actually shows disrespect for the care she took with her language.

Instead, paraphrase by not looking at the source material. Put down the book or turn off your computer monitor, then describe the idea back as if you were speaking to a friend.

Here’s another example from Alicia Elliot’s book *A Mind Spread Out On the Ground*. See if you can paraphrase it. First, read the quote:

I've heard people say that when you learn a people's language, you learn their culture. It tells you how they think of the world, how they experience it. That's why translation is so difficult—you have to take one way of seeing the world and translate it to another, while still piecing the words together so they make sense. (Elliot, 2019)

Before you paraphrase it, think about what it means to you. Maybe you've had the experience of learning the slang or curse words in a new language and finding out what that culture sees as valuable or taboo. Maybe you've felt frustrated by not being able to make yourself clear in a different language. Maybe you've had to translate for a friend or family member, and haven't been able to exactly capture what was said.

Now, pretend that someone asked you what Alicia Elliot said. How would you describe it?

Maybe you wrote, "According to Alicia Elliot, it's hard to translate from one language to another because a language is about so much more than just the words on a page." Maybe you wrote, "According to Alicia Elliot, knowing another language shows how other people see the world." Paraphrasing this way not only helps you analyze the quote, but also gives Alicia Elliot credit for her ideas.

What's the Difference Between Paraphrasing and Summarizing?

When you paraphrase, you take a single point within a source and restate it. What you did above is paraphrasing. Usually, the paraphrased version is about the same length as the original source. The goal of paraphrasing is usually to take someone else's idea and restate it so that it fits the tone of whatever you're writing. For example, you might take a complicated sentence from an academic journal and restate it so that your classmates could more easily understand it.

When you summarize, you are simply trying to capture the main points of a larger source in a short way. Your summary will be shorter than the original source. For example, an abstract summarizes the contents of an entire report or article. You might read a book and summarize it by telling friends the main points.

What Information Do I Cite?

Citing sources is often depicted as a straightforward, rule-based practice. In fact, there are many grey areas around citation, and learning how to apply citation guidelines takes practice and education. If you are confused by it, you are not alone – in fact you might be doing some good thinking. Here are some guidelines to help you navigate citation practices.

Cite when you are directly quoting. This is the easiest rule to understand. If you are stating word for word what someone else has already written, you must put quotes around those words and you must give credit to the original

author. Not doing so would mean that you are letting your reader believe these words are your own and represent your own effort.

Cite when you are summarizing and paraphrasing. This is a trickier area to understand. First of all, summarizing and paraphrasing are two related practices but they are not the same. Again, summarizing is when you read a text, consider the main points, and provide a shorter version of what you learned. Paraphrasing is when you restate what the original author said in your own words and in your own tone. Both summarizing and paraphrasing require good writing skills and an accurate understanding of the material you are trying to convey. Summarizing and paraphrasing are not easy to do when you are a beginning academic researcher, but these skills become easier to perform over time with practice.

Cite when you are citing something that is highly debatable. For example, if you want to claim that an oil pipeline is necessary for economic development, you will have to contend with those who say that it produces few jobs and has a high risk of causing an oil spill that would be devastating to wildlife and tourism. To do so, you'll need experts on your side.

When Don't You Cite?

Don't cite when what you are saying is your own insight. Research involves forming opinions and insights around what you learn. You may be citing several sources that have helped you learn, but at some point you are integrating your own opinion, conclusion, or insight into the work. The fact that you are NOT citing it helps the reader understand that this portion of the work is your unique contribution developed through your own research efforts.

Don't cite when you are stating common knowledge. What is common knowledge is sometimes difficult to discern. Generally quick facts like historical dates or events are not cited because they are common knowledge.

Examples of information that would not need to be cited include:

- Partition in India happened on August 15th, 1947.
- Vancouver is the 8th biggest city in Canada.

Some quick facts, such as statistics, are trickier. For example, the number of gun-related deaths per year probably should be cited, because there are a lot of ways this number could be determined (does the number include murder only, or suicides and accidents, as well?) and there might be different numbers provided by different organizations, each with an agenda around gun laws.

A guideline that can help with determining whether or not to cite facts is to determine whether the same data is repeated in multiple sources. If it is not, it is best to cite.

The other thing that makes this determination difficult might be that what seems new and insightful to you might be common knowledge to an expert in the field. You have to use your best judgment, and probably err on the side of over-citing, as you are learning to do academic research. You can seek the advice of your instructor, a writing tutor, or a

librarian. Knowing what is and is not common knowledge is a practiced skill that gets easier with time and with your own increased knowledge.

When to Cite

Any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and the references. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite!



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H5P: To Cite or Not to Cite

For each example of a piece of evidence, state whether you need to cite or not cite the original source.

1. A general fact about the periodic table you found in an encyclopedia
 - A. do need to cite
 - B. don't need to cite
2. A brief summary of a study you read, written in your own words
 - A. do need to cite
 - B. don't need to cite
3. The dictionary definition of a key term
 - A. do need to cite
 - B. don't need to cite
4. A paraphrase of an idea in one of your source articles
 - A. do need to cite
 - B. don't need to cite

Answer Key

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. B | 3. B |
| 2. A | 4. A |

Image Description

Figure 2.1 image description: This chart illustrates the concept that you should use quotation marks and in-text citation to distinguish between the words of the source and your own words. Your words don't need a quotation mark – We should hold our team-building dinner at House of Dosas. The source's words do need a quotation mark. Show that the words belong to the source by using quotation marks around the source's material. Then, use an in-text citation to show where the words come from. According to party planner Gurpreet Singh, "If everyone's not included, you're not building a team. You're building a clique." (Singh, 2019) Your ideas do not need a citation – After examining many options, I believe we should hold our team-building dinner at House of Dosas. Cite or attribute ideas that came from a source – According to party planner Gurpreet Singh, it's important to work with the restaurant to ensure they can safely prepare food for staff with food allergies (Singh, 2019). [\[Return to Figure 2.1\]](#)

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

You will cite sources within the body of your paper and at the end of the paper in your references section. Within this course and for all of your college courses, you will need to follow APA referencing rules set out by the American Psychological Association (also known as APA style).

This section covers the details of in-text citations. You will learn how to format citations for different types of source materials, whether you are citing brief quotations, paraphrasing ideas, or quoting longer passages. You will also learn techniques you can use to introduce quoted and paraphrased material effectively. Keep this section handy as a reference to consult while writing the body of your paper.

Formatting Cited Material: The Basics

In-text citations usually provide the name of the author(s) and the year the source was published. For direct quotations, the page number must also be included. Use past tense verbs when introducing a quote: for example, “Smith found...,” not “Smith finds....”

Citing Sources in the Body of Your Paper

In-text citations document your sources within the body of your paper. These include two vital pieces of information: the author’s name and the year the source material was published. When quoting a print source, also include in the citation the page number where the quoted material originally appears. The page number follows the year in the in-text citation. *Page numbers are necessary only when content has been directly quoted, not when it has been summarized or paraphrased.*

Using Source Material in Your Paper

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

In your essay, the introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context. In the body paragraphs of your paper, you need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. You will use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material.

Summarizing Sources

When you are summarizing, you are focusing on identifying and sharing the main elements of a source. This is when you paraphrase the concepts and put them in your own words, demonstrating you have a firm understanding of the concepts presented and are able to incorporate them into your own paper.

Within a paragraph, this information may appear as part of your introduction to the material or as a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence. Read the examples that follow.

Summary

Leibowitz (2008) found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood sugar levels.

The introduction to the source material (the **attributive tag**) includes the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses.

Low-carbohydrate diets often help subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood sugar levels (Leibowitz, 2008).

The parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence includes the author's name, a comma, and the year the source was published. The period at the end of the sentence comes after the parentheses.

Formatting Paraphrased and Summarized Material

When you paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you follow the same guidelines previously provided, except that you are not required to provide the page number where the ideas are located. If you are summing up the main findings of a research article, simply providing the author's name and publication year may suffice, but if you are paraphrasing a more specific idea, consider including the page number.

Read the following examples.

Examples

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Here, the writer is summarizing a major idea that recurs throughout the source material. No page reference is needed.

Chang (2008) found that weight-bearing exercise could help women maintain or even increase bone density through middle age and beyond, reducing the likelihood that they will develop osteoporosis in later life (p. 86).

Although the writer is not directly quoting the source, this passage paraphrases a specific detail, so the writer chose to include the page number where the information is located.

Introducing Cited Material Effectively

Including an introductory phrase in your text, such as “Jackson wrote” or “Copeland found,” often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as “Jones said,” “Smith stated,” and so on.

Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who “suggests” and one who “claims,” one who “questions” and one who “criticizes.” You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging.

Strong Verbs for Introducing Cited Material

- ask
- suggest
- question
- recommend
- determine
- insist
- explain
- assert
- claim
- hypothesize
- measure
- argue
- propose
- compare
- contrast
- evaluate
- conclude
- find
- study
- sum up
- believe
- warn
- point out
- assess



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=50#h5p-6>

H5P: For each of the sentences below, choose the best verb for the job. Get into the habit of thinking through how you introduce cited material to your reader. There's nothing more confusing than a quotation lobbed out of nowhere!

1. Johal (2015) _____ that his discovery was earth-shattering, but Best & MacDonald (2017) _____ persuasively that he is incorrect.
2. Lindsay (2020) _____ where the fossil record has gone.
3. While there are many aspects to healthy living, the primacy of the Canada Food Guide for much of modern history _____ that nutrition is a critical component.
4. In her groundbreaking research, DeWit (2019) _____ a new way of looking at the stars.
5. In three different studies, Johnson (2014, 2015, 2018) _____ drivers to pedestrians in terms of level of aggression displayed.
6. Most experts _____ against the dangers of climate change starting in the 1970s.
7. Loxman (2003) _____ the relationship between dogs and their owners.

Verbs

- A. argued
- B. warned
- C. suggested

- D. claimed
- E. compared
- F. proposed

- G. asked
- H. studied

Answer Key

- 1. D, A
- 2. G
- 3. C

- 4. F
- 5. E
- 6. B

- 7. H

Tip: It is extremely important to remember that even though you are summarizing and paraphrasing from another source—not quoting—you must still include a citation, including the last name(s) of the author(s) and the year of publication.

Example

Additionally, marijuana burning creates toxins; this strategy is counterproductive, and there are numerous individual hazards associated with using the plant as medicine (Ogborne, Smart, & Adlaf, 2000).

Example taken from:

Writing Commons. (2014, September). Open Text. Retrieved from <http://writingcommons.org/format/apa/675-block-quotations-apa>

Citation Guidelines

In-Text Citations

Throughout the body of your paper, you must include a citation whenever you quote or paraphrase material from your research sources. The purpose of citations is twofold: to give credit to others for their ideas and to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired. Your in-text citations provide basic information about your source; you will provide more detailed information for each source you cite in text in the references section.

In-text citations must provide the name of the author or authors and the year the source was published. (When a given source does not list an individual author, you may provide the source title or the name of the organization that published the material instead.) When directly quoting a source, you must include the page number where the quote appears in the work being cited. This information may be included within the sentence or in a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence, as in these examples.

Epstein (2010) points out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

Here, the writer names the source author when introducing the quote and provides the publication date in parentheses after the author’s name. The page number appears in parentheses after the closing quotation marks and before the period that ends the sentence.

Addiction researchers caution that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (Epstein, 2010, p. 137).

Here, the writer provides a parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence that includes the author’s name, the year

of publication, and the page number separated by commas. Again, the parenthetical citation is placed *after* the closing quotation marks and *before* the period at the end of the sentence.

As noted in the book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (Epstein, 2010, p. 137), “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive.”

Here, the writer chose to mention the source title in the sentence (an optional piece of information to include) and followed the title with a parenthetical citation. Note that in this example the parenthetical citation is placed *before* the comma that signals the end of the introductory phrase.

David Epstein’s book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (2010) pointed out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

Another variation is to introduce the author and the source title in your sentence and include the publication date and page number in parentheses within the sentence or at the end of the sentence. As long as you have included the essential information, you can use the option that works best for that particular sentence and source.

Citing a book with a single author is usually straightforward. Of course, your research may require that you cite many other types of sources, such as books or articles with more than one author or sources with no individual author listed. You may also need to cite sources available in both print and online and nonprint sources, such as websites and personal interviews.

Self-Practice Exercise 2.5

H5P: Noticing Errors in Quotations

Examples taken from: Writing Commons. (2014, September). Open Text. Retrieved from <http://writingcommons.org/format/apa/675-block-quotations-apa>

1. According to a recent research study, ‘that women aged 41 and over were 5 times less likely to use condoms than were men aged 18 and younger’ (2007, p. 707).
 - A. Single quotation marks are used instead of double quotation marks.

- B. The period is placed after the citation not before.
 C. “That” should have been removed to make the quote flow with the rest of the sentence.
 D. There is no attributive tag and no mention of the authors in the citation: Sormanti & Shibusawa.
2. One researcher outlines the viewpoints of both parties: Freedom of research is undoubtedly a cherished ideal in our society. In that respect, research has an interest in being free, independent, and unrestricted. Such interests weigh against regulations. On the other hand, research should also be valid, verifiable, and unbiased, to attain the overarching goal of gaining obtaining generalisable knowledge (Simonsen, 2012, p. 46).
- A. [sic] is required after “obtaining” because it is a mistake in the original.
 B. There are no quotation marks
 C. The period is placed after the citation not before.
 D. The quote is not indented on either side.
3. According to Emlet, the rate in which older adults have contracted HIV has grown exponentially. Currently, “approximately 20% of all HIV cases were among older adults”. (Emlet, 2008).
- A. The original quote used the past tense (“were”), but the transition word “currently” requires this verb to be changed to present tense (“are”) inside square brackets to make it fit.
 B. The writer used an attributive tag with the name of the source’s author, then gave the name again in the citation at the end. The second one is redundant.
 C. There is an extra period before the citation. With a short quote, you put the end punctuation after the citation.
 D. The word, “Currently” breaks the flow of the sentence.

Answer Key

1. A, C, D

2. A, C, D

3. A, B, C,

Formatting In-Text Citations

The following subsections discuss the correct format for various types of in-text citations. Read them through quickly to get a sense of what is covered, and then refer to them again as needed.

Print Sources

This section covers books, articles, and other print sources with one or more authors.

A Work by One Author

Always include the author's name and year of publication. Include a page reference whenever you quote a source directly. (See also the guidelines presented earlier in this chapter about when to include a page reference for paraphrased material.)

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Two or More Works by the Same Author

At times, your research may include multiple works by the same author. If the works were published in different years, a standard in-text citation will serve to distinguish them. If you are citing multiple works by the same author published in the same year, include a lowercase letter immediately after the year. Rank the sources in the order they appear in your references section. The source listed first should include an *a* after the year, the source listed second should include a *b*, and so on.

Rodriguez (2009a) criticized the nutrition supplement industry for making unsubstantiated and sometimes misleading claims about the benefits of taking supplements. Additionally, he warned that consumers frequently do not realize the potential harmful effects of some popular supplements (Rodriguez, 2009b).

The author's last name is again mentioned in the final citation despite it being used in the attributive tag. In this case, this is acceptable because this is referring to a different source written by the same person.

Works by Authors with the Same Last Name

If you are citing works by different authors with the same last name, include each author's initials in your citation, whether you mention them in the text or in parentheses. Do so even if the publication years are different.

J. S. Williams (2007) believes nutritional supplements can be a useful part of some diet and fitness regimens. C. D. Williams (2008), however, believes these supplements are overrated.

According to two leading researchers, the rate of childhood obesity exceeds the rate of adult obesity (K. Connelley, 2010; O. Connelley, 2010).

Studies from both A. Wright (2007) and C. A. Wright (2008) confirm the benefits of diet and exercise on weight loss.

A Work by Two Authors

When two authors are listed for a given work, include both authors' names each time you cite the work. If you are citing their names in parentheses, use an ampersand (&) between them. (Use the word *and*, however, if the names appear in your sentence.)

As Garrison and Gould (2010) pointed out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (p. 101).

As doctors continue to point out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (Garrison & Gould, 2010, p. 101).

A Work by Three to Five Authors

If the work you are citing has three to five authors, list all the authors' names the first time you cite the source. In subsequent citations, use the first author's name followed by the abbreviation *et al.* (*Et al.* is short for *et alia*, the Latin phrase for "and others.")

Henderson, Davidian, and Degler (2010) surveyed 350 smokers aged 18 to 30. One survey, conducted among 350 smokers aged 18 to 30, included a detailed questionnaire about participants' motivations for smoking (Henderson, Davidian, & Degler, 2010).

Note that these examples follow the same ampersand conventions as sources with two authors. Again, use the ampersand only when listing authors' names in parentheses.

As Henderson et al. (2010) found, some young people, particularly young women, use smoking as a means of appetite suppression.

Disturbingly, some young women use smoking as a means of appetite suppression (Henderson et al., 2010).

Note how the phrase *et al.* is punctuated. There is no period comes after *et*, but there is one with *al.* because it is an abbreviation for a longer Latin word. In parenthetical references, include a comma after *et al.* but not before. Remember this rule by mentally translating the citation to English: “Henderson and others, 2010.”

A Work by Six or More Authors

If the work you are citing has six or more authors, list only the first author’s name, followed by *et al.*, in your in-text citations. The other authors’ names will be listed in your references section.

Researchers have found that outreach work with young people has helped reduce tobacco use in some communities (Costello et al., 2007).

A Work Authored by an Organization

When citing a work that has no individual author but is published by an organization, use the organization’s name in place of the author’s name. Lengthy organization names with well-known abbreviations can be abbreviated. In your first citation, use the full name, followed by the abbreviation in square brackets. Subsequent citations may use the abbreviation only.

It is possible for a patient to have a small stroke without even realizing it (American Heart Association [AHA], 2010).

Another cause for concern is that even if patients realize that they have had a stroke and need medical attention, they may not know which nearby facilities are best equipped to treat them (AHA, 2010).

A Work with No Listed Author

If no author is listed and the source cannot be attributed to an organization, use the title in place of the author's name. You may use the full title in your sentence or use the first few words—enough to convey the key ideas—in a parenthetical reference. Follow standard conventions for using italics or quotations marks with titles:

- Use italics for titles of books or reports.
- Use quotation marks for titles of articles or chapters.

“Living With Diabetes: Managing Your Health” (2009) recommends regular exercise for patients with diabetes. Regular exercise can benefit patients with diabetes (“Living with Diabetes,” 2009).

A Work Cited within Another Work

To cite a source that is referred to within another secondary source, name the first source in your sentence. Then, in parentheses, use the phrase *as cited in* and the name of the second source author.

Rosenhan's study “On Being Sane in Insane Places” (as cited in Spitzer, 1975) found that psychiatrists diagnosed schizophrenia in people who claimed to be experiencing hallucinations and sought treatment—even though these patients were, in fact, imposters.

Two or More Works Cited in One Reference

At times, you may provide more than one citation in a parenthetical reference, such as when you are discussing related works or studies with similar results. List the citations in the same order they appear in your references section, and separate the citations with a semicolon.

Some researchers have found serious flaws in the way Rosenhan's study was conducted (Dawes, 2001; Spitzer, 1975). Both of these researchers authored works that support the point being made in this sentence, so it makes sense to include both in the same citation.

Electronic Sources

Whenever possible, cite electronic sources as you would print sources, using the author, the date, and where appropriate, a page number. For some types of electronic sources—for instance, many online articles—this information is easily available. Other times, however, you will need to vary the format to reflect the differences in online media.

Online Sources without Page Numbers

If an online source has no page numbers but you want to refer to a specific portion of the source, try to locate other information you can use to direct your reader to the information cited. Some websites number paragraphs within published articles; if so, include the paragraph number in your citation. Precede the paragraph number with the abbreviation for the word *paragraph* and the number of the paragraph (e.g., para. 4).

As researchers have explained, “Incorporating fresh fruits and vegetables into one’s diet can be a challenge for residents of areas where there are few or no easily accessible supermarkets” (Smith & Jones, 2006, para. 4).

Even if a source does not have numbered paragraphs, it is likely to have headings that organize the content. In your citation, name the section where your cited information appears, followed by a paragraph number.

The American Lung Association (2010) noted, “After smoking, radon exposure is the second most common cause of lung cancer” (What Causes Lung Cancer? section, para. 2).

This student cited the appropriate section heading within the website and then counted to find the specific paragraph where the cited information was located.

If an online source has no listed author and no date, use the source title and the abbreviation *n.d.* in your parenthetical reference.

It has been suggested that electromagnetic radiation from cellular telephones may pose a risk for developing certain cancers (“Cell Phones and Cancer,” n.d.).

Personal Communication

For personal communications, such as interviews, letters, and emails, cite the name of the person involved, clarify that the material is from a personal communication, and provide the specific date the communication took place. Note that while in-text citations correspond to entries in the references section, personal communications are an exception to this rule. They are cited only in the body text of your paper.

J. H. Yardley, M.D., believes that available information on the relationship between cell phone use and cancer is inconclusive (personal communication, May 1, 2009).

PARAPHRASING PRACTICE

It is essential to paraphrase material from your sources, restating the information from an entire sentence or passage into your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing; that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's (your) own language and style.

Self-Practice Exercise 2.1



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H5P: Paraphrase the following passage in your own words.

“The twenties were the years when drinking was against the law, and the law was a bad joke because everyone knew of a local bar where liquor could be had. They were the years when organized crime ruled the cities, and the police seemed powerless to do anything against it. Classical music was forgotten while jazz spread throughout the land, and men like Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie became the heroes of the young. The flapper was born in the twenties, and with her bobbed hair and short skirts, she symbolized, perhaps more than anyone or anything else, America's break with the past.” From Kathleen Yancey, *English 102 Supplemental Guide* (1989): 25.

H5P: Paraphrase the following passage in your own words.

“While the Sears Tower is arguably the greatest achievement in skyscraper engineering so far, it's unlikely that architects and engineers have abandoned the quest for the world's tallest building. The question is: Just how high can a building go? Structural engineer William LeMessurier has designed a skyscraper nearly one

half mile high, twice as tall as the Sears Tower. And architect Robert Sobel claims that existing technology could produce a 500-story building.” From Ron Bachman, “Reaching for the Sky.” *Dial* (May 1990): 15.

Self-Practice Exercise 2.2



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H5P: Write Your Paraphrase

- Choose an important idea or detail from your notes — for any class you like, or any research you have in process! — and jot it down here in point form.
- Restate the idea in your own words as completely as possible. Do not look it up in your notes first!
- Find the original text in the source. Now, compare your paraphrase. Do you capture the idea accurately? Is your language and sentence structure original to you? Revise and make any necessary changes here — and don't forget to add your citation!

FINDING REPUTABLE SOURCES

With so many sources available, the question usually is not whether sources exist for your project but which ones will best meet your information needs. Being able to categorize a source helps you understand the kind of information it contains, which is a big clue to (1) whether it might meet one or more of your information needs and (2) where to look for it and similar sources.

A source can be categorized by asking the following questions:

- Why was the source created? (**Purpose**)
- Who was the original audience of the source? (**Audience**)

As you may already be able to tell, sources can be in more than one category at the same time because the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Purpose

When you encounter a source, you should ask yourself, “Why does this source exist?” Thinking about the reason an author produced a source can be helpful to you because that reason was why they chose to include the information in the source. The author may have chosen to include factual, analytical information or it may have suited their purpose to include information that was meant to be entertaining. The author’s reason for producing the source also determined whether they included more than one perspective or just their own.

Authors typically want to:

- Inform and educate
- Persuade
- Sell services or products
- Entertain

Authors’ intent matters because their goal will impact what information they include and how they present that information. For instance, when you’re looking for sources that will help you actually decide your answer to your research question or evidence for your answer that you will share with your audience, you will want the author’s main purpose to have been to inform or educate their audience. That’s because, with that intent, they are likely to have used:

- Facts where possible
- Multiple perspectives instead of just their own
- Little subjective information

- Seemingly unbiased, objective language that cites where they got the information

The reason you want that kind of resource when trying to answer your research question or explaining that answer is that all of those characteristics will lend credibility to the argument you are making with your project. Both you and your audience will simply find it easier to believe—will have more confidence in the argument being made—when you include those types of sources.

Sources whose authors intend only to persuade others won't meet your information need for an answer to your research question or evidence with which to convince your audience. That's because they don't always confine themselves to facts. Instead, they tell us their opinions without backing them up with evidence.

It's especially important to ask the purpose of online sources. Let's say that you find a social media infographic about the health benefits of elderberry syrup. Someone took the time to create the post. Why did they do that work? Are they trying to sell you elderberry syrup or are they from a government health organization trying to combat misinformation about health supplements? The difference will tell you whether you can trust the source.

Audience

We can also categorize information by the expertise of its intended audience. Considering the intended audience—how expert one has to be to understand the information—can indicate whether the source has sufficient credibility and thoroughness to meet your needs. When you're writing papers in university, academic articles are usually the best source. In the workplace, however, you may be researching something that doesn't have many peer-reviewed articles about it yet or you may only need a basic understanding of the topic.

Degrees of expertise

Popular – Popular newspaper and magazine articles (such as *The National Post*, *Maclean's Magazine*, and *Rolling Stone*) are meant for a large general audience, generally affordable, easy to purchase or available for free. They are written by staff writers or reporters for the general public.

Professional – Professional magazine articles (such as *Plastic Surgical Nursing* and *Music Teacher*) are meant for people in a particular profession, often accessible through a professional organization. Staff writers or other professionals in the targeted field write these articles at a level and with the language to be understood by everyone in the profession.

Additionally, they are:

- About trends and news from the targeted field, book reviews, and case studies.
- Often less than 10 pages, some of which may contain footnotes and references.
- Usually published by professional associations and commercial publishers
- Published after approval from an editor.

Scholarly – Scholarly journal articles (such as *Plant Science and Education* and *Child Psychology*) are meant for

scholars, students, or the general public who want a deep understanding of a problem or issue. Researchers and scholars write these articles to present new knowledge and further understanding of their field of study.

Additionally, they are:

- Where findings of research projects, data and analytics, and case studies usually appear first.
- Often long (usually over 10 pages) and always include footnotes and references.
- Usually published by universities, professional associations, and commercial publishers.
- Published after approval by peer review or from the journal's editor.

The most-respected scholarly journals are peer-reviewed, which means that other experts in their field check out each article before it can be published. It's their responsibility to help guarantee that new material is presented in the context of what is already known, that the methods the researcher used are the right ones, and that the articles contribute to the field.

Peer-reviewed articles are more likely to be credible. Peer-reviewed journal articles are the official scholarly record, which means that if it's an important development in research, it will probably turn up in a journal article eventually.

Strategies for Gathering Reliable Information

Once you have determined the topic of your assignments, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging.

Of course, the technological advances of the past few decades—particularly the rise of online media—mean that, as a 21st century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. However, how can you tell whether a source is reliable? This section will discuss strategies for evaluating sources critically so that you can be a media savvy researcher.

Finding Print Resources

Print resources include a vast array of documents and publications. **Table 2.1: Library Print Resources** lists different types of print resources available at public and university libraries.

Table 2.1 Library Print Resources

Resource Type	Description	Examples
Reference works	Reference works provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works. In some cases, reference books may not be checked out of a library. Note that reference works are many steps removed from original primary sources and are often brief, so they should be used only as a starting point when you gather information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2015 • Diagnostic and Statistical Manual published by the American Psychiatric Association
Nonfiction books	Nonfiction books provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books and scientific studies are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 30-Day Low-Carb Diet Solution • Fundamentals of Nutrition
Periodicals and news sources	These sources are published at regular intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are examples. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest, while others are more specialized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Globe and Mail • Maclean’s magazine • CMAJ, Canadian Medical Association Journal
Government publications	Federal, provincial, and local government agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada • Juristat
Business and nonprofit publications	Businesses and nonprofit organizations produce publications designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A company’s instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program • A news release published by UNICEF Canada

Some of these resources are also widely available in electronic format. In addition to the resources noted in the table, library holdings may include primary texts such as historical documents, letters, and diaries.



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Tip: As you gather information, strive for a balance of accessible, easy-to-read sources and more specialized, challenging sources. Relying only on easy books and articles written for a general audience will drastically limit the range of useful, substantial information. On the other hand, restricting oneself to dense, scholarly works could make the process of researching extremely time consuming and frustrating.

To find print resources efficiently, first identify the major concepts and terms you will use to conduct your search—that is, your **keywords**.

Tip: Knowing the right keywords can sometimes make all the difference in conducting a successful search. If you have trouble finding sources on a topic, consult a librarian to see whether you need to modify your search terms.

Boolean Operators

One way to refine your keyword search is to use Boolean operators. These allow you to combine keywords, find variations on a word, and otherwise expand or limit your results. Here are some of the ways you can use Boolean operators:

- Combine keywords with and or + to limit results to citations that include both keywords—for example, diet + nutrition.
- Combine keywords with **or** to find synonyms. For example, **prison or jail**. The phrase “Or is more” may help you remember that using this will show you more results.
- Combine keywords with not or – to search for the first word without the second. This can help you eliminate irrelevant results based on words that are similar to your search term. For example, searching for stress fractures not geological locates materials on fractures of *bones* but excludes materials on fractures of *stones*. Use this one cautiously because it may exclude useful sources.
- Enclose a phrase in **quotation marks** to search for an exact phrase, such as “morbid obesity,” “**use of force**,” or “**law enforcement**.”
- Use **parentheses** to direct the order of operations in a search string. For example, since Type II diabetes is also known as adult onset diabetes, you could search (Type II or adult onset or Type 2) and diabetes to limit your search results to articles on this form of the disease.
- Use a wildcard symbol such as *, #, ?, or \$ after a word to search for variations on a term. For instance, you might type gang* to search for information on gang, gangs, and gangland. The specific symbol used varies with different databases.

Finding and Using Electronic Resources

Conducting Effective Online Searches

The Internet is filled with sources: some of them useful, some of them not. Watch this short video to learn how to effectively find information on a search engine such as Google.



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With the expansion of technology and media over the past few decades, a wealth of information is available to you in electronic format. Some types of resources, such as television documentaries, may only be available electronically. Other resources—for instance, many newspapers and magazines—may be available in both print and electronic form. The following are some of the electronic sources you might consult:

Online databases	Popular web search engines	Websites
Newspapers	E-books	Audiobooks
Industry blogs	Radio programs	Television programs
Online discussion groups	Magazines	Journals

The techniques you use to locate print resources can also help you find electronic resources efficiently. You can locate these materials in the catalogue using a keyword search. The same Boolean operators used to refine database searches can help you filter your results in popular search engines.

Using Internet Search Engines Efficiently

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines as their first source of information. Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of related websites—what could be easier? Unfortunately, despite its apparent convenience, this research strategy has the following drawbacks:

Results do not always appear in order of reliability. The first few hits that appear in search results may include sites with unreliable content, such as online encyclopedias that can be edited by any user. Since websites are created by third parties, the search engine cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.

To end up with the best results for your research you may:

- Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame
- Limit results by language or country
- Limit results to scholarly works available online
- Limit results by file type
- Limit results to a particular domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites, which can often lead to more objective results.
- Use the “bookmarks” or “favourites” feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising.

Using Other Information Sources: Interviews

With so many print and electronic media readily available, it is easy to overlook another valuable information resource: other people. Consider whether you could use a person or group as a primary source. For instance, you might interview a professor who has expertise in a particular subject, a worker within a particular industry, or a representative from a political organization. Interviews can be a great way to get firsthand information.

To get the most out of an interview, you will need to plan ahead. Contact your subject early in the research process and explain your purpose for requesting an interview. Prepare detailed questions. Open-ended questions, rather than questions with simple yes or no answers, are more likely to lead to an in-depth discussion. Schedule a time to meet, and be sure to obtain your subject’s permission to record the interview. Take careful notes and be ready to ask follow-up questions based on what you learn.

Evaluating Research Resources

As you gather sources, you will need to examine them with a critical eye. Smart researchers continually ask themselves two questions: “Is this source relevant to my purpose?” and “Is this source reliable?” The first question will help you avoid wasting valuable time reading sources that stray too far from your specific topic and research questions. The second question will help you find accurate, trustworthy sources.

Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

At this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in checking out books and printing out articles that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources.

To sort through your stack of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind.

Table 2.3 Tips for Skimming Books and Articles

Tips for Skimming Books

- Read the dust jacket and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered.
- Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered.
- Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.

Tips for Skimming Articles

- Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material.
- Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars.
- Look for keywords related to your topic.
- Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.

Self-Practice Exercise 2.4



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H5P: Using Search Engines

Use a search engine to conduct a web search on your topic. Refer to the tips provided earlier to help you streamline your search. Evaluate your search results critically based on the criteria you have learned. Identify and bookmark one or more websites that are reliable, reputable, and likely to be useful in your research.

It's really important to keep detailed notes of everything you find, both so you can find them later and so you can accurately cite your sources (and avoid accusations of plagiarism!). Make notes about anything relevant to your web searching time here.

Managing Source Information

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. What matters is that you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

Bibliographic information is all the referencing information you need from all sources you consider using for your paper—think of this as your working references page. Any time you look at a source, you should make note of all the

referencing information—you may later decide to change direction in your paper or simply choose not to use that source as you develop your paper, but if you do decide to use that source, you will have all the details you need when compiling your **references** page.

Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include separate programs for recording bibliographic information.)

Note: Following the APA format, you need to submit a references page or reference list; you do not submit a bibliography because your references should only include the sources to which you directly referred or cited within your paper, not everything you looked at but did not use.

Table 2.4: Details for Commonly Used Source Types shows the specific details you should record. Use these details to develop a **working bibliography**—a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. You may wish to record information using the formatting system of the American Psychological Association (APA), which will save a step later on.

Table 2.4 Details for Commonly Used Source Types

Source Type	Necessary Information
Book	Author(s), title and subtitle, publisher, city of publication, year of publication
Essay or article published in a book	Include all the information you would for any other book. Additionally, record the essay's or article's title, author(s), the pages on which it appears, and the name of the book's editor(s).
Periodical	Author(s), article title, publication title, date of publication, volume and issue number, and page numbers
Online source	Author(s) (if available), article or document title, organization that sponsors the site, database name (if applicable), date of publication, date you accessed the site, and URL
Interview	Name of person interviewed, method of communication, date of interview

Tip: To make your working bibliography even more complete, you may wish to record additional details, such as a book's call number or contact information for a person you interviewed. That way, if you need to locate a source again, you will have all the information you need right at your fingertips. You may also wish to assign each source a code number to use when taking notes (1, 2, 3, or a similar system).

Finding Scholarly Articles

Most scholarly articles are housed in specialized databases. Libraries (public, school, or company) often provide access to scholarly databases by paying a subscription fee for patrons.

Searching Databases

Sometimes, a little knowledge about how to do precise searches can save you a lot of time. To find relevant sources when searching Google or a research database you should.

1. **Identify the main concepts in your research question.** Stick to nouns. For example, if your research question was “How are students affected by the Vancouver Housing Crisis?” your main concepts would be ‘housing crisis’ and ‘students.’
2. **Find related search terms.** You might choose to use a thesaurus for this. For example, you might search for “affordability crisis” or (if you have discovered that some students have faced homelessness because they were unable to afford a place to live) “homelessness” or “housing vulnerability.”
3. **When searching in databases (or Google) use quotation marks around phrases to make your search more specific.** For example, you would search for “common cold” so you don’t get info on cold war or cold weather.
4. **Use wildcard and truncation symbols to broaden your search.** For example, if you type “wom?n” into a search engine, it will show results for “woman’ and “women.” If you type “mathemat*” into a search engine, it will show results for both “mathematician” and “mathematics.”
5. **Use phrases like “and” and “not” to make your search more specific.** For example, if you were searching a job board to try to find a job as a network administrator, but you kept finding positions as a network manager, you might search for “network administrator NOT manager.”

News as a Source

News sources can provide insights that scholarly sources may not or that will take a long time to get into scholarly sources. For instance, news sources are excellent for finding out people’s reactions, opinions, and prevailing attitudes around the time of an event.

When Are News Sources Helpful?

- You need breaking news or historical perspectives on a topic (what people were saying at the time).
- You need to learn more about a culture, place, or time period from its own sources.
- You want to keep up with what is going in the world today.

When Are News Sources of Limited Use?

- You need very detailed analysis by experts.
- You need sources that must be scholarly or modern views on a historical topic.

Other Types of Sources

News articles are typically written by journalists who are experts in investigating and get paid for their work. Usually, journalists will work with an editor to make sure that their work is accurate and fair. Depending on your topic, however, you might seek sources such as:

- **Social media posts:** Sometimes, experts in a subject will engage in public scholarship over Twitter or social media platforms. For example, professional historians will often share their work with the public on Twitter by relating current events to historical moments. The benefit of this type of scholarship is that it can be very current, and you can often see different scholars interact with one another. The downside is, however, that this information hasn't been vetted by anyone. You may be witnessing an expert's "rough draft" thoughts, and they might change their mind based on new information or the peer review process. To know if you should trust a social media post, you'll also have to know a lot about who's posting and if they're credible.
- **Blog posts:** Though blogging is less popular now than it once was, blogs are still a great way to find out current information about a topic in a format that's more detailed than social media allows for. For example, a cybersecurity expert might tweet about a new threat, but they might then write a blog post that outlines their concerns more explicitly and provides extensive proof. Remember that blogs are not vetted by an editor, and often bloggers have a motivation to sell products or services.
- **Archives:** If your topic involves the past, you might check out an archive. Many museums make their collections available online through archives.

Evaluating Sources

Once you've located your sources, you have to determine whether or not you can trust them. The wrong sources can weaken the ethos of your argument, so it's important to fact check your sources thoroughly.

In this section, we'll provide two models: The CRAAP test, and the SIFT test. You can choose which one you feel is most helpful. The CRAAP test shows you a series of questions you can ask yourself to determine whether you a piece of information is trustworthy and useful. The SIFT test is a series of "moves" you will take to evaluate information.

The CRAAP Test

Sarah Blakeslee and the librarians at California State University, Chico, came up with the CRAAP Test to help researchers easily determine whether a source is trustworthy. You can download a handout that explains the CRAAP test [here](#).

There are five parts to the CRAAP Test:

Currency

When was the information published? For some topics, it's okay if you use an older source. For example, if you want to know what DNA is, it's okay if the source was published five years ago. If you're researching the latest DNA discoveries, a five-year-old source wouldn't be helpful.

Relevance

Does this information meet your needs? For example, an article aimed at educating young children about DNA would probably not be a relevant source if you work for a tech firm and are writing a report about whether to acquire some DNA technology. It's okay if a source isn't perfectly relevant to your research question, since that's where analysis comes in. For example, if you were researching the Housing Crisis in Vancouver, you might read about how expensive cities like San Francisco and Hong Kong are dealing with their own housing crises in order to get ideas.

Authority

Who wrote this information? Your source should be written by someone who has the authority to speak on the matter. For example, you might come across a blog that offers natural health remedies for cancer or depression written by someone who says they're a doctor. If they're a doctor because they have a PhD in English Literature, however, then they wouldn't have the authority to offer medical advice. (You would, however, be able to trust their opinion on depictions of natural remedies in novels). To determine how trustworthy an online source is, you can also look at the URL. If it comes from a .gov or .edu website, you would probably trust it.

Accuracy

How reliable or trustworthy is the information? Specifically, you should examine how the source uses evidence. Does the source link to other trustworthy sources? Does the source support its claims with evidence? How reliable is that evidence?

Tip: If you're not sure whether a source is reliable, try Googling the source's claim plus "criticism" or "hoax." For example, if you read that baking soda cures cancer, you should Google "baking soda cancer cure hoax." Sometimes, untrustworthy websites take up the top spots in Google, so if you simply Google "baking soda cancer cure," you'll find other untrustworthy websites telling the same lies.

Purpose

Why was this information published? You should be able to identify how the author benefitted from publishing this information. Specifically, consider how the author makes money from putting this information out there. Sources that make money aren't necessarily untrustworthy, but following the money gives you an indication of how trustworthy a source is.

Ranking Your Sources

Table 2.2: Source Rankings ranks different source types.

Table 2.2 Source Rankings

<p>High-Quality Sources</p>	<p>These sources provide the most in-depth information. They are researched and written by subject matter experts and are carefully reviewed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly books and articles in scholarly journals • Trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as <i>Police Chief magazine</i>, <i>Canadian Paramedicine</i>, or <i>Harvard Business Review</i> • Government documents, such as books, reports, and web pages • Documents posted online by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes • Textbooks and reference books, which are usually reliable but may not cover a topic in great depth
<p>Varied-Quality Sources</p>	<p>These sources are often useful. However, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. **Use these sources with caution.**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as <i>The Economist</i> or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation • Popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked • Documents published by businesses and nonprofit organizations
<p>Questionable Sources</p>	<p>These sources are often written primarily to attract a large readership or present the author's opinions and are not subject to careful review. **Avoid using these sources!**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk radio shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms



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H5P: Quality of Sources

Determine whether the source listed is of high, variable, or questionable quality.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Scholarly book | 4. Internet discussion boards |
| 2. Popular magazine articles | 5. Document published by a business |
| 3. Talk radio interview | 6. Government report |

Answer Key

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. high quality | 4. questionable quality |
| 2. variable quality | 5. variable quality |
| 3. questionable quality | 6. high quality |

Tip: Free online encyclopedias and wikis may seem like a great source of information. They usually appear among the first few results of a web search. They cover thousands of topics, and many articles use an informal, straightforward writing style. Unfortunately, these sites have no control system for researching, writing, and reviewing articles. Instead, they rely on a community of users to police themselves. At best, these sites can be a starting point for finding other, more trustworthy sources. *Never use them as final sources.*

Checking for Biases and Hidden Agendas

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author's purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, the source's content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas.

Bias refers to favouritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly—or not so subtly—makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone's words, and distort information.

Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animal rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

Evaluating Overall Quality by Asking Questions

When you evaluate a source, you will consider the criteria previously discussed as well as your overall impressions of its quality. Read carefully, and notice how well the author presents and supports his or her statements. Stay actively

engaged—do not simply accept an author’s words as truth. Ask questions to determine each source’s value. **Checklist 7.1** lists a series of questions you should ask yourself as a critical reader.

Checklist 2.1: Check Your Sources



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=54#h5p-12>

H5P: Check Your Sources

1. Is the type of source appropriate for my purpose? Is it a high-quality source or one that needs to be looked at more critically?
2. Can I establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?
3. Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented?
4. Is the source of the author’s information clear?
5. Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?
6. Does the author leave out any information that I would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?
7. Do the author’s conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can I see how the author got from one point to another?
8. Is the writing clear and organized, and is it free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords? Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable?
9. Are there any obvious biases or agendas? Based on what I know about the author, are there likely to be any hidden agendas?
10. Is the source contradicted by information found in other sources?

CREATING A REFERENCE PAGE

The brief citations included in the body of your paper must pair up with more detailed citations provided at the end of the paper in the references section. In-text citations provide basic information—the author’s name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary—while the references section provides more extensive information, which allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if desired.

In-text citations are necessary within your writing to show where you have borrowed ideas or quoted directly from another author. These are kept short because you do not want to disrupt the flow of your writing and distract the reader. While the in-text citation is very important, it is not enough to enable your readers to locate that source if they would like to use it for their own research.

The references section of your essay may consist of a single page for a brief research paper or may extend for many pages in professional journal articles. This section provides detailed information about how to create the references section of your paper. You will review basic formatting guidelines and learn how to format bibliographical entries for various types of sources. As you create this section of your paper, follow the guidelines provided here.

Formatting the References Page

To set up your references section, use the insert page break feature of your word processing program to begin a new page. Note that the header and margins will be the same as in the body of your paper, and pagination will continue from the body of your paper. (In other words, if you set up the body of your paper correctly, the correct header and page number should appear automatically in your references section.) The references page should be double spaced and list entries in alphabetical order by the author’s last name. If an entry continues for more than one line, the second line and each subsequent line are indented five spaces, or one tab space; this is called a “hanging indent.”

What to Include in the References Section

Generally, the information to include in your references section is:

- The name(s) of the author(s) or institution that wrote the source
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

Before you start compiling your own references and translating referencing information from possibly other styles into APA style, you need to be able to identify each piece of information in the reference. This can sometimes be challenging because the different styles format the information differently and may put it in different places within the reference. However, the types of information each of the referencing styles requires is generally the same.

You may be asking yourself why you cannot just use the reference that is often provided on the first page of the source (like a journal article), but you need to remember that not all authors use APA style referencing, or even if they do, they may not use the exact formatting you need to follow.

Putting together a references page becomes a lot easier once you recognize the types of information you continually see in references. For example, anytime you see something *italicized* for APA, you know it is the title of the major piece of writing, such as a book with chapters or an academic journal with multiple articles. Take a look at the examples below.

Sample Book Entry

- Use author's last name and initials followed by periods.
- Use a single space between parts of the entry. Include periods and other punctuation as indicated.
- Use sentence case for book titles.
- Use standard postal abbreviations for the state where the source was published
- Use a colon between the city of publication, and the publisher.

Atkins, R.C. (2002). *Dr. Atkin's diet revolution*. New York, NY: M. Evans and Company.

Sample Journal Article Entry

- Use sentence case for article titles. Do not use quotation marks around the title.
- Use title case for journal titles and italicize the title.
- Include the volume number in italics followed by the issue number in parentheses, with no space between them.
- Include commas after the journal title and issue number.

- Include the page number(s) where the article appears. Use an en dash between page numbers.

Bass, D. N. (2010). Frad in the lunchroom? *Education Next*, 10(1), 67-71.

Tip: If you are sourcing a chapter from a book, do not italicize the title of the chapter; instead, use double quotes. You also need to include the pages of the chapter within the book. (You *do* italicize the title of the book, similar to the journal article example above.)

The following section provides general guidelines for formatting the reference page. For the remainder of this chapter, you will learn about how to format reference entries for different source types, including multi-author and electronic sources.

Formatting the References Section: APA General Guidelines

1. Include the heading References, centred at the top of the page. The heading should not be boldfaced, italicized, or underlined.
2. Use double-spaced type throughout the references section, as in the body of your paper.
3. Use **hanging indentations** for each entry. The first line should be flush with the left margin, while any lines that follow should be indented five spaces. (Hanging indentation is the opposite of normal indenting rules for paragraphs.)
4. List entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. For a work with multiple authors, use the last name of the first author listed.
5. List authors' names using this format: Smith, J. C.
6. For a work with no individual author(s), use the name of the organization that published the work or, if this is unavailable, the title of the work in place of the author's name.
7. For works with multiple authors, follow these guidelines:
 - For works with up to and including seven authors, list the last name and initials for each author.
 - For works with more than seven authors, list the first six names, followed by ellipses, and then the name of the last author listed.
 - Use an ampersand before the name of the last author listed.

8. Use title case for journal titles. Capitalize all important words in the title.
9. Use sentence case for all other titles—books, articles, web pages, and other source titles. Capitalize the first word of the title. Do not capitalize any other words in the title except for the following:
 - Proper nouns
 - First word of a subtitle
 - First word after a colon or dash
10. Use italics for book and journal titles. Do not use italics, underlining, or quotation marks for titles of shorter works, such as articles.

Tip: There are many word processing programs and websites available that allow you to just plug in your referencing information and it will format it to the style required. If you decide to use such a program, you must still check all your references against your referencing guide because the way those programs and sites piece the information together may not be the *exact* way you are expected to do so at your school. Always double check!

Formatting Reference Page Entries

As is the case for in-text citations, formatting reference entries becomes more complicated when you are citing a source with multiple authors, various types of online media, or sources for which you must provide additional information beyond the basics listed in the general guidelines. The following sections show how to format reference entries by type of source.

Print Sources: Books

For book-length sources and shorter works that appear in a book, follow the guidelines that best describe your source.

A book by two or more authors

List the authors' names in the order they appear on the book's title page. Use an ampersand (&) before the last author's name.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

An edited book with no author

List the editor or editors' names in place of the author's name, followed by *Ed.* or *Eds.* in parentheses.

Myers, C., & Reamer, D. (Eds.). (2009). *2009 nutrition index*. San Francisco, CA: HealthSource, Inc.

An edited book with an author

List the author's name first, followed by the title and the editor or editors. Note that when the editor is listed after the title, you list the initials before the last name.

Dickinson, E. (1959). *Selected poems & letters of Emily Dickinson*. R. N. Linscott.(Ed.). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

*Capitalize "Ed." when the abbreviation refers to an editor.

Tip: The previous example shows the format used for an edited book with one author—for instance, a collection of a famous person's letters that has been edited. This is different from an anthology, which is a collection of articles or essays by different authors. For citing works in anthologies, see the guidelines later in this section.

A translated book

Include the translator's name after the title, and at the end of the citation, list the date the original work was published. Note that for the translator's name, you list the initials before the last name.

Freud, S. (1965). *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis* (J. Strachey, Trans.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1933).

A book published in multiple editions

If you are using any edition other than the first, include the edition number in parentheses after the title.

Berk, L. (2001). *Development through the lifespan* (2nd ed.). Needham Height, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

*Do not capitalize “ed.” when the abbreviation refers to an edition of a book.

A chapter in an edited book

List the name of the author(s) who wrote the chapter, followed by the chapter title. Then list the names of the book editor(s) and the title of the book, followed by the page numbers for the chapter and the usual information about the book’s publisher.

Hughes, J.R., & Pierattini, R. A. (1992). An introduction to pharmacotherapy for mental disorders. In J. Grabowski & G. VandenBos (Eds.), *Psychopharmacology* (pp. 97 -125). Washington, DC: American Psychology Association.

*Include the abbreviation “pp.” when listing the pages where a chapter or article appear in a book.

A work that appears in an anthology

Follow the same process you would use to cite a book chapter, substituting the article or essay title for the chapter title.

Beck, A. T., & Young, J. (1986). College blues. In D. Goleman & D. Heller (Eds.), *The pleasures of psychology* (pp. 309-323). New York, NY: New American Library.

*Include the abbreviation “pp.” when listing the pages where a chapter or article appears in a book.

An article in a reference book

List the author’s name if available; if no author is listed, provide the title of the entry where the author’s name would normally be listed. If the book lists the name of the editor(s), include it in your citation. Indicate the volume number (if applicable) and page numbers in parentheses after the article title.

The census. (2006). In J.W. Wright (Ed.), *The New York Times 2006 almanac* (pp. 268-275). New York, NY: Penguin.

*Capitalize proper nouns that appear in a book title.

Two or more books by the same author

List the entries in order of their publication year, beginning with the work published first.

Swedan, N. (2001). *Women's sports medicine and rehabilitation*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.

Swedan, N. (2003). *The active woman's health and fitness handbook*. New York, NY: Perigee.

If two books have multiple authors, and the first author is the same but the others are different, alphabetize by the second author's last name (or the third or fourth, if necessary).

Carroll, D., & Aaronson, F. (2008). *Managing type II diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press.

Carroll, D., & Zuckerman, N. (2008). *Gestational diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press.

Books by different authors with the same last name

Alphabetize entries by the authors' first initial.

Smith, I. K. (2008). *The 4-day diet*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Smith, S. (2008). *The complete guide to Navy Seal fitness: Updated for today's warrior elite* (3rd ed.). Long Island City, NY: Hatherleigh Press.

*Capitalize the first word of a subtitle.

A book authored by an organization

Treat the organization name as you would an author's name. For the purposes of alphabetizing, ignore words like *the* in the organization's name (e.g., a book published by the American Heart Association would be listed with other entries whose authors' names begin with *A*.)

American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders DSM-IV* (4th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

A book authored by a government agency

Treat these as you would a book published by a non-governmental organization, but be aware that these works may have an identification number listed. If so, include the number in parentheses after the publication year.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2002). *The decennial censuses from 1790 to 2000*(Publication No. POL/02-MA). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Offices.

Print Sources: Periodicals

An article in a scholarly journal

Include the following information:

- Author or authors' names
- Publication year
- Article title (in sentence case, without quotation marks or italics)
- Journal title (in title case and in italics)
- Volume number (in italics)
- Issue number (in parentheses)
- Page number(s) where the article appears

DeMarco, R. F. (2010). Palliative care and African American women living with HIV. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 49(5), 1–4.

An article in a journal paginated by volume

In journals, page numbers are continuous across all the issues in a particular volume. For instance, the winter issue may begin with page 1, and in the spring issue that follows, the page numbers pick up where the previous issue left off. (If you have ever wondered why a print journal did not begin on page 1, or wondered why the page numbers of a journal extend into four digits, this is why.) Omit the issue number from your reference entry.

Wagner, J. (2009). Rethinking school lunches: A review of recent literature. *American School Nurses' Journal*, 47, 1123–1127.

An abstract of a scholarly article

At times you may need to cite an **abstract**—the summary that appears at the beginning of a published article. If you are citing the abstract only, and it was published separately from the article, provide the following information:

- Publication information for the article
- Information about where the abstract was published (for instance, another journal or a collection of abstracts)

Romano, S. (2005). Parental involvement in raising standardized test scores. [Abstract]. *Elementary Education Abstracts*, 19, 36.

*Use this format for abstracts published in a collection of abstracts.

Simpson, M. J. (2008) Assessing educational progress: Beyond standardized testing. *Journal of the Association for School Administrative Professionals*, 35(4), 32-40. Abstract obtained from Assessment in Education, 2009, 73(6), Abstract No. 537892.

*Use this format for abstracts published in another journal.

A journal article with two to seven authors

List all the authors' names in the order they appear in the article. Use an ampersand before the last name listed.

Barker, E. T., & Bornstein, M. H. (2010). Global self-esteem, appearance satisfaction, and self-reported dieting in early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 30(2), 205–224.

Tremblay, M. S., Shields, M., Laviolette, M., Craig, C. L., Janssen, I., & Gorber, S. C. (2010). Fitness of Canadian children and youth: Results from the 2007–2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey. *Health Reports*, 21(1), 7–20.

A journal article with more than eight authors

List the first six authors' names, followed by a comma, an ellipsis, and the name of the last author listed. The article in the following example has 16 listed authors; the reference entry lists the first six authors and the 16th, omitting the seventh through the 15th.

Straznicky, N.E., Lambert, E.A., Nestel, P. J., McGrane, M. T., Dawood, T., Schlaich, M. P., ... Lambert, G. W. (2010). Sympathetic neural adaptation to hypocaloric diet with or without exercise training in obese metabolic syndrome subjects. *Diabetes*, 59(1), 71–79.

*Because some names are omitted, use a comma and ellipsis, rather than an ampersand, before the final name listed.

A magazine article

After the publication year, list the issue date. Otherwise, magazine articles as you would journal articles. List the volume and issue number if both are available.

Marano, H. E. (2010, March/April). Keen cuisine: Dairy queen. *Psychology Today*, 43(2), 58.

*List the month after the year. For weekly magazines, list the full date. e.g. "March 8, 2010."

A newspaper article

Treat newspaper articles as you would magazine and journal articles, with one important difference: precede the page number(s) with the abbreviation *p.* (for a single-page article) or *pp.* (for a multipage-page article). For articles that have non-continuous pagination, list all the pages included in the article. For example, an article that begins on page A1 and continues on pages A4 would have the page reference A1, A4. An article that begins on page A1 and continues on pages A4 and A5 would have the page reference A1, A4–A5.

Corwin, C. (2009, January 24). School board votes to remove soda machines from county schools. *Rockwood Gazette*, pp. A1-A2.

*Include this section in your page reference.

A letter to the editor

After the title, indicate in brackets that the work is a letter to the editor.

Jones, J. (2009, January 31). Food police in our schools [Letter to the editor]. *Rockwood Gazette*, p. A8.

A review

After the title, indicate in brackets that the work is a review and state the name of the work being reviewed. (Note that even if the title of the review is the same as the title of the book being reviewed, as in the following example, you should treat it as an article title. Do not italicize it.)

Penhollow, T.M., & Jackson, M.A. (2009). Drug abuse: Concept, prevention, and cessation [Review of the book *Drug abuse: Concepts, prevention, and cessation*]. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 33(5), 620-622.

*Italicize the title of the reviewed book only where it appears in brackets.

Electronic Sources

Citing articles from online periodicals: URLs and Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)

Whenever you cite online sources, it is important to provide the most up-to-date information available to help readers locate the source. In some cases, this means providing an article's URL, or web address. (The letters *URL* stand for uniform resource locator.) Always provide the most complete URL possible. Provide a link to the specific article used, rather than a link to the publication's homepage.

As you likely know, web addresses are not always stable. If a website is updated or reorganized, the article you accessed in April may move to a different location in May. The URL you provided may become a dead link. For this reason, many online periodicals, especially scholarly publications, now rely on DOIs rather than URLs to keep track of articles.

A **DOI** is a digital object identifier—an identification code provided for some online documents, typically articles in scholarly journals. Like a URL, its purpose is to help readers locate an article. However, a DOI is more stable than a URL, so it makes sense to include it in your reference entry when possible. Follow these guidelines:

If you are citing an online article with a DOI, list the DOI at the end of the reference entry.

If the article appears in print as well as online, you do not need to provide the URL. However, include the words *electronic version* after the title in brackets.

In all other respects, treat the article as you would a print article. Include the volume number and issue number if available. (Note, however, that these may not be available for some online periodicals.)

AI and Chat GPT

Note: Some instructors do not permit the use of ChatGPT or AI for assignments. It is essential to have a conversation with your instructor about ethical use of Artificial Intelligence and confirm their preferences before using these tools. Using ChatGPT or other AI without citing it is considered academic misconduct.

Information and ideas that are generated by artificial intelligence (AI), including the use of ChatGPT, must be cited.

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

An article from an online periodical with a DOI

List the DOI if one is provided. There is no need to include the URL if you have listed the DOI.

Bell, J. R. (2006). Low-carb beats low-fat diet for early losses but not long term. *OBGYN News*, 41(12), 32.
doi:10.1016/S0029-7437(06)71905-X

An article from an online periodical with no DOI

List the URL. Include the volume and issue number for the periodical if this information is available. (For some online periodicals, it may not be.)

Laufer-Cahana, A. (2010, March 15). Lactose intolerance do's and don'ts. Salon. Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/food/feature/2010/03/15/lactose_intolerance_ayala

*Used the words "Retrieved from" before the URL

**This publication is online-only, so a URL must be included in the citation.

***Do not include a period after the URL.

Note that if the article appears in a print version of the publication, you do not need to list the URL, but do indicate that you accessed the electronic version.

Robbins, K. (2010, March/April). Nature's bounty: A heady feast [Electronic version]. *Psychology Today*, 43(2), 58.

A newspaper article

Provide the URL of the article.

McNeil, D. G. (2010, May 3). Maternal health: A new study challenges benefits of vitamin A for women and babies. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/04/health/04glob.html?ref=health>

An article accessed through a database

Cite articles accessed through a database the same way you would normally cite a print article. Provide database information only if the article is difficult to locate.

Tip: APA style does not require the item number or accession number for articles retrieved from databases. You may choose to include it if the article is difficult to locate or the database is an obscure one. Check with your instructor for specific requirements for your course.

An abstract of an article

Format article abstracts as you would an article citation, but add the word *Abstract* in brackets after the title.

Bradley, U., Spence, M., Courtney, C. H., McKinley, M. C., Ennis, C. N., McCance, D. R....Hunter, S. J. (2009). Low-fat versus low-carbohydrate weight reduction diets: Effects on weight loss, insulin resistance, and cardiovascular risk: A randomized control trial [Abstract]. *Diabetes*, 58(12), 2741–2748.
<http://diabetes.diabetesjournals.org/content/early/2009/08/23/db00098.abstract>

A nonperiodical web document

The ways you cite different nonperiodical web documents may vary slightly from source to source, depending on the information available. In your citation, include as much of the following information as you can:

- Name of the author(s), whether an individual or organization
- Date of publication (Use *n.d.* if no date is available.)
- Title of the document
- Address where you retrieved the document

If the document consists of more than one web page within the site, link to the homepage or the entry page for the document.

American Heart Association. (2010). *Heart attack, stroke, and cardiac arrest warning signs*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3053>

An entry from an online encyclopedia or dictionary

Because these sources often do not include authors' names, you may list the title of the entry at the beginning of the citation. Provide the URL for the specific entry.

Addiction. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addiction>

Graphic data

When citing graphic data—such as maps, pie charts, bar graphs, and so on—include the name of the organization that compiled the information, along with the publication date. Briefly describe the contents in brackets. Provide the URL where you retrieved the information. (If the graphic is associated with a specific project or document, list it after your bracketed description of the contents.)

US Food and Drug Administration. (2009). [Pie charts showing the percentage breakdown of the FDA's budget for fiscal year 2005]. *2005 FDA budget summary*. Retrieved from <mhttp://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/ReportsManualsForms/Reports/BudgetReports/2005FDABudgetSummary/ucm117231.htm>

An electronic book

Electronic books may include books available as text files online or audiobooks. If an electronic book is easily available in print, cite it as you would a print source. If it is unavailable in print (or extremely difficult to find), use the format in the example. (Use the words *Available from* in your citation if the book must be purchased or is not available directly.)

Chisholm, L. (n.d.). *Celtic tales*. Retrieved from http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookReader?bookid=chicelt_00150014&twoPage=false&route=text&size=0&fullscreen=false&pnum1=1&lang=English&ilang=English

A chapter from an online book or a chapter or section of a web document

Chapters and sections from online books or web documents are treated similarly to their print counterparts with the addition of retrieval information. Include the chapter or section number in parentheses after the book title.

Hart, A. M. (1895). Restoratives—Coffee, cocoa, chocolate. In *Diet in sickness and in health* (VI). Retrieved from <http://www.archive.org/details/dietinsicknessin00hartrich>

A dissertation or thesis from a database

Provide the author, date of publication, title, and retrieval information. If the work is numbered within the database, include the number in parentheses at the end of the citation.

Coleman, M.D. (2004). *Effect of a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet on bone mineral density, biomarkers of bone turnover, and calcium metabolism in healthy premenopausal females*. Retrieved from Virginia Tech Digital Library & Archives: Electronic Theses and Dissertations. (etd-07282004-174858)

*Italicize the titles of theses and dissertations.

Computer software

For commonly used office software and programming languages, it is not necessary to provide a citation. Cite software only when you are using a specialized program, such as the nutrition tracking software in the following example. If you download software from a website, provide the version and the year if available.

Internet Brands, Inc. (2009). FitDay PC (Version 2) [Software]. Available from <http://www.fitday.com/Pc/PcHome.html?gclid=14>

A post on a blog or video blog

Citation guidelines for blogs are similar to those used for discussion forum postings. Briefly describe the type of source in brackets after the title.

Fazio, M. (2010, April 5). Exercising in my eighth month of pregnancy [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://somanypblogs.com/~faziom/postID=67>

*Do not italicize the titles of blog or video blog postings.

A television or radio broadcast

Include the name of the producer or executive producer; the date, title, and type of broadcast; and the associated company and location.

West, Ty. (Executive producer). (2009, September 24). *PBS special report: Health care reform* [Television broadcast]. New York, NY, and Washington, DC: Public Broadcasting Service.

A television or radio series or episode

Include the producer and the type of series if you are citing an entire television or radio series.

Couture, D., Nabors, S., Pinkard, S., Robertson, N., & Smith, J. (Producers). (1979). *The Diane Rehm show* [Radio series]. Washington, DC: National Public Radio.

To cite a specific episode of a radio or television series, list the name of the writer or writers (if available), the date the episode aired, its title, and the type of series, along with general information about the series.

Bernanke, J., & Wade, C. (2010, January 10). Hummingbirds: Magic in the air [Television series episode]. In F. Kaufman (Executive producer), *Nature*. New York, NY: WNET.

A motion picture

Name the director or producer (or both), year of release, title, country of origin, and studio.

Spurlock, M. (Director/producer), Morley, J. (Executive producer), & Winters, H. M. (Executive producer). (2004). *Super size me*. United States: Kathbur Pictures in association with Studio on Hudson.

A recording

Name the primary contributors and list their role. Include the recording medium in brackets after the title. Then list the location and the label.

Smith, L. W. (Speaker). (1999). *Meditation and relaxation* [CD]. New York, NY: Earth, Wind, & Sky Productions.

Székely, I. (Pianist), Budapest Symphony Orchestra (Performers), & Németh, G. (Conductor). (1988). *Chopin piano concertos no. 1 and 2* [CD]. Hong Kong: Naxos.

A podcast

Provide as much information as possible about the writer, director, and producer; the date the podcast aired; its title; any organization or series with which it is associated; and where you retrieved the podcast.

Kelsey, A. R. (Writer), Garcia, J. (Director), & Kim, S. C. (Producer). (2010, May 7). Lies food labels tell us. *Savvy consumer podcast* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <http://www.savvyconsumer.org/podcasts/050710>

Self-Practice Exercise

H5P: APA References Practice

Using the guidelines above identify what each of these types of sources are based on their identifying characteristics and under which categories you would find them in the reference guide. Choose the answer that best describes each example.

Some examples modified from: Writing Commons. (2014, September). Open Text. Retrieved from <http://writingcommons.org/format/apa/675-block-quotations-apa>.

1. Baudrillard, Jean. (1981). *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Trans. Charles Levin. Telos.
 - A. A book with two authors
 - B. A book with one author
 - C. An article in a journal
 - D. A multi-volume work

2. United States Drug Enforcement Administration. (2014). The Dangers and consequences of marijuana abuse. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.gov/dea/docs/dangers-consequences-marijuana-abuse.pdf>
 - A. Online codes and standards
 - B. Online government document
 - C. Online task force report, corporate author
 - D. A blog

3. Watson, S. (2003). Antigone. In R. Sullivan & M. Levene (Eds.), *Short Fiction: An Anthology* (pp. 323-329). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1979)
 - A. A chapter in a book
 - B. A short story reprinted in an anthology
 - C. A book with three authors
 - D. A multi-volume book

4. Gilbert, Elliot. "The Ceremony of Innocence: Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol." *PMLA* 90 (1975): 22-31.
 - A. An online journal article
 - B. A chapter in a book
 - C. A newspaper article
 - D. An academic article

5. Ogborne, A.C., Smart, R.G., & Adlaf, E.M. (2000). Self-reported medical use of marijuana: A survey of the general population. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 162(12), 1685. Retrieved from <http://ecmaj.ca/cgi>
 - A. An online authored report, non-governmental organization
 - B. An e-version of a print book

- C. An online academic journal article
 - D. An online academic journal article by multiple authors
6. David, L. (Producer) & Guggenheim, D. (Director). (2006). *An Inconvenient Truth* [Motion Picture]. Lawrence Bender Productions.
- A. A blog
 - B. A video/DVD
 - C. A television series
 - D. A CD-ROM
7. Jaynes, J. 1986. Consciousness of the voices of the mind. *Canadian Psychology* 27. 128-137.
- A. A print journal article
 - B. An online journal article
 - C. A magazine article
 - D. A book
8. Spiro, M.D. (1983). Introduction: Thirty years of kibbutz research. In E. Krause (Ed.), *The sociology of the kibbutz: Studies in Israeli society II*. Transaction Books.
- A. An edited book
 - B. A chapter
 - C. A book
 - D. All of the options are correct
9. Kamel, F., Tanner, C., Umbach, D., Hoppin, J., Alavanja, M., Blair, A.,... Sandler, D. (2007). Pesticide exposure and self-reported Parkinson's disease in the agricultural health study. *Am J Epidemiol*, 165: 364-374.
- A. A book with eight or more authors
 - B. A chapter in an edited book
 - C. A print journal article with eight or more authors
 - D. An online academic article with eight or more authors
10. Remington, Fuller, J., & Chiu, I. (2015). Chronic necrotizing pulmonary aspergillosis in a patient with diabetes and marijuana use. *Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)*, 187(17), 1305-1308. <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.141412>
- A. All of the options are correct
 - B. A chapter of a book from an online library
 - C. An online newspaper article
 - D. An online article with DOI

Answer Key

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. D

5. D
6. B
7. A
8. D

9. C
10. D

MAKING YOUR QUOTES FIT

You may decide, after much critical thought, that you definitely have found the most amazing, well-suited quote that cannot be paraphrased, and you want to incorporate that quote into your paper. There are different ways to do this depending on how long the quote is; there are also a number of formatting requirements you need to apply.

Quoting Sources Directly

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colourful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest or personalize an issue for readers. Also, when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less-experienced writers sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. *Use quotations sparingly for greater impact.*

When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Only use a quote when the original writer has phrased a statement so perfectly that you do not believe you could rephrase it any better without getting away from the writer's point.
- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Use an attributive tag (e.g., "According to Marshall (2013)...") to lead into the quote and provide a citation at the same time.
- Never use a standalone quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Use ellipses (3) [...] if you need to omit a word or phrase; use (4) [...] when you are removing a section—maybe a complete sentence—that would end in a period. This shows your reader that you have critically and thoroughly examined the contents of this quote and have chosen only the most important and relevant information.
- Use brackets [] if you need to replace a word or phrase or if you need to change the verb tense.
- Use [sic] after something in the quote that is grammatically incorrect or spelled incorrectly. This shows your reader that the mistake is in the original, not your writing.
- Use double quotation marks [" "] when quoting and use single quotation marks [' '] when you include a quote within a quote (i.e., if you quote a passage that already includes a quote, you need to change the double quotation marks in the original to single marks, and add double quotations marks around your entire quote).

Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the JIBC APA Reference Guide.



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H5P: Quoting Sources Correctly

In each of the two examples, pick the quotation that is formatted most correctly.

- A. It's clear that students need to learn time management skills. "The biggest barrier to success is poor time management" (James, 2019, p. 743).
 - B. Student need to learn time management skills because, according to James (2019), "the biggest barrier to success is poor time management" (p. 743).
- A. The research shows that smoking is "bad" for the health of smokers (Simmons, 2018, p. 56).
 - B. The research shows that smoking is not a healthy lifestyle choice (Simmons, 2018).
- A. Chan (2020) argues persuasively that people "[are] angry about the government response to an overwhelming crisis" (p. 432).
 - B. Chan (2020) argues persuasively that people "is angry about the government response to an overwhelming crisis" (p. 432).

Answer Key

1. B

2. B

3. A

Charlie interviewed a dietitian named Dana Kwon as part of his research, and he decided to quote her words in his paper. Read an excerpt from the interview and Charlie's use of it, which follows.

Source

Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype about low-carbohydrate miracle diets like Atkins and so on. Sure, for some people, they are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.

Summary

Registered dietitian Dana Kwon (2010) admits, "Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype.... Sure, for some people, [low carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well."

Notice how smoothly the quoted material is integrated by starting the sentence with an introductory phrase. The use of an ellipsis and brackets did not change the source's meaning.

Short versus Long Quotations

Remember, what you write in essays should be primarily your own words; your instructors want to know what your ideas are and for you to demonstrate your own critical thinking. This means you should only use the ideas of experts in the form of quotes to support your ideas. A paper that consists of mostly quotes pieced together does not demonstrate original thought but rather that you are good at cutting and pasting. Therefore, you should strive to state your ideas, develop them thoroughly, and then insert a supporting quote, and only if necessary. Focus on paraphrasing and integrating and blending those external sources into your own ideas (giving the original author credit by using a citation, of course). When deciding to use any quotation as opposed to paraphrasing, you need to make sure the quote is a statement that the original author has worded so beautifully it would be less effective if you changed it into your own words. When you find something you would like to include **verbatim** (word for word) from a source, you need to decide if you should include the whole paragraph or section, or a smaller part. Sometimes, you may choose to use a longer quote but remove any unnecessary words. You would then use ellipses to show what content you have removed. The following examples show how this is done.

A short quote can be as one word or a phrase or a complete sentence as long as three lines of text (again, removing any unnecessary words). Generally, a short quotation is one that is fewer than 40 words. Whether you use a complete sentence or only part of one, you need to make sure it blends in perfectly with your own sentence or paragraph. For example, if your paragraph is written in the present tense but the quote is in the past, you will need to change the verb, so it will fit into your writing. (You will read about on this shortly.) Using an **attributive tag** is another way to help incorporate your quote more fluidly. An attributive tag is a phrase that shows your reader you got the information from a source, and you are giving the author attribution or credit for his or her ideas or words. Using an attributive tag allows you to provide a citation at the same time as helping integrate the quote more smoothly into your work.

Examples

According to Marshall (2010), “Before the creation of organized governmental policing agencies, it was citizens possessing firearms who monitored and maintained the peace” (p. 712).

In the example above, the attributive tag (with citation) is underlined; this statement is giving Marshall credit for his own words and ideas. You should note that this short quotation is a complete sentence taken from Marshall's bigger document, which is why the first word, *Before*, is capitalized. If you were to include only a portion of that sentence, perhaps excerpting from the middle of it, you would not start the quote with a capital.

Marshall (2010) argues that vigilantism in the Wild West was committed by “citizens possessing firearms who monitored and maintained the peace” (p. 712).

In this example, notice how the student has only used a portion of the sentence, so did not need to include the capital.

Tip: If you do not use an attributive tag because the quote already fits smoothly into your sentence, you need to include the author’s name after the sentence in parentheses with the date and page number.

Example

Vigilantism in the Wild West was committed by “citizens possessing firearms who monitored and maintained the peace” (Marshall, 2010, p. 712).

Formatting Short Quotations

For short quotations, use quotation marks to indicate where the quoted material begins and ends, and cite the name of the author(s), the year of publication, and the page number where the quotation appears in your source. Remember to include commas to separate elements within the parenthetical citation. Also, avoid redundancy. If you name the author(s) in your sentence, do not repeat the name(s) in your parenthetical citation. Review following the examples of different ways to cite direct quotations.

Examples

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

The author's name can be included in the body of the sentence or in the parenthetical citation. Note that when a parenthetical citation appears at the end of the sentence, it comes *after* the closing quotation marks and *before* the period. The elements within parentheses are separated by commas.

Weight Training for Women (Chang, 2008) claimed that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

Weight Training for Women claimed that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (Chang, 2008, p. 49).

Including the title of a source is optional.

In Chang's 2008 text *Weight Training for Women*, she asserts, “Engaging in weight-bearing exercise is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

The author's name, the date, and the title may appear in the body of the text. Include the page number in the parenthetical citation. Also, notice the use of the verb *asserts* to introduce the direct quotation.

“Engaging in weight-bearing exercise,” Chang asserts, “is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (2008, p. 49).

You may begin a sentence with the direct quotation and add the author's name and a strong verb before continuing the quotation.



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H5P: Quoting Sources Correctly 2

In each of the two examples, pick the quotation that is formatted most correctly.

- A. In their research, Callow (2014) argued in favour “a patient-centred care approach,” even in pediatric departments (p. 41).
- B. In their research, Callow (2014) argued in favour “a patient-centred care approach,” even in pediatric departments (Callow, 2014, p. 41).
- A. On page 362, Wing (2019) worried about the long-term impact of “moral stress” on nursing staff.
- B. Wing (2019) worried about the long-term impact of “moral stress” on nursing staff (p. 362).

- A. Abara (2017) asserted that there are “three critical crises at play” in the delivery of medicine in Canada (p. 21).
- B. Abara (2017) said that there are “three critical crises at play” in the delivery of medicine in Canada (p. 21).

Answer Key

1. A

2. B

3. A

Tip: Although APA style guidelines do not require writers to provide page numbers for material that is not directly quoted, your instructor may wish you to do so when possible. Check with your instructor about his or her preferences.

Long (Block) Quotations

Long quotations should be used even more sparingly than shorter ones. Long quotations can range in length from four to seven or eight lines (40 words or more, and should *never* be as long as a page. There are two reasons for this: First, by using a long quote, you are essentially letting the original author do all the thinking for you; remember that your audience wants to see *your* ideas, not someone else’s. Second, unless all the information and every word in the long quote is essential and could not be paraphrased (which is highly doubtful with a long passage), you are not showing your audience you have processed or evaluated the importance of the source’s critical information and weeded out the unnecessary information. If you believe you have found the perfect paragraph to support your ideas, and you decide you really want or need to use the long quote, see if you can shorten it by removing unnecessary words or complete sentences and put ellipses in their place. This will again show your reader that you have put a lot of thought into the use of the quote and that you have included it just because you did not want to do any thinking.

Tip: Be wary of quoting from sources at length. Remember, your ideas should drive the paper, and quotations should be used to support and enhance your points. Make sure any lengthy quotations that you include serve a clear purpose. Generally, no more than 10 to 15 percent of a paper should consist of quoted material.

Long Quotations: How to Make Them Fit

As with short quotations, you need to make sure long quotations fit into your writing. To introduce a long quote, you need to include a **stem** (this can include an attributive tag) followed by a colon (:). The stem is underlined in the example below.

Example

Marshall uses the example of towns in the Wild West to explain that:

Much of the population—especially younger males—frequently engaged in violence by participating in saloon fights and shootouts and gun fights. [However,] crimes committed by females, the elderly, or the infirm were rare occasions were much rarer because of those individuals being less likely to frequent such drinking establishments. (2010, p. 725)

In example, you can see the stem clearly introduces the quote in a grammatically correct way, leading into the quote fluidly.

Formatting Longer Quotations

When you quote a longer passage from a source—40 words or more—you need to use a different format to set off the quoted material. Instead of using quotation marks, create a **block quotation** by starting the quotation on a new line and indented five spaces from the margin. Note that in this case, the parenthetical citation comes *after* the period that ends the sentence. If the passage continues into a second paragraph, indent a full tab (five spaces) again in the first line of the second paragraph. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces women’s risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight bearing exercise, such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits.

It is important to note that swimming cannot be considered a weight-bearing exercise, since the water supports and cushions the swimmer. That doesn’t mean swimming isn’t great exercise, but it should be considered one part of an integrated fitness program. (p. 93)

Self-Practice Exercise 2.6



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H5P: Long Quotations

In each of the two examples, pick the quotation that is formatted most correctly.

1.
 - A. We use block quotations for quotations of four sentences or more.
 - B. We use block quotations for quotations of 40 words or more.

2.
 - A. The parenthetical citation comes after the period that ends the sentence
 - B. The parenthetical citation comes before the period that ends the sentence

3.
 - A. Block quotations start on a new line and are off-set from the text.
 - B. Block quotations continue from the text and are part of the natural prose of the essay.

Answer Key

1. B

2. A

3. A

Tip: To format a long quote, you need to remember the following:

- You may want to single space the quote, but not the main part of your essay. This will allow the long block quotation to stand out even more.
- Indent on both sides of the quote; you can use *left* or *full* justification.
- Do not use quotation marks; they are unnecessary because the spacing and indenting (and citation) will tell your reader this is a quote.
- Do not put the quote in italics.
- Include the end period (.) before the citation. See the example above.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- When you research, you'll need to build on the ideas of others. Citation is the way to give credit to the people whose ideas influenced you.
- In APA papers, in-text citations include the name of the author(s) and the year of publication whenever possible.
- Ideas and information taken from outside sources must be cited not only in the body of the paper but also in the references section.
- Material taken from sources should be used to develop the writer's ideas. Summarizing and paraphrasing are usually most effective for this purpose.
- A paraphrase restates ideas from a source using the writer's own words and sentence structures.
- Plagiarism has serious academic and professional consequences. To avoid accidental plagiarism, keep research materials organized, understand guidelines for fair dealing and appropriate citation of sources, and review the paper to make sure these guidelines are followed.

Activities for Further Reflection

- Create a quiz that tests your classmates' citation skills.
- Come up with 10 questions that you still have about citation. Compare them to your partner's questions. See how many you can answer together. If you don't know the answer, ask your instructor.
- Complete a Citation Scavenger Hunt. Using the Internet and Loyalist Library APA reference guide, do the following:
 - Cite an Instagram account

- Find a blog post about the rising costs of textbooks and cite it
- Cite a scholarly article
- Create a block quote
- Cite a tweet
- Cite a news article without an author

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CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPING STUDY SKILLS



In this section, you will:

- Compare different methods of note-taking
- Recognize ways to organize and manage your assignments and studying
- Identify strategies for managing your time effectively.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- What priorities/responsibilities do you have competing with the time you can dedicate to schooling?
- What organization methods have you used in the past? Did you find that they helped? Why or why not?
- Think of the most organized person that you know. What do you think that they do to stay so organized?

TIME MANAGEMENT

By now you have a general idea of what to expect from your courses. You have probably received course outlines, and started your first few assignments.

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

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

As you work through this section, remember that every student is different. The strategies presented here are tested techniques that work well for many people, but you may need to adapt them to develop a system that works well for you personally.

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

Understanding Yourself as a Learner

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

- What is your learning style? For the purposes of this chapter, **learning style** refers to the way you prefer to take in new information, by seeing, by listening, or through some other channel.
- What times of day are you most productive? If your energy peaks early, you might benefit from blocking out early morning time for studying or writing. If you prefer the night, set aside a few evenings a week for schoolwork.
- How much clutter can you handle in your workspace? Some people work fine at a messy desk and know exactly where to find what they need in their stack of papers; however, most people benefit from maintaining a neat, organized space.
- How well do you handle potential distractions in your environment? If you can study at home without being tempted to turn on the television, check your email, fix yourself a snack, and so on, you may make home your workspace. However, if you need a less distracting environment to stay focused, you may be able to find one on campus or in your community.
- Does a little background noise help or hinder your productivity? Some people work better when listening to

background music or the low hum of conversation in a coffee shop. Others need total silence.

- When you work with a partner or group, do you stay on task? A study partner or group can sometimes be invaluable. However, working this way takes extra planning and effort, so be sure to use the time productively. If you find that group study sessions turn into social occasions, you may study better on your own.
- How do you manage stress? Accept that at certain points in the semester, you will feel stressed out. In your day-to-day routine, make time for activities that help you reduce stress, such as exercising, spending time with friends, or just scheduling downtime to relax.

Learning Styles

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

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

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

Now read the following explanations of each option in the list above. Again, think about whether each description sounds like you.

- If you chose 1, you may prefer learning **visually**. You understand ideas best when they are presented in a visual format, such as a flow chart, a diagram, or text with clear headings and many photos or illustrations.
- If you chose 2, you may prefer learning **verbally**. You understand ideas best through reading and writing about them and taking detailed notes.
- If you chose 3, you may prefer **auditory learning**. You understand ideas best through listening. You learn well from spoken lectures or books on tape.
- If you chose 4, you may prefer learning **kinesthetically**. You learn best through doing and prefer hands-on activities. In long lectures, fidgeting may help you focus.

Your learning style does not completely define you as a student. Auditory learners can comprehend a flow chart, and kinesthetic learners can sit still long enough to read a book. However, if you do have one dominant learning style, you can work with it to get the most out of your classes and study time.

Tip: The material presented here about learning styles is just the tip of the iceberg. There are numerous other variations in how people learn. Some people like to act on information right away while others reflect on it first. Some people excel at mastering details and understanding concrete, tried-and-true ideas while others enjoy exploring abstract theories and innovative, even impractical, ideas.

Time Management

In college, you have increased freedom to structure your time as you please. With that freedom comes increased responsibility. High school teachers often take it upon themselves to track down students who miss class or forget assignments. Your instructors now, however, expect you to take full responsibility for managing yourself and getting your work done on time.

Getting Started: Short- and Long-Term Planning

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

That may sound like a lot when taking several classes, but if you plan your time carefully, it is manageable. A typical full-time schedule of 15 credit hours translates into 30 to 45 hours per week spent on schoolwork outside of class. All in all, a full-time student would spend about as much time on school each week as an employee spends on work. Balancing school and a job can be more challenging, but still doable.

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

Tip: The two- to three-hour rule may sound intimidating. However, keep in mind that this is only a rule of thumb. Realistically, some courses will be more challenging than others, and the demands will shift throughout the semester. You may have trouble-free weeks and stressful weeks.

Staying Consistent: Time Management Dos and Do Nots

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

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

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

Do:

- Do set aside time to review your schedule and calendar regularly and update or adjust them as needed.
- Do be realistic when you schedule study time. Do not plan to write your paper on Friday night when everyone else is out socializing. When Friday comes, you might end up abandoning your plans and hanging out with your friends instead.
- Do be honest with yourself about where your time goes. Do not fritter away your study time on distractions like email and social networking sites.
- Do accept that occasionally your work may get a little off track. No one is perfect.
- Do accept that sometimes you may not have time for all the fun things you would like to do.
- Do recognize times when you feel overextended. Sometimes you may just need to get through an especially demanding week. However, if you feel exhausted and overworked all the time, you may need to scale back on some of your commitments.
- Do make a plan for handling high-stress periods, such as final exam week. Try to reduce your other commitments during those periods—for instance, by scheduling time off from your job. Build in some time for relaxing activities, too.

Do not:

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

but your brain functions best when you are rested.

Self-Practice Exercise 3.1



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HSP: Reviewing Your Habits

Establish regular times to “check in” with yourself to identify and prioritize tasks and plan how to accomplish them. Many people find it is best to set aside a few minutes for this each day and to take some time to plan at the beginning of each week.

For the next two weeks, focus on consistently using whatever time management system you have set up. Check in with yourself daily and weekly, stick to your schedule, and take note of anything that interferes. At the end of the two weeks, review your schedule and determine whether you need to adjust it.

Review the list of dos and don'ts.

- Identify at least two habits from the dos list that you could use to improve your time management skills. Make notes below about how you will implement them.
- Identify the habit from the don'ts list that you are most likely to slip into as the semester gets busier. What could you do to combat this habit?

NOTE-TAKING METHODS

One final valuable tool to have in your arsenal as a student is a good note-taking system. Just the act of converting a spoken lecture to notes helps you organize and retain information, and of course, good notes also help you review important concepts later. Although taking good notes is an essential study skill, many students have never received guidance on note taking.

Marking, note making, or note taking is a matter of personal preference in terms of style. The most important thing is to do *something*. Again we stress that reading is like a dialogue with an author. The author wrote this material. Pretend you are actually talking to the author.

- **Do not** let an idea pass without noting it.
- **Do not** let an ambiguity go by without questioning it.
- **Do not** let a term slip away if context does not help you understand it; look it up!
- **Engage** and you will both understand and remember.

Tip: Put small checks in pencil where you would normally underline. When you finish a section, look back and see what you really need to mark. (If you check over 50 percent of the page, you probably are marking to go back and learn later versus thinking about what is really important to learn now!)

Use consistent symbols to visually help you identify what is happening on the page:

- Circle central themes or write at the beginning of the section if it is not directly stated.
- [Bracket] main points.
- Underline key words or phrases for significant details.
- Put numbers 1, 2, 3 for items listed.
- Put square brackets or highlights for key terms when the definition follows.
- Use stars (*), question marks (?), or diagrams in the margins to show relevance.
- Use key word outlines in the margins for highlighting.
- Write questions in the margin that test your memory of what is written right there.
- Use blank spaces indicating the number of ideas to be remembered, forcing you to test yourself versus just rereading.

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

General Note-Taking Guidelines

Before class, quickly review your notes from the previous class and the assigned reading. Fixing key terms and concepts in your mind will help you stay focused and pick out the important points during the lecture.

Come prepared with paper, pens, highlighters, textbooks, and any important handouts.

Come to class with a positive attitude and a readiness to learn. During class, make a point of concentrating. Ask questions if you need to. Be an active participant.

During class, capture important ideas as concisely as you can. Use words or phrases instead of full sentences, and abbreviate when possible.

Visually organize your notes into main topics, subtopics, and supporting points, and show the relationships between ideas. Leave space if necessary so you can add more details under important topics or subtopics.

Record the following:

- Ideas that the instructor repeats frequently or points out as key ideas
- Ideas the instructor lists on a whiteboard or transparency
- Details, facts, explanations, and lists that develop main points
- Review your notes regularly throughout the semester, not just before exams.

Organizing Ideas in Your Notes

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

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

Modified outline format

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

The first example shows Crystal's notes from a developmental psychology class about an important theorist in this field.

Notice how the line for the main topic is all the way to the left. Subtopics are indented, and supporting details are indented one level further. Crystal also used abbreviations for terms like development and example.

Child Development – 20th Century Theorists

- Jean Piaget
- Swiss psychologist, influential in education
- First developed theories in 1920s–30s
- 4 major stages of cognitive dev.
 - sensorimotor (0–2) – infants explore the world through motion and 5 senses
 - self-centred perspective
 - need to learn that environment still exists even when they can't see people/objects (for ex., playing peek-a-boo)
 - preoperational (2–7) – kids use “magical” thinking, often not logical
 - less self-centred
 - poor sense of time
 - can think about people/objects that are not physically present
 - concrete operations (7–12) – kids begin to think logically
 - thinking is very concrete
 - improved understanding of physical world
 - formal operations (12–adulthood) – logical thinking develops further
 - can understand & test abstract ideas
 - more concerned about the future, hypothetical possibilities

Mind mapping/clustering

If you are a visual learner, you may prefer to use a more graphic format for notes, such as a mind map. The next example shows how Crystal's lecture notes could be set up differently. Although the format is different, the content and organization are the same.

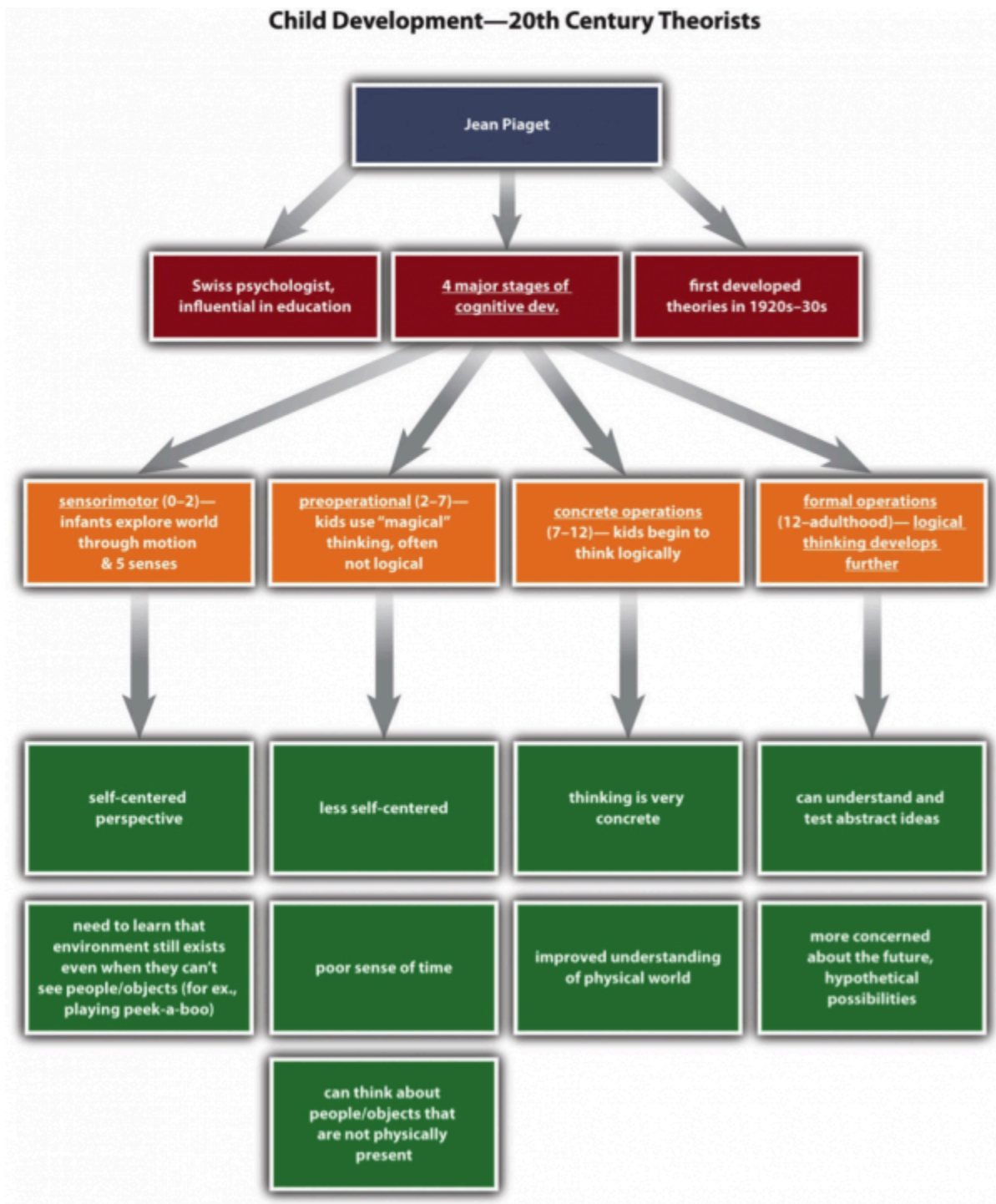


Figure 3.1 A Mind Map of Child Development – 20th Century Theorists

Charting

If the content of a lecture falls into a predictable, well organized pattern, you might choose to use a chart or table to record your notes. This system works best when you already know, either before class or at the beginning of class, which categories you should include. The next figure shows how this system might be used.

Table 3.1: Notes Organized in a Table

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

***See also stages of adult development

The Cornell note-taking system

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

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

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

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

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

The next figure shows what Crystal's notes would look like using the Cornell system.

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

Figure 1.2 The Cornell Note-Taking System

ORGANIZING TIME FOR WRITING

For any writing assignment, use these strategies:

- **Plan ahead.** Divide the work into smaller, manageable tasks, and set aside time to accomplish each task in turn.
- **Make sure you understand the assignment requirements.** If necessary, clarify the requirements with your instructor. Think carefully about the purpose of the writing, the intended audience, the topics you will need to address, and any specific requirements of the writing form.
- **Complete each step of the writing process.** With practice, using this process will come automatically to you.
- **Use the resources available to you.** Remember that most schools have specific services to help students with their writing.

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

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

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

Each Monday in Crystal's Foundations of Education class, the instructor distributed copies of a current news article on education and assigned students to write a one-and-a-half to two-page response that was due the following Monday. Together, these weekly assignments counted for 20 percent of the course grade. Although each response took just a few hours to complete, Crystal found that she learned more from the reading and got better grades on her writing if she spread the work out in the following way:

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

Figure 3.2 Sample Schedule

Self-Practice Exercise 3.2



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=81#h5p-18>

H5P: Review Your Goals

Review the long- and short-term goals you set for yourself for the discussion at the beginning of the module.

Brainstorm a list of stepping stones that will help you meet that goal, such as “doing well on my midterm and final exams” or “talking to Professor Gibson about doing an internship.” Write down everything you can think of that would help you meet that semester goal.

Identify one action from your brainstorming that you can do today. What is it? How will you do it?

Using Available Resources

One reason students sometimes find post-secondary courses overwhelming is that they do not know about, or are reluctant to use, the resources available to them. There is help available; your student fees help pay for resources that can help in many ways, such as a health centre or tutoring service. If you need help, consider asking for help from any of the following:

Your instructor: If you are making an honest effort but still struggling with a particular course, set a time to meet with your instructor and discuss what you can do to improve. He or she may be able to shed light on a confusing concept or give you strategies to catch up.

The writing centre: These centres employ tutors to help you manage your writing assignments. They will not write or edit your paper for you, but they can help you through the stages of the writing process. (In some schools, the writing centre is part of the academic resource centre.)

The career resource centre: Visit the career resource centre for guidance in choosing a career path, developing a resumé, and finding and applying for jobs.

Counselling services: Many schools offer psychological counselling for free or for a low fee. Use these services if you need help coping with a difficult personal situation or managing depression, anxiety, or other problems.

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

Self-Practice Exercise 3.3

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

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Understanding your individual learning style and preferences can help you identify the study and time management strategies that will work best for you.
- To manage your time effectively, it is important to look both at the short term (daily and weekly schedules) and the long term (major semester deadlines).
- Setting concrete long- and short-term goals helps students stay focused and motivated

Activities for Further Reflection

- Map out a week-long schedule of study time. Try to apply the two to three-hour rule. Include any other non-negotiable responsibilities, such as a job or child care duties.
- Use your course syllabi to record your exam dates and due dates for assignments on a calendar. Use a star, highlight, or mark off any days or weeks that look demanding.
- Try two of the note-taking formats that were discussed in this chapter (remember that the Cornell system can be combined with other note-taking formats). Which of these formats did you find more useful for your learning style?

CHAPTER 4: READING & WRITING



In this section, you will:

- Explore your relationship with reading and writing in the past
- Evaluate reading comprehension techniques
- Recognize the steps of the writing process including the pre-writing stage
- Demonstrate how to formulate a research question
- Critique pre-writing techniques

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- What are some of your most positive reading and writing memories?
- Do you believe that you are a good writer? Why or why not?
- What is the most frustrating part of the reading or writing process for you?
- Describe a time when you wrote something you're proud of. How did you get started? What conditions did you write under? Did you revise?

READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Your post-secondary courses will sharpen both your reading and your writing skills. Most of your writing assignments—from brief response papers to in-depth research projects—will depend on your understanding of course reading assignments or related readings you do on your own. It is difficult, if not impossible, to write effectively about a text that you have not understood. Even when you do understand the reading, it can be hard to write about it if you do not feel personally engaged with the ideas discussed.

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

- **Planning strategies** to help you manage your reading assignments
- **Comprehension strategies** to help you understand the material
- **Active reading strategies** to take your understanding to a higher and deeper level

Planning Your Reading

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

Managing Your Reading Time

Focus on setting aside enough time for reading and breaking your assignments into manageable chunks. For example, if you are assigned a 70-page chapter to read for next week's class, try not to wait until the night before to get started. Give yourself at least a few days and tackle one section at a time.

Your method for breaking up the assignment will depend on the type of reading. If the text is very dense and packed with unfamiliar terms and concepts, you may need to read no more than 5 or 10 pages in one sitting so that you can truly understand and process the information. With more user-friendly texts, you will be able to handle longer sections—20 to 40 pages, for instance. And if you have a highly engaging reading assignment, such as a novel you cannot put down, you may be able to read lengthy passages in one sitting.

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

Setting a Purpose

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

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

- How did my instructor frame the assignment? Often instructors will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading. For example:
 - Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current theories related to conducting risk assessments.
 - Read these two articles and compare Smith’s and Jones’s perspectives on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982).
- How deeply do I need to understand the reading? If you are majoring in emergency management and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, “Introduction to Emergency Management,” it is safe to assume the chapter presents fundamental concepts that you will be expected to master. However, for some reading assignments, you may be expected to form a general understanding but not necessarily master the content.
- How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class? Your instructor may make some of these connections explicitly, but if not, try to draw connections on your own. (Needless to say, it helps to take detailed notes both when in class and when you read.)
- How might I use this text again in the future? If you are assigned to read about a topic that has always interested you, your reading assignment might help you develop ideas for a future research paper. Some reading assignments provide valuable tips or summaries worth bookmarking for future reference. Think about what you can take from the reading that will stay with you.

Improving Your Comprehension

For any expository writing—that is, nonfiction, informational writing—your first comprehension goal is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. Because post-secondary-level texts can be challenging, you will also need to monitor your reading comprehension. That is, you will need to stop periodically and assess how well you

understand what you are reading. Finally, you can improve comprehension by taking time to determine which strategies work best for you and putting those strategies into practice.

Identifying the Main Points

In your courses, you will be reading a wide variety of materials, including the following:

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

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

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

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

Many trade books include an introduction that presents the writer's main ideas and purpose for writing. Reading chapter titles (and any subtitles within the chapter) will help you get a broad sense of what is covered. It also helps to read the beginning and ending paragraphs of a chapter closely. These paragraphs often sum up the main ideas presented.

Reading the headings and introductory paragraphs carefully is crucial in popular articles. In magazine articles, these features (along with the closing paragraphs) present the main concepts. Hard news articles in newspapers present the gist of the news story in the lead paragraph, while subsequent paragraphs present increasingly general details.

At the far end of the reading difficulty scale are scholarly books and journal articles. Since these texts are aimed at a specialized, highly educated audience, the authors presume their readers are already familiar with the topic. The language and writing style is sophisticated and sometimes dense. When you read scholarly books and journal articles, try to apply the same strategies discussed earlier for other types of text. The introduction usually presents the writer's thesis—the idea or hypothesis the writer is trying to prove. Headings and subheadings can help you understand how the writer has organized support for the thesis. Additionally, academic journal articles often include a summary at the beginning, called an abstract, and electronic databases include summaries of articles too.

Monitoring Your Comprehension

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

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

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

Summarize – At the end of each section, pause to summarize the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.

Ask and answer questions – When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to answer after you finish it. Write down your questions and use them to test yourself on the reading. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Is the answer buried in that section of reading but just not coming across to you? Or do you expect to find the answer in another part of the reading?

Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates – Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers'. These discussions can also serve as a reality check. If everyone in the class struggled with the reading, it may be exceptionally challenging. If it was easy for everyone but you, you may need to see your instructor for help.

Self-Practice Exercise 4.1



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=89#h5p-19>

H5P: Reading Activity

For this activity, you can choose any reading you've been assigned in another class. (This course is intended to help you succeed in your other courses!) If you don't have any assigned readings, you can choose

something you need to read for work or for another application, or a news story you've been meaning to get around to.

- Summarize the main points of your text in two or three sentences.
- Write down two to three questions about the text that you can bring up during class discussion.
- Doing this active reading exercise when you have assigned readings will enable you to be more successful because you will be prepared for class discussions.

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

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

Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading

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

There are two common strategies for active reading:

- Applying the four reading stages
- SQ3R

Both will help you look at a text in depth and help prepare you for when you have to study to use the information on an exam. You should try them both and decide which works better for you.

Four reading stages

Everyone reads and retains information in different ways. However, applying the following four stages of reading whenever you pick up material will not only help you understand what you are reading, but will also increase the chances

of your actually remembering what you have read. While it may seem that this strategy of four reading stages takes a lot of time, it will become more natural for you as you continue applying it. Also, using these four stages will actually save you time because you will already have retained a lot, if not all, of the content, so when it is time to study for your exam, you will find that you already know the material.

The four reading strategies you will need to sharpen in order to get through your material are:

- Survey reading
- Close reading
- Inquiry reading
- Critical reading

These four strategies all stress “reading as thinking.” You will need to read actively to comprehend and remember what you are reading, for both your own and your instructor’s purposes. In order to do that, you need to think about the relevance of ideas to one another and about their usefulness to you personally, professionally, and academically.

Again, this differs from our usual daily reading activities, where interest often determines what we choose to read rather than utility. What happens when we are really not interested in what we are reading or seeing? Our eyes move down the page and our minds are elsewhere. We may read anywhere from one paragraph to several pages and suddenly realize we do not have the foggiest idea what we have just read. Clearly focusing our reading purpose on surveying, reading closely, being inquisitive, and reading critically, means we are reading for specific results: we read faster, know what we want, and read to get it.

Survey reading

Surveying quickly (2 to 10 minutes if it is a long chapter) allows you to see the overall idea of what the text is sharing with you. Some of the benefits of surveying are listed below:

- It increases reading rate and attention because you have a road map: a mental picture of the beginning, middle, and end of this journey.
- It helps you create a mental map, allowing you to organize your reading by highlighting key topics and getting impressions of relevance, which in turn helps in the business or remembering.
- It aids in budgeting study time because you know the length and difficulty of the material. Usually you read study material to find out what is there in order to go back later and learn it. With surveying you accomplish the same in one-tenth the time.
- It **improves concentration** because you know what is ahead and how what you are reading fits into the total picture.

For a text or chapter, look at introductions, summaries, chapter headings, bold print, and graphics to piece together the main theme and its development.

Close reading

Close reading allows you to concentrate and make decisions now about what is relevant and what is not. Its main purpose is to help ensure that you understand what you are reading and to help you store information in a logical and organized way, so when you need to recall the information, it is easier for you to do so. It is a necessary and critical strategy for academic reading for the following reasons:

- You read as if you were going to be tested on it immediately upon completion. You read to remember at least 75 to 80 percent of the information.
- You clearly identify main concepts, key details, and their relationships with one another. Close reading allows you to summarize effectively what you read.
- Your ability to answer essay questions improves because the concepts are more organized and understood rather than merely memorized.
- You become more confident because your understanding improves which, in turn, increases your enjoyment.

Survey for overall structure; read, annotating main theme, key points, and essential detail; summarize the important ideas and their development.

Inquiry reading

Inquiry reading tends to be what we do with material we are naturally interested in. We usually do not notice we are doing this because we enjoy learning and thinking about it. *Discovery reading* is another term that describes this type of reading. Some of its benefits to the study process include:

- **Increased focus:** By asking interpretative questions, determining relevance, and searching for your answers, you are involved and less likely to be bored or distracted.
- **Retention:** Memory of the material is improved because of increased involvement.
- **Stimulation of creativity:** This involvement will raise new questions for you and inspire further research.
- **Matching instructor expectations:** Instructors are usually seeking deeper understanding as well as basic memory of concepts.

Critical reading

Critical reading is necessary in order to determine the salience (or key points) of the concepts presented, their relevance, and the accuracy of arguments. When you read critically, you become even more deeply involved with the material, which will allow you to make better judgments about what is the more important information.

People often read reactively to material—especially debate, controversy, and politics. When readers react, they bring a wealth of personal experience and opinion to the concept to which they are reacting. But critical reading requires thinking—as you would expect—critically about the material. Critical thinking relies on reason, evidence, and open mindedness and recognizes the biases, assumptions, and motives of both the writer and the reader.

Learning to read critically offers these advantages:

- By substantiating arguments and interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating those supporting the concept moves mere reaction into critical reading and deepens your understanding.
- By analyzing relationships between the material read and other readings or experience, you can make connections.
- By making connections, you will increase your concentration and confidence in being able to discuss and evaluate what you read.

Understand and analyze the material in terms of writer's purpose and results, relevance to readers, and value to the field at large.

Your memory of facts and concepts will be enhanced by surveying and close reading. Interpretation, relevance, application, and evaluation of presented facts and concepts require deeper questioning and involvement. Inquiry and critical reading are more applicable at these stages. We will be discussing this in the next section: SQ3R.

Using the SQ3R strategy

Another strategy you can use to become a more active, engaged reader is SQ3R, which is a step-by-step process to follow before, during, and after reading. You could use SQ3R for a variety of reading purposes:

- Getting main concepts only
- Flushing out key details
- Organizing concepts
- Writing a coherent summary of significant points and their development

This is not a new or unfamiliar process; SQ3R is only a new name. It describes surveying various resources (e.g., papers, journals, other relevant sources) for whatever project we are working on; generating questions to shape our understanding of the topic; reading the material; marking, reciting, or, in some way, logging what is critical to our task; and reviewing on what we have read.

You may already use some variation of SQ3R. In essence, the process works like this:

- Survey the text in advance.
- Form questions before you start reading.
- Read the text.
- Recite and/or record important points during and after reading.
- Review and reflect on the text after you read.

Each of these elements is discussed below.

Survey

Before you read, first survey the text. As noted earlier, reading introductory paragraphs and headings can help you begin to figure out the author's main point and identify what important topics will be covered. Flip through the text and look for any pictures, charts or graphs, the table of contents, index, and glossary. Scan the preface and introduction to each chapter. Skim a few paragraphs. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. This will help you form a first impression of the material and determine the appropriateness of the material.

The final stage of surveying occurs once you have identified which chapters are relevant. Quickly look at any headings as well as the introduction and conclusion to the chapter to confirm the relevance of the information.

Sometimes, this survey step alone may be enough because you may need only a general familiarization with the material. Surveying will also help you to decide if you want to look at a book more deeply when you are conducting research, saving you time in the long run.

Question

There are two focuses in the Question stage. First, keep the question of why you are reading the material in mind. It will help you focus because you will be actively engaged in the information you are consuming. Also, if there are any visual aids, you will want to examine what they are showing as they probably represent important ideas.

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

- What are the major differences between these two concepts?
- Where does each appear in the sentencing process?

Focus your questioning on open ended questions. Asking in-depth questions will help you stay more engaged as you read. Once you have your questions in mind, you can move to the next step of actively reading to see if you can come up with an answer.

Read

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

Recite

While you are reading, pause occasionally to recite or record important points. It is best to do this at the end of each

section or when the topic changes. Put the book aside for a moment and recite aloud the main points of the section or any important answers you found there. You might also record ideas by jotting down a few brief notes in addition to, or instead of, reciting aloud. Either way, the physical act of articulating information makes you more likely to remember it.

After you have finished reading, set the book aside and briefly answer your initial question by making notes or highlighting/underlining. Try to use your own words as much as possible, but if you find an important quote, you can identify it as well. If there are any diagrams, make notes from memory on what information they are giving. Then look back at the diagrams to make sure you were accurate.

Repeat this questioning, reading, and reciting process for the rest of the chapter. As you work your way through, occasionally pause and really think about what you have read; it is easy to work through a section or chapter and realize that you have not actually absorbed any of the material.

Review and reflect

Once you have looked at the whole chapter, try to put each section into the context of the bigger picture. Ask yourself if you have really answered each question you set out with and if you have been accurate in your answers. To make sure that you really remember the information, review your notes again after about one week and then again three or four weeks later. Also, if the textbook includes review questions or your instructor has provided a study guide, use these tools to guide your review. You will want to record information in a more detailed format than you used during reading, such as in an outline or a list.

As you review the material, reflect on what you learned. Did anything surprise you, upset you, or make you think? Did you find yourself strongly agreeing or disagreeing with any points in the text? What topics would you like to explore further? Jot down your reflections in your notes.

Tip: As you go through your future readings, practice this method considering these points:

- From memory, jot down the key ideas discussed in the section you just read. If you need it, use a separate piece of paper. Look back through the text and check your memory with what you jotted down. How did you do?
- Choose one section from the chapter and write a summary from memory of what you learned from that section.
- Now review that section. Identify what corresponds and what you omitted. How are you doing? When you read that section, did you consciously intend to remember it?

Although this process may seem time-consuming, you will find that it will actually save time. When you have a question in mind while reading, you have more of a purpose while looking for the important information. The notes you take will also be more organized and concise because you are focused, and this will save you time when it comes to writing essays. Also, since you have reviewed throughout the

process, you will not need to spend as much time reviewing for exams because it is already stored in your memory.

Self-Practice Exercise 4.2



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=89#h5p-20>

H5P: Reading Activity

Choose another text that that you have been assigned to read for a class. Use the SQ3R process to complete the reading. (Keep in mind that you may need to spread the reading over more than one session, especially if the text is long.) Again, if you don't have any assigned readings, you can choose something you need to read for work or for another application, or a news story you've been meaning to get around to.

The prompts below will guide you through the SQ3R process.

- **Step One: Survey.** Preview the reading. Read the introduction, headers, figures or charts, and skim a few paragraphs. Identify which parts of the reading are most relevant to your purposes.
- **Step Two: Question.** Brainstorm some questions you have about the text. Aim for a balance of factual questions (what does this word mean?) and open-ended (is this argument successful?).
- **Step Three: Read.** Time to do the reading itself now! Don't be shy about highlights, making notes in the margins, or marking pages with sticky notes to help you flag the things that are important and that interest you.
- **Step Four: Recite.** As you read, pause to record important details. When you finish reading, see if you can answer the questions you identified in Step One.
- **Step Five: Review and Reflect.** Return to the text and your responses to see if you've accurately answered the questions, and if your understanding of the important points is detailed or correct enough.

Reflection

- On a scale from one to ten, how helpful did you find this process?
- How does it compare with other study techniques you have used?

Using Other Active Reading Strategies

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

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

Additional Reading Comprehension Techniques

In this section, we will take this a step further by developing your skills in how to understand the material you read by helping you to distinguish the main ideas in a passage from the more specific supporting details. One way to do this is to recognize patterns, which will help you organize your thinking in systematic ways that parallel the presentation in the source. Key terms for such patterns are:

- **Main/controlling ideas** (located in topic sentences)
- **Key details** (located within paragraphs)
- **Patterns** (form the structure of the paragraph or section)
- **Inferences** (are not usually written and must be concluded by the reader)

Many people read to remember everything and do not distinguish between key concepts, key supporting details, positions relative to these concepts, and inferences that can be drawn. Creating a road map with these highlights helps you both to understand and to remember what you read. This section includes a few exercises to practise identifying the main and supporting ideas in passages representing the different patterns.

Reading for Main Ideas and Details

Creating or identifying main ideas is like creating a skeleton that holds all the rest of the information together—creating a body. Key facts are like muscles. The point of view and its implications are like the blood that gives life to the body. Some main ideas are directly stated; others are implied, and you must infer a statement yourself. When you read, you can identify the main idea of a paragraph, section, chapter, or book by asking yourself the following questions:

- What is the topic or subject matter? What/who is this about?
- What am I supposed to understand about this? (This is the idea about the topic.)
- Are there any sentences that help clarify what I am supposed to understand about the topic? (Often the first or last sentence will state the main idea.)
- How do I know for sure? All the important information in the paragraph is covered by the main idea sentence. Does it help me to understand what is being said about the topic?

Self-Practice Exercise 4.3



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HSP: Read the passage and identify the main idea. It's okay to use the author's own words here.

When we think about it, is there really something that we can call “the public”? The population of communities is really made up of a set of publics. The needs and interests of a population are uniform on only the broadest matters, such as health and the security of the person and his or her property. Beyond those

very broad areas of policy, needs and interests differ, sometimes very markedly, and sometimes in ways that cause conflict between competing interests. It is highly unlikely that diverse needs or interests of all groups or individuals can all be satisfied at the same time. Thus, industrial firms that produce hazardous wastes may need sites to dispose of such undesirable by-products. Such firms can be thought of as one “public” and it is apparent that their need will conflict with the interests of another public—the people who live near the proposed disposal site.

HSP: Read the passage and identify the main idea. It’s okay to use the author’s own words here.

Marketing research is a major component or subsystem within a marketing information system. It is used in a very wide variety of marketing situations. Typically, in a marketing research study the problem to be solved is first identified. Then a researcher decides whether to use secondary or primary sources of information. To gather primary data, the researcher may use the survey, observation, or experimental method. Normally, primary data are gathered by sampling. Then the data are analyzed, and a written report is prepared.

HSP: Which of the following sentences is the best main point for this paragraph?

According to psychiatrist Richard Moscotti, the ability to work well is one key to a balanced life. He feels both underworking and overworking are to be avoided. A second key is the ability to love, which requires a certain amount of openness. The ability to be loved is the third key to a balanced life. This is difficult for those who feel unworthy of love. The last key is the ability to play, which involves knowing how to relax.

- A. According to Moscotti, some people having trouble receiving love.
- B. The final key to a balanced life, according to Moscotti, is the ability to play.
- C. According to Moscotti, there are four keys to a balanced life.
- D. The first key to a balanced life, according to Moscotti, is the ability to work well.

Correct Answer: C

How did you do? Were you able to identify which were the more general statements from the supporting details? Most of the time, the topic sentence is at or near the beginning of the paragraph, but sometimes it is not. Always remember that when identifying the topic sentence, all of the other ideas in that paragraph need to be an example or detail relating to that main point. If one of the ideas does not fit, either you have chosen a statement or idea that is too specific or the writer did not create a strong topic sentence in the paragraph.

Reading for Patterns

Depending on the writer’s purpose and the information being shared, there are four general groupings by which information is organized:

- Definitions, details, and illustrations
- Time sequences, process descriptions, experiment/instructions, and simple listing
- Comparison and contrast

- Cause and effect

Reading for Key Details

Some details are more important than others in explaining, supporting, or developing the main idea. Others are further illustrations of details.

The following list shows key words you can use to help you identify patterns with ideas in relation to the four groupings listed above. Whichever words from whichever group are used, they will help the reader follow the logical organization of the material.

- **Definitions, details, and illustrations.** Usually when you see these, a definition or concept preceded it.
 - for example
 - for instance
 - as an illustration
 - to illustrate
 - such as
 - to be specific
 - specifically
 - including one
- **Time sequence, process description, experiment/instructions, simple listing.** Some of these can be used to both show sequence in time and ideas.
 - Time order:
 - first, second, third, etc
 - then, since, next, before, after, as soon as, now, until, later, while, during, when, finally
 - Additive listing: also, another, and, in addition, moreover, next, first of all, first, second, furthermore, last of all, finally
- **Compare and contrast**
 - Compare: similarly, similar to, just as with, in comparison, likewise, like, liken, both, compared to, in the same way, in a similar fashion
 - Contrast: on the other hand, conversely, rather, on the contrary, but, however, alternatively, differ, instead of, in contrast to, despite, nevertheless
- **Cause and Effect**
 - thus, because, because of, causes, as a result, results in, result, affects, therefore, since, leads to, brings about, consequently

The previous list categorizes key words that can help you identify main and supporting ideas when you are reading. You will also need to apply these throughout the rest of the chapters when developing sentences, paragraphs, and essays.

The next exercises will give you opportunities to practise identifying the main and key ideas in paragraphs.

Self-Practice Exercise 4.4

Read the passage below and then make note of the following things: the main term, its definition, key details, and an example.

Eidetic imagery is the technical term for what most people know as photographic memory. People with eidetic imagery can recall every detail of a memory as clearly as if they were looking at a photograph. People often wish they had this ability, but it can lead to trouble. For example, a law student with eidetic imagery was accused of cheating on an examination because his test paper contained exactly the words in his textbook. To prove his innocence, he studied an unfamiliar passage for five minutes and then wrote down more than 400 words from it without making a mistake.

Self-Practice Exercise 4.5

Read the passage below and then identify the effects caused by the condition described.

Suffering from debilitating guilt causes many self-defeating behaviours in adulthood. We see adults submitting to the outrageous demands of partners or employers. We see individuals who appear to be constantly angry and then, almost immediately, guilty. We see adults who have felt lifelong depression. The rage felt when shamed in childhood and when suffering from debilitating shame in adulthood is turned against the self because of the dependency on the other for survival. When we are rejected in adulthood by a mate or lover, the feelings we experience are anger at being rejected. Furthermore, if we suffer from debilitating shame, we have not been able to gain autonomy. We continue to feel dependent upon attachment figures. It is from them, from their feelings, attitudes and opinions of us, that we feel worthwhile. To be angry at someone depended upon for survival causes us enormous guilt. Anger is redirected on the vulnerable self. We become trapped in a circular bind of shame, anger, anxiety, guilt, and depression.

Reading for Implications/Inferences: Tracing a Theme to its Conclusion

The methods of recognizing patterns discussed above are concrete and easy to identify. Inferences, on the other hand, are more subtle. When a writer implies something, he or she is giving hints but does not state the point directly. Think

about a time, for example, when you had people visiting you at home; it was late, and you wanted them to leave. Did you ask them directly, “Hey, can you leave now”? Probably not, but you may have hinted that you had to wake up early in the morning, or you may have subtly yawned. Hopefully, those people picked up on your cues and inferred it was time to leave: meaning they put the pieces together to arrive at the conclusion you wanted them to leave, yet you did not say it directly.

When a writer does this, the reader may not actually pick up on the hints or maybe even interpret them differently. Sometimes readers make inferences that are based more on their own preferences and experience than on the information provided. This also means that two readers may interpret the same information differently because of differing individual experiences that led them to arrive at their conclusions. For you as a writer, you need to remember that it is your responsibility to give the readers everything they need in order for them to arrive at the conclusions you want them to make. If you are not direct, readers may be left confused or not catch your point.

There are also times that you as a reader will need to read passages requiring you to make inferences. The next exercises will help you to practise reading for inference. Remember, if your answers are different than the ones given, it means you interpreted the information differently and may have missed the author’s point. In these passages, you can also use a process of elimination and ask yourself statement best completes the passage.

Self-Practice Exercise 4.6



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=89#h5p-24>

HSP: Reading for Implications

Read each passage and choose the answer that best completes the thought of the passage. Think about why the other answers would not be a correct conclusion to the passage.

1. To a manufacturer, the wages paid to employees are a large portion of production expenses. The fact that wages also determine the buying power of the consumer is sometimes overlooked. In times of overproduction, the manufacturer tries to lower operating costs by decreasing the number of employees. This reduces expenditures of money in wages, but it also:
 - A. raises costs
 - B. reduces consumption
 - C. maintains the status quo

- D. increases population
2. Totally new cities that will be built in the future may be better planned than the large cities that already exist. Old cities were not properly planned for the great growth in population and industry that they have had, and many are in the process of tearing down and rebuilding large sections. This process is helping to improve some old cities—both large and small ones—but it does not give them the choice of complete city designing that will be available to:
- A. foreign cities
 - B. larger cities
 - C. richer cities
 - D. new cities
3. The director of this company believes that there is a growing awareness by management that business corporations are, and should be, guided by policies that are designed to satisfy human needs as well as material needs, and that there is nothing inconsistent between this and the making of:
- A. good and satisfying profits
 - B. political enemies in some quarters
 - C. better opportunities for workers
 - D. educational opportunities for workers
4. Knowledge and pleasure are inextricably interlocked. It is impossible for us to learn what we do not enjoy, and we cannot enjoy that which does not impart:
- A. a strong emotion
 - B. a practical use
 - C. a novelty
 - D. a lesson
5. Oratory is to be best estimated on different principles from those that are applied to other productions. Truth is the object of philosophy and history. The merit of poetry is in its truth even though the truth is understood only through the imagination, which is aroused by poetry. The object of oratory is not truth but persuasion. A speaker who exhausts the whole philosophy of a question, who displays every grace of style, yet produces no effect on an audience, may be a great essayist, a great politician, a great master of composition, but:
- A. essentially a persuader
 - B. not a poet
 - C. not an orator
 - D. essentially an orator

Answer Key

1. B
2. D

3. A
4. D

5. C

Check back if you missed any of the answers in this self-exercise. In which instances did you read into the passages your ideas when selecting an answer versus what is stated in the passage?

In the next chapter, we will practise taking these main ideas and supporting ideas and put them into our own words, or paraphrase, to compose summaries which are very useful not only for remembering and studying information before tests but also for looking at sources and incorporating the information in them into your essays—essentially providing backing evidence to make your arguments more convincing.

APPROACHING THE WRITING PROCESS

College courses emphasize expository writing—writing that explains or informs. Often expository writing assignments will incorporate outside research, too. Some classes will also require persuasive writing assignments in which you state and support your position on an issue. Your instructors will hold you to a higher standard when it comes to supporting your ideas with reasons and evidence.

To write successfully, you also need to pre-write, think, research, plan, organize, draft, revise, rethink, analyze and brainstorm. Why is it important to think of writing as more than just the act of physically writing out words? When people say that they're "bad at writing," they actually just need to make a few adjustments to just one of the phases of the writing process. The more you understand your writing process, the more control you have over it.

Writing well is difficult. Even people who write for a living sometimes struggle to get their thoughts on the page. Even people who generally enjoy writing have days when they would rather be doing anything else. For people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, writing assignments can be stressful or even intimidating.

No magic formula will make writing quick and easy. However, you can use strategies and resources to manage writing assignments more easily.

Using the Writing Process

1. **Prewriting.** The writer generates ideas to write about and begins developing these ideas.
2. **Outlining a structure of ideas.** The writer determines the overall organizational structure of the writing and creates an outline to organize ideas. Usually this step involves some additional fleshing out of the ideas generated in the first step.
3. **Writing a rough draft.** The writer uses the work completed in prewriting to develop a first draft. The draft covers the ideas the writer brainstormed and follows the organizational plan that was laid out in the first step.
4. **Revising.** The writer revisits the draft to review and, if necessary, reshape its content. This stage involves moderate and sometimes major changes: adding or deleting a paragraph, phrasing the main point differently, expanding on an important idea, reorganizing content, and so forth.
5. **Editing.** The writer reviews the draft to make additional changes. Editing involves making changes to improve style and adherence to standard writing conventions—for instance, replacing a vague word with a more precise one or fixing errors in grammar and spelling. Once this stage is complete, the work is a finished piece and ready to share with others.

Chances are you have already used this process as a writer. You may also have used it for other types of creative projects, such as developing a sketch into a finished painting or composing a song. The steps listed above apply broadly to any

project that involves creative thinking. You come up with ideas (often vague at first), you work to give them some structure, you make a first attempt, you figure out what needs improving, and then you refine it until you are satisfied.

Common misconceptions about the writing process

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

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

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

What Role Do Emotions Play in Writing?

How you feel about a writing task often determines how effectively you can complete it. For example, have you ever struggled to write an apology to someone you upset? Have you ever found yourself procrastinating to write an assignment you don't really understand? Have you ever found that it's easier for you to seem to write better in some classes more than others?

Emotions are the reason that sometimes you can write without thinking and sometimes you find yourself procrastinating, then staring at a blank screen, typing and deleting the same words over and over, feeling your writing becoming more awkward rather than less. That's why simply acknowledging how you feel can help you avoid procrastination.

The first step is acknowledging how you feel, and the second step is figuring out why you feel that way. For example, some students have negative feelings about a writing assignment because they don't like the teacher (or a teacher they had years ago), or they've had past struggles in a subject, or they don't understand the point of the assignment, or they're overwhelmed with other classes. Being able to identify why you're feeling an emotion takes the power out of it. Sometimes you can even find a solution to make the writing task easier.

Here are some stories about how student writers changed their writing processes.

Raveena's Story

Whenever Raveena writes, she feels a little editor on her shoulder who's always chiming in correcting her grammar and telling her that her sentences are awkward and sloppy. She spends so much time editing while she writes that she loses her train of thought and has trouble just letting her thoughts flow. Writing a single page takes her hours.

Raveena's instructor asked if she had always written this way. Raveena said she used to write easily, but during her first semester she had a couple of instructors who were tough graders. Whenever she would write, she would imagine her instructors criticizing her. Raveena's instructor suggested two solutions:

- 1) She should pretend to write to someone she likes. It's easier to write to a friendly reader than a hostile one. Raveena imagined writing to her favourite cousin and writing got a little easier.
- 2) She asked Raveena to put a piece of paper over her laptop screen or turn the screen's brightness to the lowest setting, then type out her thoughts. At first, Raveena found this very uncomfortable. When she turned her screen back on, she saw a jumble of text. But Raveena soon discovered that she had quickly

written 500 words, which would have taken her hours under her old method. Raveena then used her excellent editing skills to shape what she had written.

Kai's Story

Kai prided themselves on being able to write their essays the night before. They would drink some energy drinks and buy their favourite snacks and write for hours. They rarely revised their work. This technique worked well in high school, but when they got to university their grades started slipping. Their instructors noted that they had great ideas, but many were not well-organized or were incomplete.

Kai's instructor asked the class to bring a draft for a peer workshop. Kai told their instructor that they wouldn't be able to write a draft, since they could only write well the night before the assignment was due. Kai's instructor asked them what they liked about writing at night. Kai said that they liked how quiet it was in the house at 3 a.m. and how the pressure made them focus. Kai's instructor asked them to try to replicate the same environment (dark room, snacks, drinks etc.), set a timer for 2 hours and see how much they could write. Kai was able to write a rough draft of their assignment, though they didn't feel the "writing magic" in the same way.

During the workshop, Kai's classmates offered several useful suggestions for improvement, but they were worried about overthinking things and ruining them by doing too much revision. Kai's instructor told them to save the rough draft as a different file. If they didn't like the revisions, they could go back to the previous draft. Kai tried a number of revision techniques and ended up with a much stronger assignment. Slowly, they used more and more revision techniques in their other assignments. The result: higher grades and more sleep.

If your writing process is working for you, then there's no need to change it. But if the way you write frustrates you, consider making some changes. You might also consider changing your writing process for certain writing tasks, such as important assignments.

Questions for Reflection

1. How did you learn to read and write? Who influenced you?
2. What do people in your culture and/or your family believe about reading, writing and telling stories?
3. What are some of your most positive reading and writing memories?
4. Describe some moments when you struggled with reading or writing. How did you react?
5. Have you ever changed a belief around reading and writing?
6. Do you believe that you are a good writer? Why or why not?
7. What is the most frustrating part of reading or writing for you?
8. Describe your writing process. How do you tackle writing tasks?
9. What do you think the role of your writing teacher should be?

Do you notice any patterns? Can you identify any beliefs that might hold you back? Let's take a look at how other students answered.

Simran's Story

Simran's earliest memories of reading involve being snuggled up with her grandma, siblings and cousins. She loved being read to. Before she was old enough to go to school, she often sat with her older siblings as they did their homework and pretended to write. Unfortunately, when Simran was in Grade 4, she had a teacher who criticized her writing. She began to believe that she was a bad writer. By the time she reached Grade 12, English was Simran's worst subject.

Today, Simran likes to read for fun, but hates to read for school. When she gets a writing assignment, she often starts and stops and procrastinates. She writes a sentence then gets caught up in grammar details, deletes it, starts over, then checks social media. In the end, she pulls an all-nighter and hands in her assignment with just minutes to spare. Simran likes to write fan fiction based on her favourite T.V. show, and she doesn't understand why the words come so easily when she's writing for fun, but so painfully when she's writing for school. She isn't looking forward to taking a business communication course because she thinks completing the assignments will be stressful.

Jian Yi's Story

Jian Yi began his education in China. He was an excellent student and enjoyed writing. His teachers often praised his beautiful cursive. When Jian Yi was 12, his family moved to Canada. He was placed for a short time in an EAL class, but quickly was integrated into a Grade 7 classroom. He understood very little and felt embarrassed whenever he was asked to speak in class. Though Jian Yi's English skills improved dramatically, he never again enjoyed school.

Jian Yi doesn't enjoy reading or writing. He majored in Accounting because he believed there wouldn't be much reading and writing, and he's disappointed that he has to take a communications class. He is taking a full course load and he wants to get through this course as quickly as possible.

Both Simran and Jian Yi are good writers; Simran can write short stories and Jian Yi can write in multiple languages. Neither, however, expects to do well in this course. That's the power of unhelpful beliefs. They can set us up for failure before we've even started. By talking about our reading and writing beliefs and figuring out where they came from, we can challenge unhelpful beliefs and be more successful.

Thinking about our reading and writing beliefs is also a great way to celebrate the communication strengths you already have. For example, if you've learned Traditional Stories from elders in your community, you already know a story can be used as a powerful teaching tool when tailored to the right audience at the right time. Your ability to play music or sing will help you write sentences that people will enjoy reading. If you can shift between multiple languages or dialects, you can adapt to a new workplace environment. Our goal is not to erase what's unique about your writing voice to make it "appropriate" for the workplace, but to build on your existing skills so that you can be successful in whatever workplace you enter.

BEGINNING YOUR RESEARCH

Selecting Your Research Topic

You'll be more efficient if you begin with a clear research question. That's because research questions are more than handy tools; they are essential to the research process. By defining exactly what the researcher is trying to find out, these questions influence most of the rest of the steps taken to conduct the research.

For instance, if you're seeking information about a health problem in order to learn whether you have anything to worry about, research questions will make it possible for you to more effectively decide whether to seek medical help—and how quickly. Or, if you're researching a potential employer, having developed and used research questions will mean you're able to more confidently decide whether to apply for an internship or job there.

The confidence you'll have when making such decisions will come from knowing that the information they're based on was gathered by conscious thought rather than luck.

Most of us look for information to answer questions every day, and we often act on the answers to those questions. Are research questions any different from most of the questions for which we seek information? Yes.

Regular Question: What can I do about my insomnia?

Research Question: How do flights more than 16 hours long affect the reflexes of commercial jet pilots?

Regular Question: How many children in Canada have allergies?

Research Question: How does his or her country of birth affect a child's chances of developing asthma?

Research questions cannot be answered by a quick web search. Answering them involves using more critical thinking than answering regular questions because they seem more debatable. Research questions require more sources of information to answer and, consequently, take more time to answer. They, more often than regular questions, start with the word "How" or "Why."

Choosing a Topic

The Controversy: A controversial topic is one on which people have strong views. Imagine the type of discussion that can become really heated, usually when the subject is something people are passionate about. Remember being passionate about a particular issue does not necessarily mean you recognize the merits of the other view (although that often happens); it just means that you have collected evidence (from a variety of sources) and synthesized those ideas to arrive at a particular point of view.

When you are trying to choose your topic for your persuasive paper, it is easier if you choose a topic about which you feel very strongly. You probably have realized by this point that when you are writing, it is a lot easier to write about a topic

you already have some background knowledge on, and something you are extremely interested in. This helps to engage you and keep you interested in the writing process. No matter the topic you eventually decide to discuss, there are a few things you need to think about before you begin the writing process. You will need to make sure your subject is:

- **Significant.** Is a discussion of this topic one that has the potential to contribute to a field of study? Will it make an impact? For example, a significant topic would be to convince your reader that eating at fast-food restaurants is detrimental to people’s cardiovascular system. A less significant discussion would be if you were to try to convince your reader why one fast-food restaurant is better than another.
- **Singular.** This means you need to focus on one subject.
- **Specific.** Similar to the point above, your topic needs to be narrow enough to allow for you to really discuss the topic within the essay parameters (i.e., word count). Many writers are afraid of getting too specific because they feel they will run out of things to say. If you develop the idea completely and give thorough explanations and plenty of examples, the specificity should not be a problem.
- **Supportable.** Does evidence for what you want to discuss actually exist? There is probably some form of evidence out there even for the most obscure topics or points of view. However, you need to remember you should use credible sources. Someone’s opinions posted on a blog about why one fast-food restaurant is the best does not count as credible support for your ideas

Formulating a Research Question

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper, but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer.

To determine your research question, review the freewriting you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. Include simple, factual questions and more complex questions that require analysis and interpretation. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several subquestions that you will need to research to answer that main question.

Here are some research questions. Notice that the main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. It is necessary to research the subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer the main question.

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

Subquestions:

- Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

Narrowing Your Focus

Mina's Story

Mina is doing an internship at a small press. Authors and agents submit children's books for potential publication and Mina is responsible for reading them all and passing on the most promising ones to the editorial team. One day, the head editor says that she is frustrated by the lack of diversity in the children's book manuscripts that she is receiving. She asks Mina to do some research about the problem.

Mina isn't sure where to start. The topic of diversity in children's book publishing is huge. She begins by doing some background research. A Twitter thread leads her to an article about how 50% of main characters in children's books are white, 27% are animals, and only 23% are BIPOC characters.¹ Then, she looks at the submission history for her press for the last few months and realizes that the breakdown is pretty similar.

Mina narrows her research question from “diversity in publishing” to “How can our small press encourage more diverse submissions?” Narrowing the question was only possible because she did

1. <https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=an-updated-look-at-diversity-in-childrens-books>

some initial research. If she'd found that the press received diverse submissions but only accepted books with white main characters, her research focus would be totally different. Her question is now both more manageable (which will save her time) and more useful.

From there, Mina does the following research:

- Reads articles about how other presses have encouraged more diverse applications.
- Follows some popular BIPOC authors on Twitter and learns about some of the challenges they've faced in the publishing industry, and interviews a few.
- Discovers that disabled authors face additional barriers and identifies this as an untapped market.
- Interviews a few agents to get their perspective.
- Looks at the website copy for different presses and realizes that her press' website copy could be more inclusive.
- Writes a short report outlining her findings.

As you can see, a specific research question allowed Mina to save time and also made sure that she was asking the right questions. Mina also kept an open mind throughout the process. She didn't go looking to prove her own theories, and was open to being surprised. She hadn't thought about disability, but her research led her to this area. The result: her editor was able to use her research to make positive changes within the press.

Why Narrow Your Focus?

Once you have a need for research—say, an assignment—you may need to prowl around a bit online to explore the topic and figure out what you actually want to find out and write about. For instance, maybe your assignment is to develop a poster about “plants” for an introductory horticulture course. The instructor expects you to narrow that topic to something you are interested in and that is related to your class.

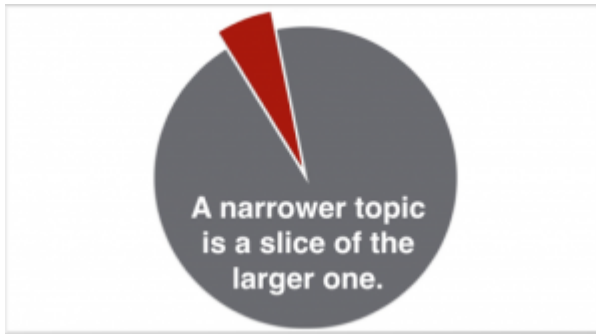


Figure 9.1

Ideas about a narrower topic can come from anywhere. In this case, a narrower topic boils down to deciding what's interesting to you about “plants” that is related to what you're learning in your horticulture class and small enough to manage in the time you have.

One way to get ideas would be to read about plants on Wikipedia, looking for things that seem interesting and relevant to your class, and then letting one thing lead to another as you keep reading and thinking about likely possibilities that are more narrow than the enormous “plants” topic. (Be sure to pay attention to the references at the bottom of most Wikipedia pages and pursue any that look interesting. Your instructor is not likely to let you cite Wikipedia, but those references may be citable scholarly sources that you could eventually decide to use.)

Background Reading

When you're working on projects it's wise to do some more reading about that narrower topic once you have it. For one reason, you probably don't know much about it yet. For another, such reading will help you learn the terms used by experts who have studied your narrower topic. Those terms are certain to be helpful when you're looking for sources later, so jot them down or otherwise remember them.

For instance, if you were going to do research about the treatment for humans with bird flu, this background reading would teach you that professionals and scholars usually use the term avian influenza instead of bird flu when they write about it. (Often, they also use H1N1 or H1N9 to identify the strain.) If you didn't learn that, you would miss the kinds of sources you'll eventually need for your assignment.

This initial reading could cause you to narrow your topic further, which is fine because narrower topics lead to greater specificity for what you have to find out. After this upfront work, you're ready to start developing the research question(s) you will try to answer.

PREWRITING

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

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following four strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

- Using experience and observations
- Reading
- Freewriting
- Asking questions

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

Choosing a Topic

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

Using 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.

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

Reading

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

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

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

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

Freewriting

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

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

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

In the following example, the instructor allowed the members of the class to choose their own topics, and a student named 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.

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

Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise?

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 in **Figure 4.1: Asking Questions** 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.

Figure 4.1 Asking Questions

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

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

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

More Prewriting Techniques: Narrowing the Focus

The prewriting techniques of freewriting and asking questions helped Mariah think more about her topic. The following additional prewriting strategies would help her (and you) narrow the focus of the topic:

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping
- Searching the Internet

Narrowing the focus means breaking up the topic into subtopics, or more specific points. Generating a lot of subtopics helps in selecting the ones that fit the assignment and appeal to the writer and the audience.

After rereading her syllabus, Mariah realized her general topic, mass media, was too broad for her class's short paper requirement. Three pages would not be 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 may want to read a paper about a particular issue in mass media.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit into 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:



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

Idea Mapping

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

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

Mariah tried idea mapping in addition to brainstorming. **Figure 5.2: Idea Map** shows what she created.



Figure 4.2: 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.

Searching the Internet

Using search engines on the Internet is a good way to see what kinds of websites are available on your topic. Writers use search engines not only to understand more about the topic’s specific issues but also to get better acquainted with their audience.

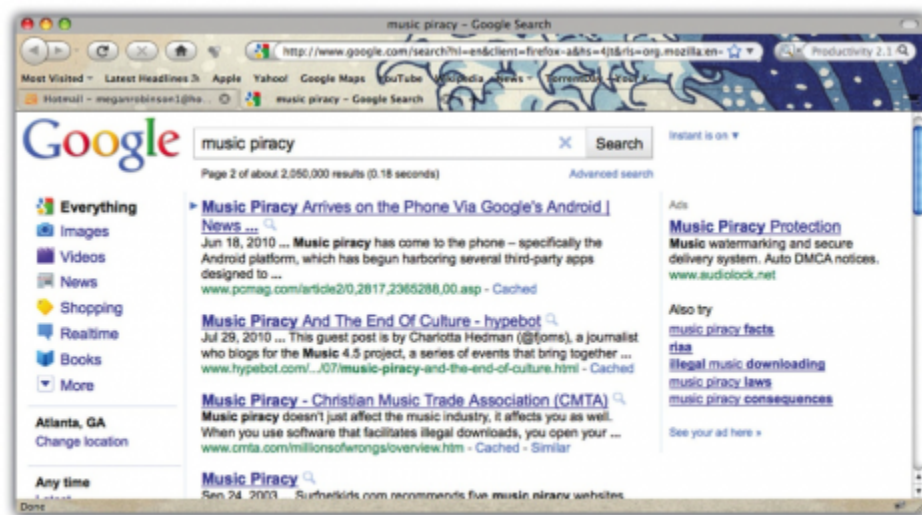
When you search the Internet, type some key words from your broad topic or words from your narrowed focus into your browser's search engine (many good general and specialized search engines are available for you to try). Then look over the results for relevant and interesting articles.

Results from an Internet search show writers the following information:

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

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

Mariah typed the words music piracy from her idea map into the search engine Google (see **Figure 4.3 Useful Search Engine Results**).



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

Figure 4.3 Useful Search Engine Results

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

The results from Mariah's search included websites from university publications, personal blogs, online news sources,

and a lot of legal cases sponsored by the recording industry. Reading legal jargon made Mariah uncomfortable with the results, so she decided to look further. Reviewing her map, she realized that she was more interested in consumer aspects of mass media, so she refocused her search to media technology and the sometimes confusing array of expensive products that fill electronics stores. Now, Mariah considers a topic on the products that have fed the mass media boom in everyday lives.

Self-Practice Exercise 4.7



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=109#h5p-25>

H5P: More Pre-Writing Strategies

Pre-Writing Strategies

In this chapter, you've learned about pre-writing strategies like brainstorming, idea mapping, and internet searching. Choose any two of those strategies to use.

If you choose to brainstorm, set your timer for ten minutes and dedicate that time to brainstorming about your topic. Write your general topic first, and then follow with all your ideas about potential related ideas for you to focus on in your essay.

If you choose to idea map, set your timer for ten minutes and dedicate that time to idea mapping about your topic. You'll need to do this on paper instead of in this space. Write your general topic first, and then follow by visually representing the connections to the potential related ideas for you to focus on in your essay.

If you're new to idea mapping, please consider using Figure 5.2 as an example for your thinking.

If you choose to internet search, set your timer for ten minutes and dedicate that time to internet searching about your topic. It's super easy to get distracted here, so consider closing any unrelated tabs or window or applications on your computer. This is a good time to look up any gaps you still have in your thinking. Take notes below about:

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

And save all your links!

Narrowing the Topic

Let's take all you've learned about your topic and get it narrowed down.

Freewrite for ten minutes about what interests you most about your topic, and think particularly about how you might focus your thinking and argument.

What will you focus on for the topic of this paper? Try to articulate it in one or two sentences.

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



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=109#h5p-26>

H5P: Pre-Writing Checklist

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

If you answered no to any of the questions, you need to reframe your topic. Consider re-doing the prewriting exercises or making an appointment with your instructor.

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

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR WRITING PROCESS

Here are some simple ways to change your writing process. Pick a few and try them.

Pre-Writing

1. Read the assignment prompt, then quickly write down 5 things you'll need to do to be successful in the assignment. Using this list and the assignment prompt, create a timeline for finishing the assignment. For example, if you're being graded on using primary and secondary research, you'll want to make time to research, analyze your sources and add your citations.
2. Go for a walk (or do some exercise) and think about your writing task. Sometimes moving your body helps you do brainstorming.
3. Create an outline for your work.
4. Use brainstorming (mind mapping, bubble maps, etc).
5. Try illustrating your project visually. Connect ideas and thoughts with lines.
6. Read a similar document to get ideas.
7. Talk about your writing task with a friend.
8. Represent your writing task visually. Sometimes creating a comic strip or series of doodles helps you to figure out where to start.

Writing

1. Turn off the screen of your computer and try writing your document. This will help you get your thoughts down without worrying about editing.
2. Use the voice recorder in your phone to record yourself describing what you want to write about as if to a friend.
3. Write an imaginary conversation between your sources. How would they respond to each other?
4. Try free-writing. Write the phrase "What I want my reader to know is..." or "The most surprising thing about my research is..." Then, set a timer for 5 minutes and write about this topic. Don't stop writing. Ignore all grammar and spelling errors. See how much you can write.
5. Schedule a time each day to write and put it in your calendar.
6. Try to [Pomodoro Technique](#), where you work intensely for 25 minutes then take a 5 minute break.
7. Use website blocking software like Freedom, FocusBooster or StayFocusd to block your internet use for a few hours so you can concentrate.

Revising

1. Read your work out loud. The ear is a better editor than the eye.
2. Leave your work overnight so that you can come back to it with fresh eyes.
3. Describe your work to a trusted friend or family member and encourage them to ask you questions.
4. Compare your work to the assignment prompt or rubric. Read a criteria/rubric point then go to your work and underline where in the work you met the criteria.
5. Print your work out and cut it up so that each paragraph is on its own piece of paper. Try reorganizing your paragraphs. Does another order work better?
6. If your writing uses sources, print your work out and highlight every time you use a source. If your writing has no highlighted parts, you might want to add sources. If your writing is mostly highlighted, you might want to do more analysis of the sources.
7. Underline the main point of each paragraph. If you can't point out what the point of the paragraph is, you may need to rethink it. If your paragraph has multiple points, you may need to break it up.
8. Show your work to your teacher, a colleague or friend and ask them what they think the goal of the assignment is.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Reading comprehension improves when planning is done ahead of time for the proper time of day and reading environment
- It is useful to check in with yourself while reading materials to ensure that you are understanding what you are reading
- Following the steps of the writing process helps students complete any writing assignment more successfully

Activities for Further Reflection

- Write a letter to your instructor that tells them what you believe about reading and writing. Be sure to include:
 - Whether or not you think your beliefs are helpful.
 - Whether you would like to change any of your beliefs.
- If you speak a different language or have lived in different cultures, write about how the reading and writing beliefs compare to the reading/writing beliefs in Canada. Do you have different reading and writing beliefs for each language you speak? Write a few paragraphs about your findings.
- Re-read the “Ways to Switch Up Your Writing Process,” and pick a few methods that are interesting to you. Try them then write a memo to your instructor reporting on how the experience went.

CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT, PURPOSE & AUDIENCE



“Audience listens at Startup School” by Robert Scoble is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

In this section, you will:

- Understand the relationship between Audience, Tone and Purpose.
- Describe summary, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Explain angle of vision and the impact on writing.
- Analyze the relationship between communication and context.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- Think about a time when you had to write to a new audience or in a new context. For example, perhaps you had to write an email to an instructor when you were new to college. How did you tackle the task? Is there anything you wish you did differently?
- Pretend that you woke up this morning and are sick. Write 1-2 sentences to the following audiences:
 - Your best friend or partner, complaining about being sick
 - Your instructor, because you are supposed to write a test today
 - Your followers on Facebook or Twitter
 - Which of these was easiest to write? Which was the hardest? Why?

PURPOSE, AUDIENCE, TONE, AND CONTENT

It is important to learn how to write according to the purpose, audience, and tone of writing.

Three elements should shape your writing:

- **Purpose.** The reason behind the writing.
- **Tone.** The attitude the writer conveys about the subject.
- **Audience.** The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.

Figure 5.1: Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content Triangle illustrates this concept.

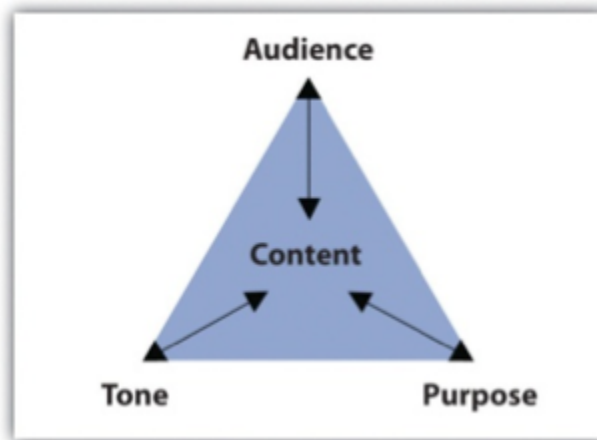


Figure 5.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content Triangle

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

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose is simply the reason why you are writing. For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theatre. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform him or her of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your Member of Parliament? To persuade him or her to address your community's needs.

In academic settings, the reasons for writing fulfill four main purposes: to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate.

Your instructors ask you to complete assignments specifically designed to meet one of the four purposes. As you will see,

the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of the paper, helping you make decisions about content and style. For now, identifying these purposes by reading paragraphs will prepare you to write individual paragraphs and to build longer assignments.

Summary Paragraphs

A **summary** is a concise and condensed version. It provides the reader with a brief overview of the main points, key ideas, and essential information contained in the original text. A well-crafted summary paragraph serves as a valuable tool for readers, helping them decide whether to delve into the full text or gain a quick understanding of its content. Below you will find a summary of *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum.

“The Wizard of Oz” is a beloved children’s novel written by L. Frank Baum. It tells the story of a young girl named Dorothy, who, after being transported by a tornado to the magical Land of Oz, embarks on a journey to find her way back home to Kansas. Along the way, she meets a cast of memorable characters, including the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion, each seeking something they believe the great Wizard of Oz can provide. Together, they face various challenges and confront the wicked Wicked Witch of the West. Ultimately, Dorothy discovers that the power to return home was within her all along, with her ruby slippers, given by Glinda the Good Witch. This classic tale is a timeless exploration of friendship, courage, and the idea that the things we seek externally are often found within ourselves.

Analysis Paragraphs

An **analysis** separates complex materials into their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. An analysis examines 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 they relate to one another.

Take a look at a student’s analysis of a journal report.

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

The lack of specific information in the second part of the report raises several important questions. Why

are teenagers in rural high schools more likely to drink than teenagers in urban areas? Where do they obtain alcohol? How do parental attitudes influence this trend? A follow-up study could compare several high schools in rural and urban areas to consider these issues and potentially find ways to reduce teenage alcohol consumption.

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

Synthesis Paragraphs

The purpose of a **synthesis** is to combine two or more items to create an entirely new item. An academic synthesis paragraph considers the main points from one or more pieces of writing and links the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document.

Take a look at a student's synthesis of several sources about homelessness in Ontario.

Homelessness in Ontario is a complex and pressing issue that requires comprehensive attention and innovative solutions. According to a report by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA), the problem of homelessness in the province has been exacerbated by factors such as the lack of affordable housing, rising rent costs, and the economic challenges faced by vulnerable populations. ONPHA's research underscores the urgent need for increased investment in affordable housing initiatives and support services to combat homelessness effectively.

Furthermore, findings from a study conducted by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness emphasize the importance of a Housing First approach in addressing homelessness in Ontario. This approach prioritizes providing stable housing as a first step, followed by tailored support services addressing the underlying issues that led to homelessness. Such a strategy has shown promising results in reducing homelessness rates and improving the well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness. By synthesizing these sources, it becomes evident that a multi-faceted approach, including affordable housing initiatives and a Housing First strategy, is essential in the ongoing battle against homelessness in Ontario.

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

Evaluation Paragraphs

An **evaluation** judges the value of something and determines its worth. An academic evaluation communicates your opinion about a document or a topic of discussion, and the reasons for that opinion. Evaluations are influenced by your reading of the document, your prior knowledge, and your prior experience with the topic or issue. Since an evaluation incorporates your point of view and the reasons for your point of view, it typically requires more critical thinking and a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills. Evaluation paragraphs often follow summary, analysis, and synthesis paragraphs. Read a student's evaluation and notice how the student incorporates the student's personal judgment within the evaluation. Evaluating a document requires prior knowledge that is often based on additional research.

"Hamilton," the groundbreaking musical created by Lin-Manuel Miranda, has left an indelible mark on the world of theater. This remarkable production blends history, hip-hop, and an incredibly diverse cast to tell the story of Alexander Hamilton and the founding of the United States. The play's innovative approach to storytelling and its ability to make complex historical events accessible and engaging is truly commendable. Lin-Manuel Miranda's writing and music have created a captivating narrative that resonates with audiences of all ages.

The performances in "Hamilton" are nothing short of exceptional, with standout talents bringing iconic historical figures to life in a fresh and relatable way. Moreover, the production's commitment to diverse casting enhances its relevance and impact in today's cultural landscape. The visual and technical aspects of the play, including set design and choreography, contribute to a visually stunning and immersive experience.

However, "Hamilton" is not without its critiques. Some argue that the musical simplifies and glosses over certain aspects of history, potentially leading to a skewed understanding of the events and characters it portrays. Additionally, the rapid-fire delivery of lyrics, while impressive, can occasionally make it challenging to grasp all the nuances of the story.

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



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=123#h5p-27>

H5P: Identify which paragraph is the best example of each paragraph purpose (summarize, synthesize, analyze, evaluate).

Paragraphs:

1. During the opening scene, we learn that the character Laura is adopted and that she has spent the past three years desperately trying to track down her real parents. Having exhausted all the usual options—adoption agencies, online searches, family trees, and so on—she is on the verge of giving up when she meets a stranger on a bus. The chance encounter leads to a complicated chain of events that ultimately result in Laura getting her lifelong wish. But is it really what she wants? Throughout the rest of the film, Laura discovers that sometimes the past is best left where it belongs.
2. The scene in which Campbell and his fellow prisoners assist the guards in shutting down the riot immediately strikes the viewer as unrealistic. Based on the recent reports on prison riots in both Detroit and California, it seems highly unlikely that a posse of hardened criminals would intentionally help their captors at the risk of inciting future revenge from other inmates. Instead, both news reports and psychological studies indicate that prisoners who do not actively participate in a riot will go back to their cells and avoid conflict altogether. Examples of this lack of attention to detail occur throughout the film, making it almost unbearable to watch.
3. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vise, the director, May Lee, uses a variety of elements to gradually increase the tension. The creepy, haunting melody that subtly enhances the earlier scenes becomes ever more insistent, rising to a disturbing crescendo toward the end of the movie. The desperation of the actors, combined with the claustrophobic atmosphere and tight camera angles create a realistic firestorm, from which there is little hope of escape. Walking out of the theatre at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.
4. This film could easily have been cut down to less than two hours. By the final scene, I noticed that most of my fellow moviegoers were snoozing in their seats and were barely paying attention to what was happening on screen. Although the director sticks diligently to the book, he tries too hard to cram in all the action, which is just too ambitious for such a detail-oriented story. If you want my advice, read the book and give the movie a miss.

Paragraph Purposes:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| A. Synthesize | C. Analyze |
| B. Summarize | D. Evaluate |

Answer Keys

1. B
2. C

3. A
4. D

Identifying the Audience

Imagine you must give a presentation to your colleagues at work. 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? 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 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. Your presentation and delivery will shift to create a relationship with the new audience.

In these two situations, the audience plays a role in the development of presentation. As you prepare the presentation, you should 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.

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they are just as important. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers’ characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about audience has become so common that you may not even know you are doing it!

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’ sense of humour 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 sniffing all weekend; I hope I don't have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

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

Focusing on audience will enhance your writing, your process, and your finished product. 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, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or gender. Certain topics and assignments will require you to consider these factors as they relate to your audience.

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: Prior knowledge is 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 a 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 post-secondary tuition costs.

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

Tone identifies a speaker’s attitude toward a subject or another person. It refers to how something is said: the words you choose, your sentence and paragraph lengths, the details you include, your attitude towards the reader, whether you use positive or negative words, etc. Every word you choose creates a reaction within the reader.

For example, which would you prefer to hear?

- *I’m happy to answer any questions.*
- or
- *If you still don’t understand, I can clarify for you.*

Probably the first one, right? Even though these sentences mean roughly the same thing, one makes the speaker seem approachable and friendly. The other makes it seem as if anyone who doesn’t understand is at fault and is wasting the speaker’s time. That’s the power of tone.

When we communicate in writing, tone can be hard to convey. If someone’s confused about your message, they’ll ask you follow-up questions, but people don’t often give each other feedback about tone. It’s rare that someone will say, “Your email came off as a little hostile. Did you intend that?” Without you knowing it, tone miscommunications can negatively impact your relationship with your audience.

Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers show their attitudes and feelings with useful devices, such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language. The writer’s attitude should always appropriately match the audience and the purpose.

Self-Practice Exercise 5.2



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=123#h5p-28>

H5P: Read the following paragraph and consider the writer’s tone. How would you describe the writer’s attitude toward wildlife conservation? There is more than one right answer.

Many species of plants and animals are disappearing right before our eyes. If we do not act fast, it might be too late to save them. Human activities, including pollution, deforestation, hunting, and overpopulation, are devastating the natural environment. Without our help, many species will not survive long enough for our

children to see them in the wild. Take the tiger, for example. Today, tigers occupy just 7 percent of their historical range, and many local populations are already extinct. Hunted for their beautiful pelt and other body parts, the tiger population has plummeted from 100,000 in 1920 to just a few thousand (Smith, 2013). Contact your local wildlife conservation society today to find out how you can stop this terrible destruction.

- A. relaxed
- B. funny
- C. bored
- D. impassioned
- E. well-informed
- F. urgent

Answer Key

D, E, F

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 elementary students, for example, would have to contain succinct and simple content.

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

Anmol's Story

Anmol had a question for his teacher, so he decided to email her. He didn't know what to put for the email subject, so he left it blank. He was worried about not getting the answer to his question in time to complete his homework, so he just wrote the email quickly and didn't proofread. He also put

a lot of exclamation marks so the teacher would take him seriously. Anmol was surprised when the teacher told him that the email was rude.

Let's look at this situation more closely.

College is a new context. It has spoken and unspoken rules. Because Anmol wasn't aware of the context of the college, it was hard to make a good communication choice. Looking back, he realized that this context is perhaps more formal than other types of environments he'd communicated in, so perhaps his email didn't have an appropriate tone.

Audience: Anmol realized that the role of teacher is a more formal role. When Anmol re-read his email, he realized that multiple question marks looked too informal. Anmol also realized that his teacher probably received a lot of student emails and was busy, so she didn't want to have to re-read an email. Because he hadn't done any proofreading, his email was hard to read.

Purpose: Anmol's purpose was to receive a quick response to his question. He realized that he'd simply written "I don't understand this week's homework. What should I do?" This is a broad question, so it would be hard for his teacher to help him. Since he didn't include a subject in his email, it was also hard for his teacher to prioritize the email.

Message/ Product: To help achieve his purpose, Anmol decided to review the instructions his teacher had given, then narrow his question down. He then edited his email to make sure it was easy to read and correctly punctuated. He made sure that his tone was polite and formal. He also added a clear subject line, which included his class and section number.

LANGUAGE CHOICE

Here are five principles for writing in plain language:

Use Active Voice

To use active voice, make the noun (person, place, or thing) that performs the action the subject of the sentence and pair it directly with an action verb.

Read these two sentences:

- Matt Damon left Harvard in the late 1980s to start his acting career.
- Matt Damon’s acting career was started in the late 1980s when he left Harvard.

In the first sentence, left is an action verb that is paired with the subject, Matt Damon. If you ask yourself, “Who or what left?” the answer is Matt Damon. Neither of the other two nouns in the sentence—Harvard and career—“left” anything.

Now look at the second sentence. The action verb is started. If you ask yourself, “Who or what started something?” the answer, again, is Matt Damon. But in this sentence, the writer placed career—not Matt Damon—in the subject position. When the doer of the action is not the subject, the sentence is in passive voice. In passive voice constructions, the doer of the action usually follows the word by as the indirect object of a prepositional phrase, and the action verb is typically partnered with a version of the verb to be.

Writing in active voice is easy once you understand the difference between active and passive voice. First, find the verb. Then, ask yourself who did the verb. Is the subject present?

Review Active vs. Passive Voice

Identify the sentences with active voice:

1. Mika kicked the ball.
2. The ball was kicked by Mika.
3. Great students attend Loyalist College.
4. The college is attended by great students.

5. I made a mistake.
6. Mistakes were made.

Answers: 1, 3, and 5

Using the Passive Voice

While using the active voice is preferred, sometimes passive voice is the best option. For example, maybe you don't know who's responsible for an action or you don't want to place the blame on someone. For example, you might say "a lamp was broken at our recent party" to avoid saying who broke the lamp.

Use Common Words Instead of Complex Words

Sometimes, new English language speakers believe that large words feel more appropriate in their writing. The world is filled with wonderful, long words that are fun to use. However, long words can cause more confusion. Worse than that, they can exclude anyone who doesn't understand that particular word. Maybe you've had the experience of reading an academic article or textbook chapter and having to read the same sentence three times over to try to figure out what it was trying to say. If you've ever thought, "Why didn't they just say it simply from the beginning?" you can understand the power of plain language.

Use words that are appropriate to the audience, the context and your purpose. As we've said, time is the biggest constraint, so simple words likely meet most audiences' needs. The exception to this is in specialized environments. For example, a lawyer has to use specific, technical language to precisely lay out a case. A doctor has to use medical language to convey a patient's exact symptoms and diagnosis.

Use a Positive Tone Whenever Possible

Unless there is a specific reason not to, use positive language wherever you can. Positive language benefits your writing in two ways. First, it creates a positive tone, and your writing is more likely to be well-received. Second, it clarifies your meaning, as positive statements are more concise. Take a look at the following negatively worded sentences and then their positive counterparts, below.

Examples:

Negative: Your order will not be ready for pick up until 4 p.m.
 Positive: Your order will be ready for pick up at 4 p.m.

Negative: You did not complete the assignment.
 Positive: You will need to complete the assignment.

This is especially important if a situation is negative to you but not the audience. For example, imagine that you held a fundraiser that didn't raise as much money as you hoped. This might really impact your budget and the future of some programs you run. But if you're sending out an email with the goal of getting people to fill out a survey asking for ways to improve the fundraiser, none of this matters.

Read the following two examples, then ask yourself which version would make you more likely to fill out the survey:

Negative Details: Unfortunately, this year's Gala Under the Stars only raised half of its expected profit. This means that we will need to cancel our Little Stars after-school program and lay off part-time staff. Obviously, this is devastating to our organization, so we need to make sure it doesn't happen again. Please fill out this survey to help make the Gala Under the Stars better.

Positive Details: Help us make Gala Under the Stars even better next year. Fill out this five-minute survey and be entered into a draw for two movie tickets.

In the first example, the reader has to wade through negative details in order to get to the survey. They might not even read the email long enough to find out about the survey. In the second example, however, the benefit to reader (free tickets) and what's being asked of them (to fill out a survey) is listed first. Positive details don't just lead to a positive tone, they also help you fulfill the purpose of the communication.

Write for your Reader

When you write for your readers and speak to an audience, you have to consider who they are and what they need to know. When readers know that you are concerned with their needs, they are more likely to be receptive to your message, and will be more likely to take the action you are asking them to and focus on important details.

When you write, ask yourself, "Why would someone read this message?" Often, it is because the reader needs a question answered. What do they need to know to prepare for the upcoming meeting, for example, or what new company policies do they need to follow? Think about the questions your readers will ask and then organize your document to answer them.

Keep Words and Sentences Short (Concise)

It is easy to let your sentences become cluttered with words that do not add value to your message. Improve cluttered sentences by eliminating repetitive ideas, removing repeated words, and editing to eliminate unnecessary words.

Eliminate Repetitive Ideas

Unless you are providing definitions on purpose, stating one idea twice in a single sentence is redundant.

Remove Repeated Words

As a general rule, you should try not to repeat a word within a sentence. Sometimes you simply need to choose a different word, but often you can actually remove repeated words.

Example:

Original: The student who won the cooking contest is a very talented and ambitious student.

Revision: The student who won the cooking contest is very talented and ambitious.

Rewording to Eliminate Unnecessary Words

If a sentence has words that are not necessary to carry the meaning, those words are unneeded and can be removed.

Examples:

Original: For his part in the cooking class group project, Malik was responsible for making the mustard reduction sauce.

Revision: Malik made the mustard reduction sauce for his cooking class group project.

Avoid Expletive Pronouns (most of the time)

Many people create needlessly wordy sentences using expletive pronouns, which often take the form of “There is ...” or “There are”

Pronouns (e.g., I, you, he, she, they, this, that, who, etc.) are words that we use to replace nouns (i.e., people, places, things), and there are many types of pronouns (e.g., personal, relative, demonstrative, etc.). However, expletive pronouns are different from other pronouns because unlike most pronouns, they do not stand for a person, thing, or place; they are called expletives because they have no “value.” Sometimes you will see expletive pronouns at the beginning of a sentence, sometimes at the end.

Examples:

There are a lot of reading assignments in this class.

I can't believe how many reading assignments *there are*!

Note: These two examples are *not* necessarily bad examples of using expletive pronouns. They are included to help you first understand what expletive pronouns are so you can recognize them.

The main reason you should generally avoid writing with expletive pronouns is that they often cause us to use more words in the rest of the sentence than we have to. Also, the empty words at the beginning tend to shift the more important subject matter toward the end of the sentence. The above sentences are not that bad, but at least they are simple enough to help you understand what expletive pronouns are. Here are some more examples of expletive pronouns, along with better alternatives.

Examples

Original: *There are* some people who love to cause trouble.

Revision: Some people love to cause trouble.

Original: *There is* a person I know who can help you fix your computer.

Revision: I know a person who can help you fix your computer.

When you find yourself using expletives, always ask yourself if omitting and rewriting would give your reader a clearer, more direct, less wordy sentence. Can I communicate the same message using fewer words without taking away from the meaning I want to convey or the tone I want to create?

Choose Specific Wording

You will give clearer information if you write with specific words. For example, you could say, “My shoe feels odd.” This statement does not give a sense of why your shoe feels odd, since “odd” is an abstract word that does not suggest any physical characteristics. You could also say, “My shoe feels wet.” This statement gives you a sense of how your shoe feels to the touch. It also gives a sense of how your shoe might look as well as how it might smell, painting a picture for your readers.

Inclusive Language

Good communicators include everyone and don’t make assumptions about their readers. You can make your language more inclusive by:

- Using the singular “they” instead of “he or she.” For example, instead of saying, “A communicator should understand his or her audience,” you could say, “A communicator should understand their audience” or “Communicators should understand their audience.”
- Being specific when discussing a person’s identity and use the terminology they prefer. For example, instead of saying “Marilyn Gabriel is a First Nations person,” you could say “Marilyn Gabriel is a member of the Kwantlen Nation.” Usually, a person’s disability isn’t relevant, but if it is, use neutral and specific language. For example, instead of saying “Brent is confined to a wheelchair” (which is both inaccurate, negative and vague), you could say “Brent uses a wheelchair” or “Brent has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair.” When in doubt, ask the person what terminology they prefer.

- Question the assumptions that you make about your audience. Consider that many of your readers might not share the same cultural values or experiences. For example, before writing a sentence like “Every child waits all year for Christmas morning,” consider that many of your readers might not have shared this experience.
- Avoid expressions or idioms that would be confusing to English language learners. Workplaces are increasingly global, and your writing should be understood by people from many different backgrounds.

Words and phrases also often have complex histories. For example, often we don’t think twice about calling a decision “stupid” or “dumb,” but these words have a long history rooted in harm against people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. One way that we can address ableism, racism, sexism, xenophobia, fatphobia and other forms of discrimination is to replace these words with words that are more precise. For example, saying “our manager’s decision is stupid” is vague, whereas “our manager’s decision will make life harder for the interns” or “our manager’s decision ignores the data that Cody presented at the meeting last week” is much more specific.

You should be especially careful when writing about groups of people in a way that might reinforce stereotypes. For example, in his book *Elements of Indigenous Style*, Gregory Younging discusses how subtle bias can have a big impact when non-Indigenous people write about First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. For example, instead of portraying Indigenous people as victims, focus on their “resilience, agency and future.” (2018, pg. 77). Instead of portraying an Indigenous culture as something static that existed in the past, focus on how that culture is thriving and changing.

ANGLE OF VISION

In this section, we will explore the impact of emotional writing and the impact on the reader; we will also explore word choices and their possible connotations. To begin, look at the two passages in the below activity showing different angles of vision or points of view.

Self-Practice Exercise 5.3



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=129#h5p-29>

HSP: Noticing Angle of Vision

Passages and Questions

Read these two passages, and then answer the questions below.

Passage 1

What a glorious day! The beautiful sun is shining down on those basking, hoping to absorb its wonderful rays. The surf is playfully nudging the young children who are frolicking in the waves. A group of smiling young people laugh joyously as they plan an exciting game of volleyball. As I watch their rousing game, I enjoy the feel of the warm sand playing between my toes. I love summer at the beach!

Passage 2

It is way too hot! The sun is beating down on all those foolish enough to think it is healthy to get a suntan. They will be sorry when they burn. I keep seeing unsupervised children getting knocked down by the strong waves, and their negligent parents are nowhere to be seen. Nearby, some rowdy teenagers keep laughing obnoxiously every time one in their group misses the volleyball; they are really terrible volleyball players. I would like to move from where I am sitting, but the sand is scorching hot and will burn my feet. I wish I had stayed home!

- What are the differences in the physical setting that these passages are describing? Are they in different locations or happening at different times of day? Are there different people involved?
- What evidence beyond sensory perceptions and personal opinion do the writers provide?

- Which one are you more likely to agree with? Why? Is this because it matches your personal opinion of the beach or because it is combined with supporting facts?

It is clear that the two authors like or appreciate conditions and experiences differently. In Passage 1, the writer likes warm weather and does not mind noise, but in Passage 2, the writer would probably prefer to be at home in air conditioning. Ultimately, the passage that you connect with more is probably based on how you personally feel about going to the beach. Because the passages are based solely on opinion, there is nothing in them to convince the reader that other perspectives or angles of vision are valid. This is why you need to use facts to back up your ideas when writing (and of course include citations).

Self-Practice Exercise 5.4



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=129#h5p-30>

HSP: Passages and Questions

Read this passage, which offers a contrast with the kind of writing you read in the last exercise, and answer the questions below.

On the morning of Saturday, June 10, I decided to visit the beach. The sky was clear with no clouds visible in the sky. I arrived at the beach at about 12:30, and it was already quite warm. I had to drive with the windows open, and it read 25C on the car's temperature display. Just before getting out of the car, I remembered to grab my 30 SPF sunscreen because I got burned so badly last year, and I do not want to experience that blistering again this year. In front of me, there were five children who were about six years old playing in the foot-high waves; it looked like their parents were sitting watching them carefully from about four metres away probably just in case the waves got too high and they needed to dash to their children quickly. I chose a spot 10 metres to the right away from a group of young people, maybe 16 years old, playing volleyball, close enough to watch them having fun but far away enough to not get hit by any stray balls. These teenagers must have been playing just for fun because it seemed like someone missed every second ball, and the entire group started laughing when they did. Thankfully I wore my sandals, so I could feel the warmth of the sand between my toes but protect my feet in case the sand got too hot.

Questions:

- How is this passage different from the subjective examples in Self-Practice Exercise 2.10?
- What evidence beyond sensory perceptions and personal opinion does the writer provide?
- Is the passage more positive or negative? Does it discuss both good and bad things? What is different about how the different perspectives are presented?

In the passage above, the writer has presented both positive and negative situations, but the language she used is neutral and without judgment. The writer has linked bad past experiences and put a positive spin on them or was able to see possible negatives but also present solutions. She also provided enough detail (measurements, temperatures, distances, etc.) to present a more complete description, so the reader could visualize where everyone was situated in the scene, how hot it was, how high the waves were. Essentially, the writer presented a complete, unemotional, and objective perspective that is supported by quantifiable evidence.

THE PURPOSE OF 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 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.

Most people have strong views on **controversial topics** (ones that inspire extreme points of view or opinions) and are often very willing to share those strong views. However, imagine you are having a discussion with someone who is only willing to share a particular point of view, ignoring yours, which may be in opposition. The ideas presented by that person would be very narrow, almost as if the person has tunnel vision and is merely expressing a personal opinion. If that person does provide you with facts, they may often be skewed or not from a credible source. After the discussion, there is only a slight chance you would be convinced of the other person's point of view. You may have new ideas you had not considered before or a new perspective, but you would probably not be thoroughly convinced because that person has not made any attempt to present a well-rounded, fact-based point of view. This is why it is essential for you to not only provide your reader with strong, substantiated evidence, but also to ensure you present an argument that looks at the topic from multiple angles.

Now, you may be asking yourself, "How can my argument be convincing if I present ideas contrary to my main point of view?" It is very important to show your reader you have thought about different angles and that the conclusions you have come to have been critically developed. This evidence of critical thinking will elevate your argument to a higher level.

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

WRITING FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

The audience is the intended or potential reader or readers. This should be *the most important* consideration in planning, writing, and reviewing a document. You “adapt” your writing to meet the needs, interests, and background of the readers who will be reading your writing.

Audiences, regardless of category, must also be analyzed in terms of characteristics such as the following:

- **Background—knowledge, experience, training:** One of your most important concerns is just how much knowledge, experience, or training you can expect in your readers. For example, imagine that you’re a software developer who’s developing an app for a client. Unfortunately, your code had a number of bugs, which put you behind schedule. If you give a highly technical explanation of why the bugs occurred, you will likely confuse your client. If you simply say “we ran into some bugs,” your client might not be satisfied with the explanation. Your job would be to figure out how much technical knowledge your audience has, then find a way to communicate the problem clearly.
- **Needs and interests:** To plan your document, you need to know what your audience is going to expect from that document. For example, imagine you are writing a manual on how to use a new smart phone—what are your readers going to expect to find in it? Will they expect it to be in print or will they look for the information online? Would they rather watch a series of Youtube videos?
- **Different cultures:** If you write for an international audience, be aware that formats for indicating time and dates, monetary amounts, and numerical amounts vary across the globe. Also be aware that humour and figurative language (as in “hit a home run”) are not likely to be understood outside of your own culture. Ideally, your company should employ someone from within that culture to ensure that the message is appropriate, especially if it’s an important message.
- **Other demographic characteristics:** There are many other characteristics about your readers that *might* have an influence on how you should design and write your document—for example, age groups, type of residence, area of residence, gender, political preferences, and so on.

Audience analysis can get complicated by other factors, such as mixed audience types for one document and wide variability within the audience.

- **More than one audience.** You may often find that your message is for more than one audience. For example, it may be seen by technical people (experts and technicians) and administrative people (executives). What to do? You can either write all the sections so that all the audiences of your document can understand them (good luck!), or you can write each section strictly for the audience that would be interested in it, then use headings and section introductions to alert your audience about where to go and what to avoid in your report.
- **Wide variability in an audience.** You may realize that, although you have an audience that fits into only one category, there is a wide variability in its background. This is a tough one—if you write to the lowest common

denominator of reader, you're likely to end up with a cumbersome, tedious book-like thing that will turn off the majority of readers. But if you don't write to that lowest level, you lose that segment of your readers. Most writers go for the majority of readers and sacrifice that minority that needs more help. Others put the supplemental information in appendices or insert cross-references to beginners' books.

Craft Your Message

Let's say you've analyzed your audience until you know them better than you know yourself. What good is it? How do you use this information? How do you keep from writing something that will still be incomprehensible or useless to your readers?

The business of writing *to* your audience takes a lot of practice. The more you work at it, the more you'll develop an intuition about how most effectively to reach your audience. But there are some controls you can use to have a better chance to connect with your readers. The following "controls" mostly have to do with making information more understandable for your specific audience:

- **Add information readers need to understand your document.** A critical series of steps from a set of instructions, important background that helps beginners understand the main discussion, or definitions of key terms are useful additions.
- **Omit information your readers do not need.** You can probably chop theoretical discussion from basic instructions.
- **Add examples to help readers understand.** When you are trying to explain a technical concept, examples are a major help—analogies in particular.
- **Change the level of your examples.** You may be using examples, but the technical content or level may not be appropriate to your readers.
- **Change the organization of your information.** Sometimes, there can be too much background information up front (or too little) such that certain readers get lost. In instructions, it's sometimes better to feed in chunks of background at the points where they are immediately needed.
- **Strengthen transitions.** It may be difficult for readers to see the connections between the main sections of your report, between individual paragraphs, and sometimes even between individual sentences. Add *transition words* like "therefore," "for example," and "however" —they indicate the logic connecting the previous thought to the upcoming thought.
- **Write stronger introductions—both for the whole document and for major sections.** People seem to read with more confidence and understanding when they have the "big picture"—a view of what's coming, and how it relates to what they've just read. For each major section within your document, use mini-introductions that indicate at least the topic of the section and give an overview of the subtopics to be covered in that section.
- **Create topic sentences for paragraphs and paragraph groups.** This can help readers immensely to give them an idea of the topic and purpose of a section (a group of paragraphs) and in particular to give them an overview of the subtopics about to be covered.
- **Change sentence style and length.** How you write—down at the individual sentence level—can make a big difference too. Passive, person-less writing is harder to read—put people and action in your writing. All of this

makes your writing more direct and immediate—readers don’t have to dig for it. Sentence length matters as well. An average of somewhere between 15 and 25 words per sentence is about right; sentences over 30 words are often mistrusted.

- **Work on sentence clarity and economy.** Often, writing style can be so wordy that it is hard or frustrating to read. Revise your rough drafts—go through a draft line by line trying to reduce the overall word, page or line count by 20 percent.
- **Add cross-references to important information.** In technical information, you can help readers by pointing them to background sources.
- **Use headings and lists.** Readers can be intimidated by big dense paragraphs of writing, uncut by anything other than a blank line now and then.

Choose Your Medium/Product

Analyzing your purpose, audience and message will lead you to your medium, which is how the message is communicated. Should your message be a letter? A memo? An email? A text? A GIF?

See the table below for information about mediums to deliver messages.

Table 5.1 Written communication channels.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Instant message or text message	Very fast Good for rapid exchanges of small amounts of information Inexpensive	Informal Not suitable for large amounts of information Abbreviations lead to misunderstandings	Quick response	Informal use among peers at similar levels within an organization You need a fast, inexpensive connection with a colleague over a small issue and limited amount of information

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Email	Fast Good for relatively fast exchanges of information “Subject” line allows compilation of many messages on one subject or project Easy to distribute to multiple recipients Inexpensive	May be overlooked or deleted without being read. Large attachments may cause the e-mail to be caught in recipient’s spam filter Tone may be lost, causing miscommunications.	Normally a response is expected within 24 hours, although norms vary by situation and organizational culture	You need to communicate but time is not the most important consideration You need to send attachments (provided their file size is not too big)

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Fax	Fast Provides documentation	Very few businesses have a fax machine anymore, unless you work in the legal or medical field.	Usually this is reserved for brief documents.	You want to send a document whose format must remain intact as presented, such as a medical prescription or a signed work order

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Memo	Official but less formal than a letter Clearly shows who sent it, when, and to whom	Memos sent through e-mails can get deleted without review Sending to many recipients can cause your message to get stuck in a spam filter.	Normally used internally in an organization to communicate directives from management on policy and procedure, or documentation	You need to communicate a general message within your organization

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Letter	Formal Letterhead represents your company and adds credibility	May get filed or thrown away unread Cost and time involved in printing, stuffing, sealing, affixing postage, and travel through the postal system	Specific formats associated with specific purposes	You need to inform, persuade, deliver bad news or negative message, and document the communication

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Report	Can require significant time for preparation and production	Requires extensive research and documentation	Specific formats for specific purposes	You need to document the relationship(s) between large amounts of data to inform an internal or external audience

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Proposal	Can require significant time for preparation and production	Requires extensive research and documentation	Specific formats for specific purposes	You need to persuade an audience with complex arguments and data

By choosing the correct channel for a message, you can save yourself many headaches and increase the likelihood that your writing will be read, understood, and acted upon in the manner you intended.

In terms of writing preparation, you should review any electronic communication before you send it. Spelling and grammatical errors will negatively impact your credibility. With written documents, we often take time and care to get it right the first time, but the speed of instant messaging, text messaging, or emailing often deletes this important review cycle of written works. Just because the document you prepare in a text message is only one sentence long doesn't mean it can't be misunderstood or expose you to liability. Take time when preparing your written messages, regardless of their intended presentation, and review your work before you click "send."

WRITING CRITICALLY

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

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

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own, so you can spend the rest of the essay countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's.

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. Your readers 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 admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

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

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to the ideas. See below for Phrases of Concession for some useful phrases of concession.

Phrases of Concession

- although
- granted that
- of course
- still
- though
- yet

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly coloured clothes, or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view.

- **The strength of a personal bias** is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.
- **The weakness of personal bias** is that it can 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.

Fact and Opinion

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

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions, as experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience.

For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In your 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.

The Use of *I* in Writing

The use of *I* in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing.

Be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased, for two primary reasons:

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.

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 bolded and underlined:

Smoking is bad. vs. **I** think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, *smoking*, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of *I* and *think* replaces *smoking* as the subject, which draws attention to *I* and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate.

Tip: The word *prove* is frequently used in the discussion of persuasive writing. Writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but proving an argument is often not possible. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Three elements should shape your writing content: purpose, audience and tone.
- Audiences respond better to plain, inclusive language.
- When writing something critical, it is important to understanding limits of your argument and your own biases.

Activities for Further Learning

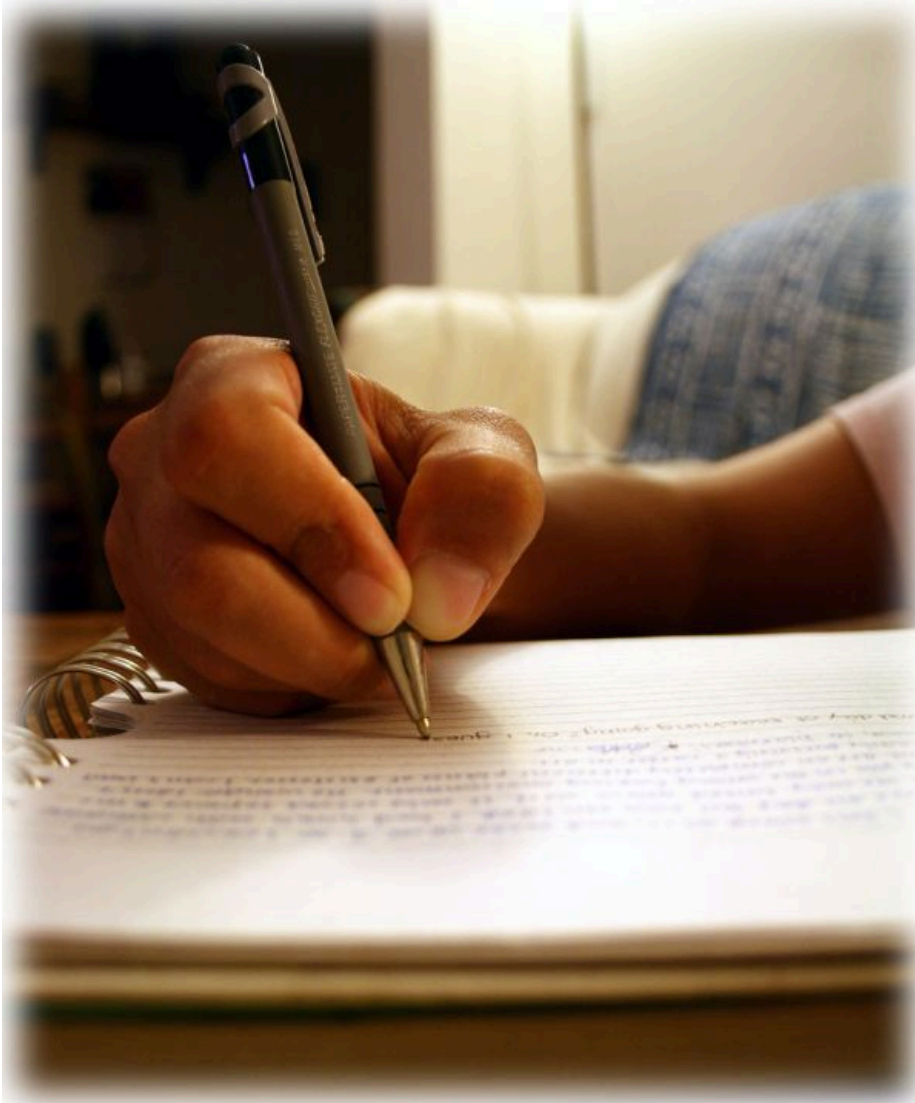
- Think about an assignment that you've created recently. Then, look online to try to see how other people have delivered a similar message in a different genre. How does the genre impact the message? What's left out and what's included? Does it appeal to a different audience? Write a paragraph or two about your findings.
- Write a critical paragraph about something you have big opinions about. Be sure to follow the criteria for writing critically.

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CHAPTER 6: PERFECTING YOUR WRITING: GRAMMAR



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In this section, you will:

- Identify commonly used words to ensure proper word choice in your writing.
- Describe strategies to improve spelling.
- Compare sentence structure and practice how to write better sentences.
- Implement punctuation rules.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- Which common grammatical errors do you often make, and how do you plan to improve on them?
- Why is grammar important in written and spoken communication?
- How has technology, such as grammar-checking software, impacted the way we approach and learn grammar?

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

Just as we use bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Tough, reliable materials are required to build a structurally sound skyscraper. From the foundation to the roof and every floor in between, every part is necessary. Writers need to use strong, meaningful words from the first sentence to the last.

Imagine you are writing a grocery list to purchase the ingredients for a recipe but accidentally write down cilantro when the recipe calls for parsley. Even though cilantro and parsley look remarkably alike, each produces a very different effect in food. This seemingly small error could radically alter the flavour of your dish!

Having a solid everyday vocabulary will help you while writing, but learning new words and avoiding common word errors will make a real impression on your readers. Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection and usage can lead to more polished, more meaningful work.

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because they share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words. For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words *new* and *knew*:

- I liked their new sweater.
- I knew they would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. *New* is an adjective that describes the sweater, and *knew* is the past tense of the verb “to know.”

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

New and *knew* are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word to avoid confusing the reader.

Examples of Commonly Confused Words

Common Confused Words	What do they mean?	Examples
A, An, And	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant. • An (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel. • And (conjunction). Connects two or more words together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key, a mouse, a screen. • An airplane, an ocean, an igloo • Peanut butter and jelly, pen and pencil, jump and shout
Affect, Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affect (verb). Means to create a change. • Effect (noun). Means an outcome or result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hurricane winds affect the amount of rainfall. • The heavy rains will have an effect on the crop growth.
Are, Our	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are (verb). A conjugated form of the verb to be. • Our (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun we. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My cousins are all tall and blonde. • We will bring our cameras to take pictures.
By, Buy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By (preposition). Means next to. • Buy (verb). Means to purchase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My glasses are by the bed. • I will buy new glasses after the doctor's appointment.
Its, It's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its (pronoun). A form of it that shows possession. • It's (contraction). Joins the words it and is. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The butterfly flapped its wings. • It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.
Know, No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge. • No. Used to make a negative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers. • I have no time to visit the zoo this weekend.
Loose, Lose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loose (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached. • Lose (verb). Means to forget, to give up, to fail to earn something, or to fail to find something. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without a belt, their pants are loose on their waist. • She is known to regularly lose her keys.

Of, Have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of (preposition). Means from or about. • Have (verb). Means to possess something. • Have (linking verb). Used to connect verbs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I studied maps of the city to know where to rent a new apartment. • I have many friends to help me move. • I should have helped him with that heavy box.
Quite, Quiet, Quit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite (adverb). Means really or truly. • Quiet (adjective). Means not loud. • Quit (verb). Means to stop or to end. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My work will require quite a lot of concentration. • I need a quiet room to complete the assignments. • I will quit when I am hungry for dinner.
Right, Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right (adjective). Means proper or correct. • Right (adjective). Also means the opposite of left. • Write (verb). Means to communicate on paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When bowling, she practises the right form. • The ball curved to the right and hit the last pin. • After the team members bowl, I will write down their scores.
Set, Sit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set (verb). Means to put an item down. • Set (noun). Means a group of similar objects. • Sit (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She set the mug on the saucer. • All the mugs and saucers belonged in a set. • I'll sit on the sofa while she brews the tea.
Suppose, Supposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppose (verb). Means to think or to consider. • Suppose (verb). Means to suggest. • Supposed (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I suppose I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe. • Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner. • She was supposed to create the menu.
Than, Then	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Than (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing. • Then (adverb). Means next or at a specific time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered nurses require less schooling than doctors. • Doctors first complete medical school and then obtain a residency.
Their, They're, There	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their (pronoun). A form of they that shows possession. • They're (contraction). Joins the words they and are. • There (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dog walker feeds their dogs everyday at two o'clock. • They're the sweetest dogs in the neighbourhood. • There are more treats if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To (preposition). Indicates movement. • To. A word that completes an infinitive verb. • Two. The number after one. It describes how many. • Too (adverb). Means also or very. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's go to the circus. • to play, to ride, to watch. • Two clowns squirted the elephants with water. • The tents were too loud, and we left.
Use, Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use (verb). Means to apply for some purpose. • Used. The past tense form of the verb to use • Used to. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We use a weed whacker to trim the hedges. • He used the lawnmower last night before it rained. • He used to hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.
Who's, Whose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who's (contraction). Joins the words who and either is or has. • Whose (pronoun). A form of who that shows possession. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who's the new student? Who's met him? • Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?
Your, You're	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your (pronoun). A form of you that shows possession. • You're (contraction). Joins the words you and are. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your book bag is unzipped. • You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Self-Practice Exercise 6.1



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=148#h5p-32>

HSP: Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns (to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbour's dog is (quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. (Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake (than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and (than, then) brushed his teeth.
6. Do you have any (loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
7. Father must (have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. Before playing ice hockey, I was (suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may (affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.
9. Tonight she will (set, sit) down and (right, write) a cover letter to accompany her resumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves (are, our) changing, and (it's, its) getting darker earlier.

Answer Key

- | | |
|----------|---------------------|
| 1. two | 6. loose |
| 2. quite | 7. have |
| 3. Your | 8. supposed, affect |
| 4. than | 9. sit, write |
| 5. then | 10. are, it's |

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It reduces confusion and improves clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

Use the online dictionary. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Dictionary apps are available for smartphone use.

Be aware of the words that often confuse you. Keep a list of these words and refer to it when you are editing your assignments.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.2



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=148#h5p-33>

H5P: In the paragraph below, locate all of the misused words and correct them. There are 11 errors in total. You can refer to the list of frequently misused words in this chapter for help as you work.

The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators' compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

SPELLING

While computer spell checkers are a great starting point, these programs fail to catch every error. Writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that many spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and the exceptions like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

- **Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbour” or “weigh.”**
 - achieve, niece, alien
 - receive, deceive
- **When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.**
 - happy + er = happier
 - cry + ed = cried
- **When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.**
 - delay + ed = delayed
 - Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: day, lay, say, pay = daily, laid, said, paid
- **When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as -able, -ence, -ing, or -ity, drop the last *e* in a word.**
 - write + ing = writing
 - pure + ity = purity
- **When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as -less, -ment, or -ly, keep the last *e* in a word.**
 - hope + less = hopeless
 - advertise + ment = advertisement
- **For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add -s when using the plural form.**
 - photo + s = photos
 - soprano + s = sopranos
- **Add -es to words that end in *s*, *ch*, *sh*, and *x*.**
 - church + es = churches
 - fax + es = faxes

Self-Practice Exercise 6.3



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=150#h5p-34>

H5P: Highlight all the misspelled words in the following paragraph:

Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane-Coeur d'Alene Native American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likly suffer long-term brain damage. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilitys, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagud him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck'sThe Grapes of Wrath . Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt aleinated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializeing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displaid at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologeis to his credit, notably The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven and The Toughest Indian in the World . Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and powwows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of storys is called War Dances, which came out in 2009.

Tip: Use these seven tips to improve your spelling skills:

1. Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page. Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. It can help to read your assignment out loud.
2. Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words. Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that beautiful begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word Wednesday Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.

3. Use a dictionary.
4. Use your computer's spell checker. The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool.
5. Keep a list of frequently misspelled words. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve.
6. Look over corrected papers for misspelled words. Add these words to your list and practise writing each word four to five times.
7. Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.

Tip: Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important—details like spelling and punctuation.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms	What do they mean?	Examples
Lead, led	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead (noun) – type of metal • Led (verb) – past tense of the verb lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lead pipes in my home are old and need to be replaced. • After the garden tour, she led the patrons through the museum.
Lessen, lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessen (verb) – to reduce in number, size, or degree • Lesson (noun) – reading or exercise to be studied by a student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My dentist gave me medicine to lessen the pain of my aching tooth. • Today’s lesson was about the use of punctuation.
Passed, past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed (verb) – to go away or move • Past (noun) – having existed or taken place in a period before the present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He passed the slower cars on the road using the left lane. • The War of 1812 was in the past.
Patience, patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience (noun) – capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring trials calmly) • Patients (plural noun) – individuals under medical care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher’s patience with the unruly class was astounding. • The patients sat in the waiting room awaiting their medical tests.
Peace, piece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace (noun) – state of tranquility or quiet • Piece (noun) – part of a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For once, there was peace between the argumentative brothers. • I would like a large piece of cake.
Principle, principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle (noun) – fundamental concept that is accepted as true • Principal (noun) – original amount of debt on which interest is calculated • Principal (noun) – person who is the main authority of a school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principle of human equality is an important foundation for all nations. • The payment plan allows me to pay back the principal amount, but not any compounded interest. • The principal made the morning announcements at the school.
Sees, seas, seize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees (verb) – perceives with the eye • Seas (plural noun) – plural of sea (body of salt water) • Seize (verb) – to possess or take by force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He sees a whale through the binoculars. • The pirate sailed the seven seas. • The king plans to seize all of the peasants’ land.

Threw, through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threw (verb) – past tense of throw • Through (preposition) – word that indicates movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She threw the baseball with perfect form. • She walked through the door and out of his life.
Where, wear, ware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where (adverb) – place in which something happens • Wear (verb) – carry or have on the body • Ware (noun) – articles of merchandise or manufacture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the restaurant? • I will wear my purple hat tomorrow. • When I return from shopping, I will show you my wares.
Which, witch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which (pronoun) – replaces one out of a group • Witch (noun) – person who practices magic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which apartment is yours? • The witch rides a broom through the sky.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.4



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=150#h5p-35>

HSP: Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

1. Do you agree with the underlying (principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?
2. Marjorie felt like she was being (led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
3. Serina described (witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.
4. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a (peace, piece) of his apple.
5. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the (passed, past) all the time?
6. Eating healthier foods will (lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
7. Daniela (sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.
8. Everyone goes (through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Refer to this list as needed before, during, and after you write. You may wish to copy each word a few times and underline areas that are tricky, or copy the words onto flashcards and have a friend test you to improve your spelling.

across	address	answer	argument	athlete	beginning	behaviour	calendar	career	conscience
crowded	definite	describe	desperate	different	disappoint	disapprove	eighth	embarrass	environment
exaggerate	familiar	finally	government	grammar	height	illegal	immediate	important	integration
intelligent	interest	interfere	jewellery	judgment	knowledge	maintain	mathematics	meant	necessary
nervous	occasion	opinion	optimist	particular	perform	personnel	possess	possible	prefer
prejudice	privilege	probably	psychology	pursue	reference	rhythm	ridiculous	separate	speech
similar	since	strength	success	surprise	taught	temperature	thorough	thought	tired
until	weight	written	writing						

Self-Practice Exercise 6.5



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=150#h5p-36>

H5P: After identifying each incorrectly spelled word, write in the correct spelling at the end of passage below.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly across the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginnings stretch back to the 16th century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it “Breuckelen.” Immediately after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn’s first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finally, they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British.

In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first important battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all.

By the end of the 19th century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an occasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its separate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinion, the integration into New York City should have never happened; they thought Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Now that you have identified the misspelled words, write the correctly spelled words in the order that they appear in the passage above.

WORD CHOICE

Effective writing involves making conscious word choices. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- Spelling: How the word and its different forms are spelled
- Pronunciation: How to say the word
- Part of speech: The function of the word
- Definition: The meaning of the word
- Synonyms: Words that have similar meanings
- Etymology: The history of the word

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceding information you can identify:

myth, mith, n. [Gr. mythos, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—myth • ic, myth • i • cal

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms—words that have the same (or close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms—words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly. Look at the following thesaurus entry:

precocious, adj, She's such a precocious little girl!: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

While a thesaurus is a valuable tool for expanding your vocabulary, its misuse can lead to unintended consequences. **It is important not to rely too heavily on thesaurus or translation tools.** This may result in the use of words that don't quite fit the context, leading to awkward and confusing sentences. Over-reliance on synonyms can also make your writing appear forced and artificial, lacking the natural flow and rhythm that authentic language provides. It is crucial to understand the subtle nuances of words, as synonyms often carry different connotations or shades of meaning. Replacing a familiar word with a less common synonym can alienate readers and disrupt understanding. Misuse of a thesaurus can lead to verbosity, when simple ideas become convoluted with unnecessarily complex language. In essence, while a thesaurus can be a valuable resource, it's essential to use it sparingly and in conjunction with a strong grasp of language and context to avoid these potential pitfalls in your writing.

Using Proper Connotations

A *denotation* is the dictionary definition of a word. A *connotation*, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word. Look at the examples below:

Table 6.1 Denotation vs. Connotation

Word	Denotation	Sentence	Connotation
Scrawny	Exceptionally thin and slight or meagre in body or size.	Although he was a premature baby and a scrawny child, Martin has developed into a strong man.	(Negative) In this sentence the word scrawny may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.
Skinny	Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.	Skinny jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.	(Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word skinny.
Lean	Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.	My brother has a lean figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.	(Neutral) In this sentence, lean has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word scrawny, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word skinny. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.6



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=152#h5p-37>

HSP: Group the following words into positive, negative, and neutral based on their connotation.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| • relaxed | • laugh | • interested |
| • cackle | • curious | • courageous |
| • foolhardy | • assured | • giggle |
| • lazy | • modern | • newfangled |
| • slow | • shack | • mansion |
| • new | • residence | • nosy |

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondence, such as emails, text messages, and instant messages.

Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- Clichéd: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my blood boil.
- Plain: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- Original: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.7



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=152#h5p-38>

H5P: In each of the statements below, pick the one that uses a cliché.

- A. She is writing a memoir to explore her family history, including the negative parts.
 - B. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.
- A. Fran had an axe to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
 - B. Fran was angry with Benny for years of annoyances, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
- A. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
 - B. Mr. Muller could no longer cope with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
- A. Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
 - B. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
- A. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheque.
 - B. Sometimes it is hard to pay for everything I need with just one paycheque.
- A. I'm finding it hard to work today after studying all night.
 - B. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
- A. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to show Jeff that she was frustrated with his lack of help with daily tasks.
 - B. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
- A. While they were at the carnival, Janice exclaimed, "I love this, and I'm so sorry we have to go home soon!"
 - B. While they were at the carnival, Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
- A. Jeremy struggled to find a response when the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
 - B. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.

Answer Key

1. B
2. A
3. A

4. B
5. A
6. B

7. B
8. B
9. B

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring your words to life. Add words that provide colour, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- General: My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
- Specific: My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.8



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=152#h5p-39>

HSP: Rewrite the Sentences.

For each of the sentences below, rewrite the plain, general prose to be more detailed and specific. See the example above for a suggestion.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo's essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.

10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

WRITING BETTER SENTENCES

Before we work more on piecing ideas together to form summaries and paragraphs, we need to look at fundamental sentence construction. Imagine you are reading a book for school. You need to find important details that you can use for an assignment. However, when you begin to read, you notice that the book has very little punctuation. The sentences fail to form complete paragraphs and instead form one block of text without clear organization. Most likely, this book would frustrate and confuse you. Without clear and concise sentences, it is difficult to find the information you need.

For both students and professionals, clear communication is important. Whether you are typing an email or writing a report or essay, it is your responsibility as the writer to present your thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Writing in complete sentences is one way to ensure that you communicate well. This section covers how to recognize and write basic sentence structures and how to avoid some common writing errors.

Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A **clause** is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An **independent clause** is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses in curly brackets:

{We went to the store.} {We bought the ingredients on our list}, and then {we went home.}

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the **subject** or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A **noun** is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A **pronoun** is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are I, he, she, it, you, they, and we. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

Trevor is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: Malik. The pronoun **He** replaces and refers back to Trevor.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: computer lab. In the second sentence, the pronoun **It** substitutes for computer lab as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: project. In the second sentence, the pronoun **It** stands in for the project.

Tip: In this chapter, please refer to the following grammar key:

- Subjects are underlined once.
- Verbs are highlighted.
- LV means linking verb; HV means helping verb; V means action verb.

Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called **compound subjects**. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year.

Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

In the first sentence, the subjects are *Desmond* and *Maria*. In the second sentence, *books*, *magazines*, and *online articles* are the subjects.

Prepositional Phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a **preposition** with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *under*, *near*, *by*, *with*, and *about*. A group of words that begin with a preposition is called a **prepositional phrase**. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following phrases inside curly brackets are examples of prepositional phrases.

We went {on a business trip}. That restaurant {with the famous pizza} was on the way. We stopped {for lunch}.

The prepositional phrases in this example include *on a business trip*, *with the famous pizza*, and *for lunch*.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.9



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccess2/?p=157#h5p-40>

HSP: Click the subject of the sentence. If the subject is compound, click on all the words relevant to the subject. You can ignore articles and conjunctions. Underline any prepositional phrases in the sentence. Underline words that make up the prepositional phrase. Ignore articles: click only the prepositions and their objects.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
3. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
4. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
5. Anita won the race with time to spare.

6. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
7. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
8. The soundtrack has over 60 songs in languages from around the world.
9. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the **verb**. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an **action verb**. An action verb answers the question what is the subject doing? In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are action verbs.

The dog barked at the jogger.
He gave a short speech before we ate.

Barked and *gave* are action verbs.

Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a **linking verb** because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are linking verbs.

The coat was old and dirty.
The clock seemed broken.

Was and *seemed* are linking verbs.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember:

- An action verb shows that the subject is doing something.
- A linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject.

A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action verb: The boy **looked** for his glove.

Linking verb: The boy **looked** tired.

Although both sentences use the same verb, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a **helping verb**. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of be, do, or have. The word can is also used as a helping verb.

The restaurant **is known** for its variety of dishes.

Is is the helping verb. *Known* is the main verb.

She **does speak up** when prompted in class.

Does is the helping verb. *Speak up* is the main verb.

We **have seen** that movie three times.

Have is the helping verb. *Seen* is the main verb.

They **can tell** when someone walks on their lawn.

Can is the helping verb. *Tell* is the main verb.

Tip: Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

- Subject: Who or what is the sentence about?
- Verb: Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

Self-Practice Exercise 6.10



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=157#h5p-41>

H5P: Please click on all the verbs in the sentences below. If the verb uses two words, click on both.

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside.
2. We have not eaten dinner yet.
3. It took four people to move the broken down car.
4. The book was filled with notes from class.
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages.
6. Sandeep was expecting a package in the mail.
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice.
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces.

Name the type of verb used in each sentence. Use V for action verbs, LV for linking verbs, and HV for helping verbs. The blank comes after each verb.

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside.
2. We have not eaten dinner yet.
3. It took four people to move the broken down car.
4. The book was filled with notes from class.
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages.
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail.
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice.
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces.

Sentence Structure (Including Fragments)

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

Sentence Patterns

Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing. A sample sentence is provided for each pattern. As you read each sentence, take note of where each part of the sentence falls. Notice that some sentence patterns use action verbs and others use linking verbs.

SUBJECT – VERB

Computers hum.

Subject – Linking Verb – Noun

Computers **are** tools.

SUBJECT – LINKING VERB – ADJECTIVE

Computers **are** expensive.

SUBJECT – VERB – ADVERB

Computers **calculate** quickly.

Subject – Verb – Direct Object

When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.

Ren rides a motorcycle.

Ren is the subject. *Rides* is the verb. *A motorcycle* is the direct object.

SUBJECT – VERB – INDIRECT OBJECT – DIRECT OBJECT

In this sentence structure, an **indirect object** explains *to whom* or *to what* the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.

My coworker **gave** me the reports.

My coworker is the subject. *Gave* is the verb. *Me* is the indirect object. *Reports* is the direct object.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.11



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=157#h5p-42>

HSP: Fill in the blanks to the right of each word to indicate its part of speech. Use **S** for subject, **V** for verb, **N** for noun, **LV** for linking verb, **ADJ** for adjective, **ADV** for adverb, **DO** for direct object, **IO** for indirect object.

1. John ____ runs ____ .
2. John ____ is ____ an athlete ____ .
3. John ____ is ____ hurt ____ .
4. John ____ heals ____ quickly ____ .
5. John ____ buys ____ a bicycle ____ .
6. John ____ gives ____ me ____ his running shoes ____ .

Fragments

The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a **fragment**. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

- Fragment: Children helping in the kitchen.
- Complete sentence: Children helping in the kitchen often make a mess.

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding often make a mess creates an S-V-N sentence structure. Figure 3.1 illustrates how you can edit a fragment to become a complete sentence.

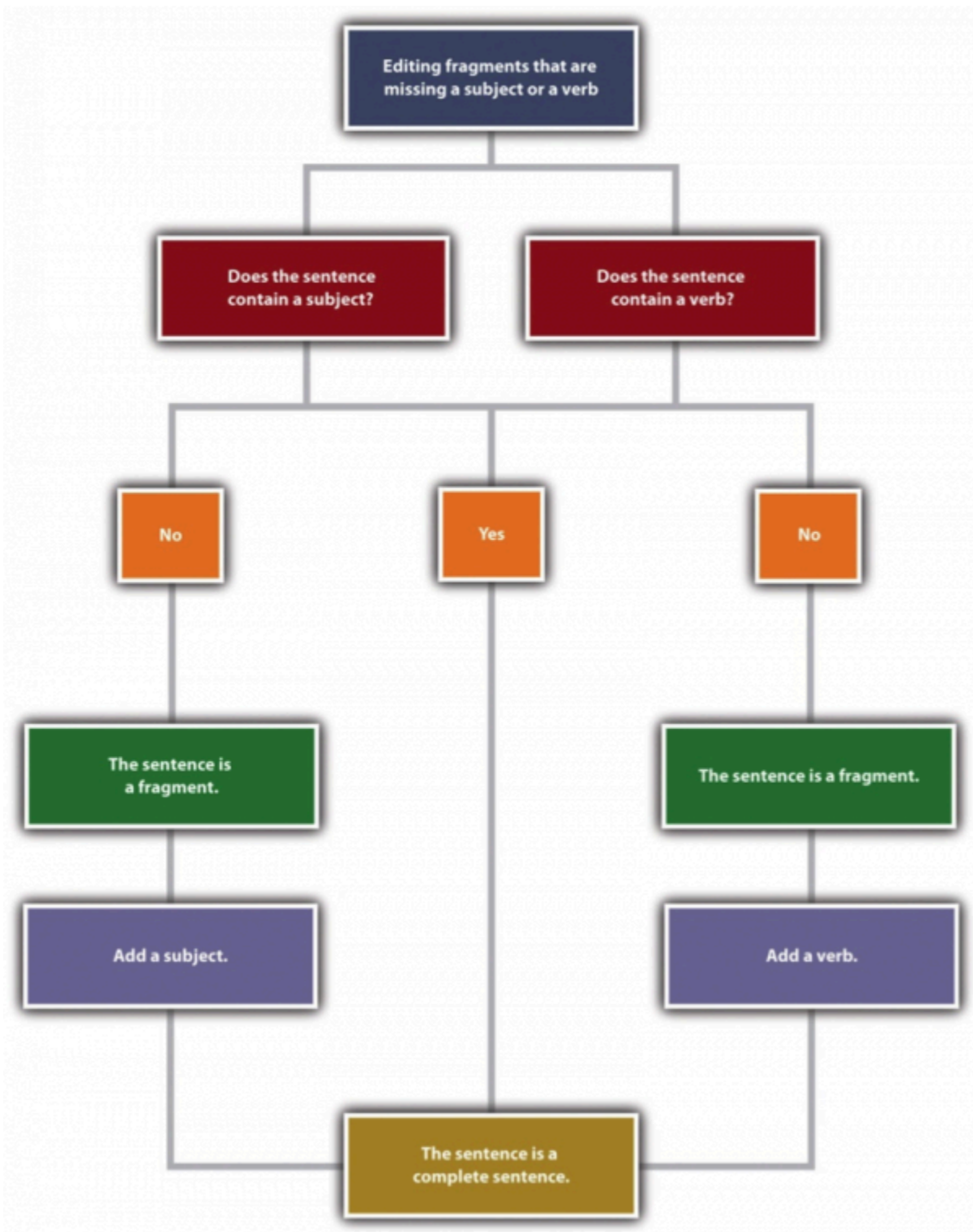


Figure 6.1 Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb [Figure 6.1 Image description]

See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments.

- Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.

- Complete sentence: I told her about the broken vase.

Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common errors, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive, or a gerund.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase. Look at the examples. Figure 3.2 illustrates how you can edit a fragment that begins with a preposition.

Example A:

- **Incorrect:** After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.
- **Correct:** After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.
- **Correct:** John remembered his wallet after walking over two miles.

Example B

- **Incorrect:** The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner. When it was switched on.
- **Correct:** When the vacuum cleaner was switched on, the dog growled.
- **Correct:** The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner when it was switched on.

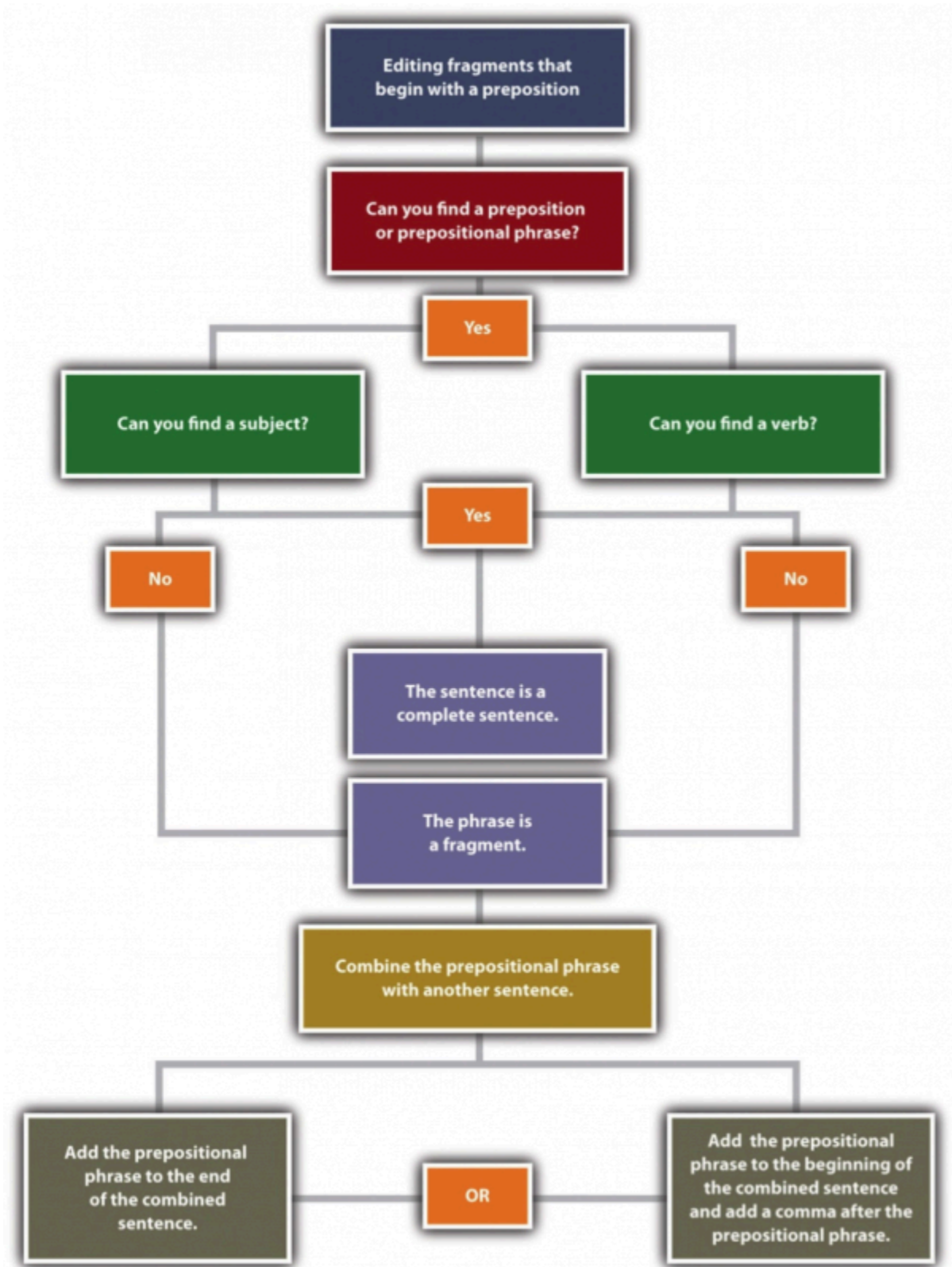


Figure 6.2 Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition [Figure 6.2 Image Description]

Clauses that start with a **dependent** word—such as since, because, without, or unless—are similar to prepositional

phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma after it before the independent clause.

- **Incorrect:** Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.
- **Correct:** Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.
- **Correct:** The entire family overslept because we lost power.

- **Incorrect:** He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.
- **Correct:** Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.
- **Correct:** He has been seeing a physical therapist since his accident.

When you encounter a word ending in -ing in a sentence, identify whether it is being used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the -ing verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An -ing verb form used as a noun is called a **gerund**.

- Verb: I **was working** on homework until midnight.
- Noun: Working until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

Once you know whether the -ing word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence. Figure 3.3 illustrates how to edit fragments that begin with a gerund.

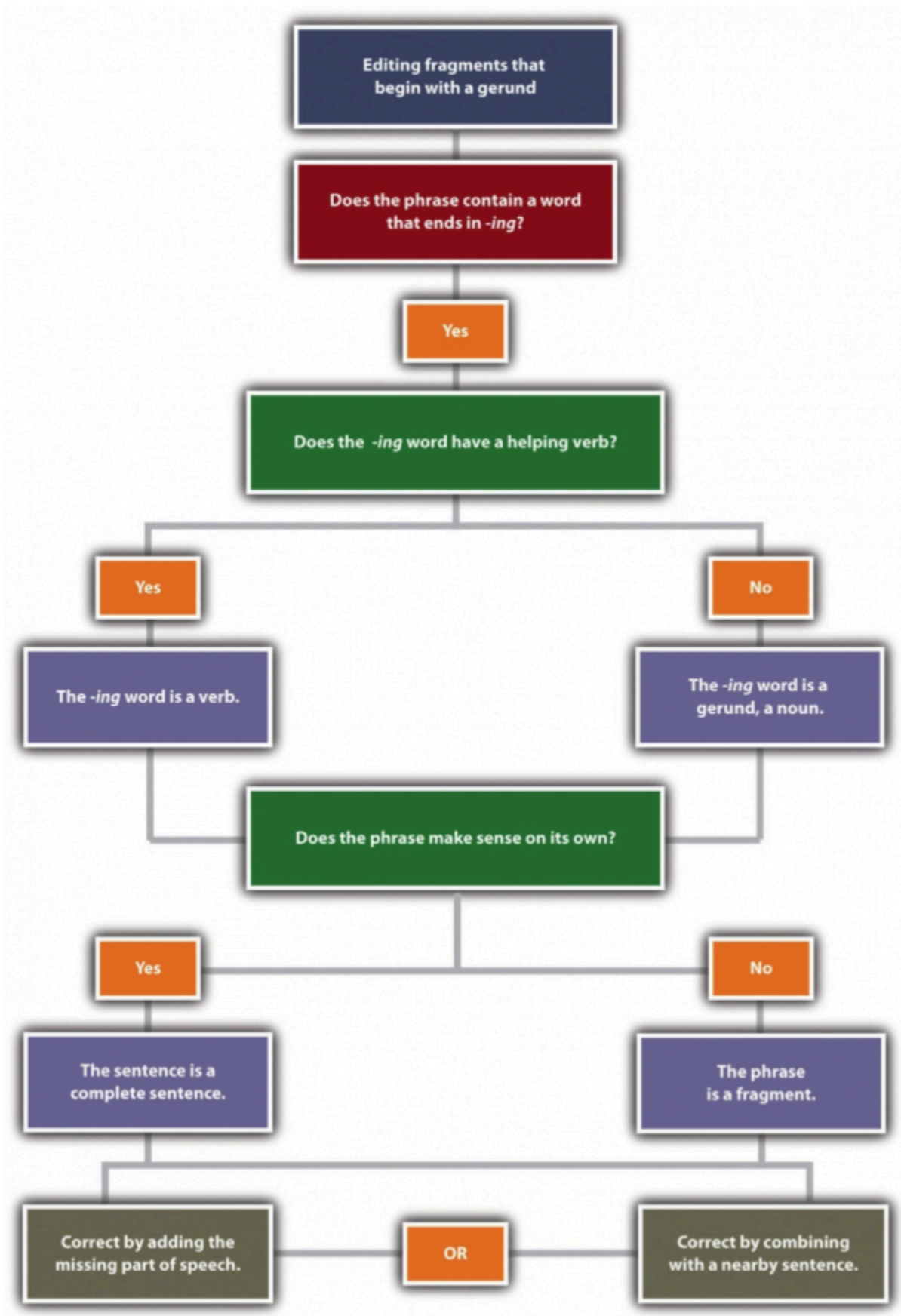


Figure 6.3 Editing Fragments That Begin with Gerunds [Figure 6.3 Image Description]

- **Incorrect:** Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.
- **Correct:** She was congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.
- **Correct:** Congratulating the entire team, Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An **infinitive** is a verb paired with the word to; for example, to run, to write, or to reach. Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

- **Incorrect:** We needed to make 300 more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.
- **Correct:** We needed to make 300 more paper cranes to reach the one thousand mark.
- **Correct:** We needed to make 300 more paper cranes. We wanted to reach the one thousand mark.

Self-Practice Exercise 6.12



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=157#h5p-43>

H5P: Click all of the fragments in the list of sentences below.

1. Unless the ground thaws before spring break.
2. You'll find what you need if you look.
3. On the shelf next to the potted plant.

4. Working without taking a break.
5. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
6. I needed to bring work home.
7. We won't be planting any tulips this year.
8. In order to meet the deadline.
9. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.
10. To find the perfect apartment.

Image Descriptions

A decision tree for editing sentence fragments that are missing a subject or a verb:

1. Does the sentence contain a subject?
 - If yes, go to #2.
 - If no, the sentence is a fragment. Add a subject to make it a complete sentence. Then go to #2.

2. Does the sentence contain a verb?
 - If yes, the sentence is a complete sentence.
 - If no, the sentence is a fragment. Add a verb to make it a complete sentence.

[\[Return to Figure 6.1\]](#)

A decision tree for editing fragments that begin with a preposition:

1. Can you find a preposition or prepositional phrase?
2. Can you find a subject?
 - If yes, go to #3.
 - If no, go to #4.

3. Can you find a verb?
 - If yes, the sentence is a complete sentence.
 - If no, go to #4.

4. The phrase is a fragment. Combine the prepositional phrase with another sentence. Add the prepositional phrase

to the end of the combined sentence or add the prepositional phrase to the beginning of the combined sentence and add a comma after the prepositional phrase.

[\[Return to Figure 6.2\]](#)

A decision tree for editing fragments that begin with a gerund:

1. Does the phrase contain a word that ends in -ing?
2. Does the -ing word have a helping verb?
 - If yes, the -ing word is a verb. Go to
 - If no, the -ing word is a gerund, a noun.
3. Does the phrase make sense on its own?
 - If yes, the sentence is a complete sentence.
 - If no, go to #4.
4. The phrase is a fragment. Correct by adding the missing part of speech or correct by combining with a nearby sentence.

[\[Return to Figure 6.3\]](#)

PUNCTUATION CHOICE

We've talked a lot about how word choice impacts tone, but there's one sneaky element that can also impact how your reader perceives your tone: punctuation.

In January of 2023, I did an informal survey that I circulated through Twitter and other social media channels, asking people to rank different variations of the email sign-off "Thanks,". I got the idea because every so often, debate flares up over whether some sign-offs are seen as passive-aggressive, rude or hostile.

Here were the instructions:

Please rank the following email sign-offs from most positive (1) to most negative (8). The sign-offs are:

Thanks.
 Thanks!
 Thanks,
 Thanks...
 Thank You.
 Thanks
 Thank you
 Thank you!

How would you rank them? Why? Go with your gut reaction, then see how you did compared to others who took the poll.

The Results

So, which was the most positive and which was the least positive? 178 people took the survey. With one being the most positive and 8 being the least positive, here's how they ranked the versions:

1. Thank you! = 1.60
2. Thanks! = 2.09
3. Thanks, = 3.71
4. Thank you = 4.27
5. Thanks = 5.02
6. Thank You. = 5.7
7. Thanks. = 6.58
8. Thanks... = 7.02

As you can see, some very interesting things are happening here! What trends do you notice? Did anything surprise you?

I noticed:

- Exclamation points are seen as positive, which likely isn't surprising.
- Adding a comma to 'Thanks' made it more positive (3.71 vs. 5.02). In general, versions without punctuation were seen as more negative than versions with punctuation.
- A period at the end of 'Thanks' was seen as more negative.
- The ellipsis (...) is seen as the most negative, likely because it comes across as passive-aggressive.
- With an exclamation point at the end, 'thank you' is seen as more positive than 'thanks.' However, the opposite was true without punctuation and with a period. Hmm!

So what does this mean?

It means that punctuation impacts how readers interpret the tone. Some types of punctuation, such as exclamation points and ellipses, are rather straightforward. However, when it comes to no punctuation, commas and periods, we know that readers interpret them differently.

This doesn't mean that you should obsess over every single comma you write. It just illustrates how many choices we have when we create a particular tone, and how sometimes how others perceive our messages will be different from what we intend because of a different context. It's also worth noting that all of our tone choices take place within a larger context. Your relationship with the reader, the type of communication you're sending, the purpose of the message and the genre will influence how the reader interprets these subtle clues about your tone.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words
- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
- Knowing commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.

Activities for Further Reflection

- Review the latest assignment you completed for school. Does it contain any commonly confused words?
- In one paragraph, describe in detail what you think makes a person successful. When you are finished, proofread your work for spelling errors. Exchange papers with a partner and read each other's work. See if you catch any spelling errors that your partner missed.

CHAPTER 7: WRITING GREAT PARAGRAPHS



“laptop-desk-notebo
ok-computer-macbo
ok-writing – Must
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In this section, you will:

- Compose paragraphs with proper paragraph structure.
- Identify elements of a paragraph including topic sentence, supporting sentences, transitions, and concluding sentences.
- Describe how to properly incorporate transitions into the other elements of the paragraph.
- Compare summaries and abstracts and determine how to properly execute this type of writing.
- Explain writing good introductory and concluding paragraphs.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- When you write, how do you know when to begin and end a paragraph?
- How do you organize your thoughts when you write?
- Look at a piece written by your favourite author. How does he or she use paragraphs?

WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

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 very quickly lose interest. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. One effective technique is to begin a new paragraph for each idea.

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

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

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

There are no strict rules for shaping your paragraphs. If you presented a text without paragraphs to a dozen writing instructors and asked them to break the document into logical sections, chances are that you would receive different opinions about the best places to break the paragraph. In part, where paragraphs should be placed is a stylistic choice. Some writers prefer longer paragraphs that compare and contrast several related ideas, whereas others stick to having one point per paragraph.

Note: When you are drafting, you need to trust your intuition about where to place paragraphs; you don't want to interrupt the flow of your thoughts as you write to check on whether you are placing them in logical order. Such self-criticism could interfere with creativity or the generation of ideas. Before you submit a document for a grade, however, you should examine the structure of your paragraphs.

Structuring the Paragraph

We've already learned that every piece of communication should have a purpose. That's also true of paragraphs. In general, you should have one purpose per paragraph, although for the overall flow of the document you might want to combine two points. Let's take a look at this customer service email:

Paragraph	Purpose
Dear Ms. Tran,	
Thank you for your patience as we investigated your missing clothing order, which you brought to our attention on Tuesday.	Provides a context for writing.
Once we received your email, we contacted both our warehouse and FedEx. The warehouse confirmed that your order was processed on Feb. 19th and FedEx confirmed that a shipping label was created on Feb. 20th. Unfortunately, we were not able to locate the package from that point.	Tells the reader what the writer did to solve the problem.
We are sorry for the inconvenience. Since we value your business and we know that you have been waiting for your clothes for two weeks, we would like to offer you two choices:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We can refund your money and give you a 25% discount towards future purchases. 2. We can send your clothing order with free one-day shipping and still give you a 25% discount towards future purchases. 	Apologizes and offers a solution.
Please let us know which option you choose and we will immediately process your order. If you have any questions, you can also call me at 604-123-4557.	Tells the reader what to do next.
Thank you again for your patience. We appreciate your business and look forward to making this right.	
Sincerely,	Ends the communication on a positive note, looking towards the future.
Makiko Hamimoto	

As you can see, most of the paragraphs have only one point. In short communication, it's enough to simply understand what role the paragraph plays in your writing. In longer or more important communication, you may choose to use topic sentences to structure your paragraphs.

Organization Within Paragraphs

If you're having trouble organizing your paragraph, you can try the following formats:

- **General to specific:** This is the most common format, and is the one used in the paragraph above.
- **Specific to General:** Building the reader up to a point. This is usually used to soften bad news, since it helps prepare the reader for the news.
- **Cause and Effect:** Show how one thing caused another thing to happen.
- **Chronological:** Describe events as they happened.
- **Narrative:** Describe a scene. Though this form is usually used in creative writing, it is often used in the workplace in incident reports, donations letters and other forms of storyteller

Paragraph Transitions

Readers expect paragraphs to relate to each other as well as to the overall purpose of a text. Establishing transitional sentences for paragraphs can be one of the most difficult challenges you face as a writer because you need to guide the reader with a light hand. When you are too blatant about your transitions, your readers may feel patronized.

Effective paragraph transitions signal to readers how two consecutive paragraphs relate to each other. The transition signals the relationship between the “new information” and the “old information.”

For example, the new paragraph might:

- elaborate on the idea presented in the preceding paragraph
- introduce a related idea
- continue a chronological narrative
- describe a problem with the idea presented in the preceding paragraph
- describe an exception to the idea presented in the preceding paragraph
- describe a consequence or implication of the idea presented in the preceding paragraph.

TOPIC SENTENCES

A topic sentence summarizes the main idea or the purpose of a paragraph. The topic sentence usually comes at the beginning of the paragraph. Then, the rest of the paragraph provides the supporting details. Sometimes, a writer will choose to put the topic sentence at the end of the paragraph in order to break bad news or build the reader up to a point. A topic sentence functions in several important ways:

- **It informs the reader of the paragraph’s direction** – The topic sentence announces the direction of the paragraph’s conversation. With the help of an effective topic sentence, readers will better understand what the paragraph will be about.
- **It guides the reader through the major points that support the writer’s purpose** – Clearly worded topic sentences may help readers find the author’s position or argument more convincing.
- **It places boundaries on the paragraph’s content** – The body of the paragraph provides support for the topic sentence. The paragraph should only include evidence and details that relate directly to the boundary established by the topic sentence.

Let’s look at an example:

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

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

Main Idea versus Controlling Idea

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

Main idea Marijuana use

Topic Sentence #1

The legalization of marijuana allows for control of the production, distribution, and sale of cannabis in Canada.

Topic Sentence #2

The anti-nausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.

Topic Sentence #3

Frequent use of marijuana can impair your cognitive abilities and cause lung damage.

Although the main idea – *marijuana use* – is the same in all three topic sentences; the controlling idea differs depending on the writer's viewpoint.

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. **A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.**
 - Weak example: People rarely give firefighters the credit they deserve for such a physically and emotionally demanding job. (The paragraph is about a specific incident that involved firefighters; therefore, this topic sentence is too general.)
 - Stronger example: During the October riots, Unit 3B went beyond the call of duty. (This topic sentence is more specific and indicates that the paragraph will contain information about a particular incident involving Unit 3B.)

2. **A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion.**
 - Weak example: In this paper, I am going to discuss the rising suicide rate among young professionals. (This topic sentence provides a main idea, but it does not present a controlling idea or thesis.)
 - Stronger example: The rising suicide rate among young professionals is a cause for immediate concern. (This topic sentence presents the writer's opinion on the subject of rising suicide rates among young professionals.)

3. **A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.**
 - Weak example: In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many

different types. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but both are buried beneath the confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary. These obstacles make it difficult for the reader to follow.)

- **Stronger example:** Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline. (This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow.)

4. A good topic sentence does not include supporting details.

- **Weak example:** Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don't allow the same team to win year after year. (This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.)
- **Stronger example:** Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons. (This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph.)

5. A good topic sentence engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary.

- **Weak example:** Hospitals deserve better equipment. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but the language is bland and unexciting.)
- **Stronger example:** The appalling lack of resources provided to hospitals is outrageous and requires our immediate attention. (This topic sentence reiterates the same idea and controlling thesis, but adjectives such as *appalling* and *immediate* better engage the reader. These words also indicate the writer's tone.)

Self-Practice Exercise 7.1



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=171#h5p-44>

H5P: Choose the most effective topic sentence from the following sentence pairs.

- A. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Liberals winning the next election.
- B. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Liberals need to listen to public opinion.

- A. Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure.
- B. The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.

- A. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.
 B. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.
- A. This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry.
 B. Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.

Answer Key

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. B | 3. B |
| 2. A | 4. B |

Self-Practice Exercise 7.2



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=171#h5p-45>

H5P: Prompts

Create your own topic sentences that expresses an opinion using the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea (opinion) in addition to the topic.

- An endangered species.
- The cost of fuel.
- The legal drinking age.
- A controversial film or novel.

Let's take a look at an example. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

After reading the new TV guide this week, I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favourites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. Prisoner

follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We’ve had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

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

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

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

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

Last year, a cat travelled 200 kilometres to reach its family, who had moved to another city and had left their pet behind. Even though the cat had never been to the new home, it cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighbourhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

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

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

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

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

SUPPORTING SENTENCES

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

- Reason
 - 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 6 percent of adults are currently unemployed in Canada.
- Quotation
 - “We will not allow this situation to continue,” stated Mariam Brown.
- Example
 - Last year, Terrence was asked to retire at the age of 55.

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

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

First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more kilometres to the litre than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. (**statistic**)

Second, they produce very few emissions during low-speed city driving. (**fact**)

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

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

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

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

CONCLUDING SENTENCES

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. The topic sentence and the concluding sentence are very similar. They frame the body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the previous example:

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

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

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

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

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.
 - Example: Homelessness is a growing problem in North America.
- Summarize the key points in the paragraph.
 - Example: Increased rental costs, lack of affordable housing, and population growth are some of the many factors contributing to homelessness.
- Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.
 - Example: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, homeless rates will continue to rise.
- Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.
 - Example: Based on this research, the homeless rate will continue to rise unless we take evasive action.
- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.
 - Example: Homelessness is preventable.



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H5P: Self-Practice Exercise

1. The concluding sentence is a good place to introduce a new idea, because readers find that engaging.
 - A. True
 - B. False

2. Match the type of concluding sentence to the best example.
 1. These examples from recent research show how criminalizing drugs has not protected communities or served individual drug users.
 2. The war on drugs has not resulted in a reduction in suffering.
 3. Given all we know about outcome of failed drug policy, the next step is to consider decriminalization.
 4. The war on drugs has damaged society because it has resulted in a more dangerous drug supply and a criminalized population.
 5. The traumas and violence inflicted by the war on drugs could have been prevented.
 - A. Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.
 - B. Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.
 - C. Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.
 - D. Restate the main idea.
 - E. Summarize the key points in the paragraph.

Answer Key

1. B
2. top, bottom, meat/patty

1. B	3. A
2. D	4. E

TRANSITIONS

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

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more kilometres to the litre than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they require less 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,” he said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

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

The transition word because is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they require less gas). Other transition words of consequence include as a result, so that, since, or for this reason.

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

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

Table: Transitional Words and Phrases to Connect Sentences provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

Transitional Words and Phrases to Connect Sentences

For Supporting Sentences

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

For Concluding Sentences

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

Self-Practice Exercise 7.4



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H5P: Practice what you've learned about paragraphs!

Exercise Explanation

For this exercise, you will draft a paragraph after spending some time reflecting on the criteria for good paragraphs that you learned about in this chapter. You can choose any topic you like for your paragraph — maybe there's something you're thinking about for this or another class that would benefit from some time to do some writing about — but if you need help with a prompt, consider writing about one of the issues in this chapter or answer one of these questions:

- Can online friendships be as meaningful as offline ones?
- Is college or university always the right decision for people leaving high school?
- What can people do to manage their stress levels?

You don't need to do research to approach this exercise (though you are welcome to, if you wish!). Instead, your own personal experience will be sufficient here.

Key Paragraph Details

Here you will reflect on what makes a good paragraph before you take a run at it yourself. Remember, a good paragraph has the following criteria:

- A topic sentence (that makes a claim/states an opinion!).
- A concluding sentence.
- Appropriate supporting details.
- Use of transitional words/phrases.

In the exercise below, click on the "criteria" button and make notes for yourself about how you can address the key criteria for paragraphs. Try make four points: one for each key element your paragraph needs to have.

Paragraph Composition

Based on the criteria you outlined on the previous page, draft a paragraph.

Review Criteria and Goals

Rate how well you've achieved each of the criteria, and reflect on how you can strengthen the thesis statement.

- Doesn't meet criteria.
- Meets criteria partially.
- Strongly meets criteria.

SUMMARIES

When you summarize, you are filtering and condensing the most necessary points from a source, like a book, article, or website.

When summarizing material from a source, you focus in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers. To create a summary, consider the following points:

1. **Review** the source material as you summarize it.
2. **Identify the main idea** and **restate** it as concisely as you can—preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples.
3. **Check** your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.
4. **Make a careful record** of where you found the information because you will need to include the reference and citation if you choose to use the information in an essay. It is much easier to do this when you are creating the summary and taking notes than having to go back and hunt for the information later. Guessing where you think you got it from is not good enough.

Abstracts

When you read many journal articles, you will notice there is an **abstract** before the article starts: this is a summary of the article's contents. Be careful when you are summarizing an article to not depend too much on the abstract as it is already a condensed version of the content. The author of the abstract identified the main points from his or her perception; these may not match your own purpose or your own idea of what is important. What may also happen if you try to summarize the abstract is you will probably end up replacing some words with synonyms and not changing the overall ideas into your own words because the ideas are already summarized, and it is difficult to make them more generalized. You have to read the entire source or section of the source and determine for yourself what the key and supporting ideas are.

Tip: A summary or abstract of a reading passage is one-tenth to one-quarter the length of the original passage, written in your own words. The criteria for a summary are that it:

- Includes only the main points and key details
- Is valuable because it is the surest way to measure your understanding

- Helps you remember because you must attend carefully to what you read, organize your thoughts, and write them out to make it meaningful to you (This is absolutely necessary when you cannot mark a book because it belongs to someone else.)
- Challenges you to be concise in your writing while providing balanced coverage of the main points.
- Challenges you to paraphrase or use your own words and avoid using too many quotations.

Is important to remain objective because you are giving the author's views not your own.

Article: Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets by Adrienne Howell, Ph.D. (2010)

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

Summary

In three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time (Howell, 2010).

Tip: A summary restates ideas in your own words, but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, the term obese was used in this summary because related words such as heavy or overweight have a different clinical meaning.

Summary Paragraphs

A summary shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials. You probably summarize events, books, and movies daily. Think about the last movie you saw or the last novel you read. Chances are, at some point in a casual conversation with a friend, co-worker, or classmate, you compressed all the action of a two-hour film or a 200-page book into a brief description of the major plot movements. You probably described the main points in just a few sentences, using your own vocabulary and manner of speaking.

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

The following is another example of a report on the use of alcohol by adolescents with an example of a student summary of that information.

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

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

Alcohol use and problem drinking in late adolescence vary by sociodemographic characteristics. For example, the prevalence of alcohol use is higher for boys than for girls, higher for White and Hispanic adolescents than for African-American adolescents, and higher for those living in the north and north

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

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

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

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

Notice how the summary retains the key points made by the writers of the original report but omits most of the statistical data. Summaries do not need to contain all the specific facts and figures in the original document; they provide only an overview of the essential information.

Tip: To write a summary:

1. Survey the passage, anticipating main points and checking them.
2. Read carefully, locating all controlling ideas, identifying key details, and deciding which are necessary to remember and which are not.
3. Write a paragraph in whole sentences that relate/explain only the controlling ideas and supporting details; be economical and use no more words than necessary.

4. Differentiate between your ideas and the original author's by using phrases such as "According to Marshall (2014)," or " Marshall (2014) argues that"

Self-Practice Exercise 7.5



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HSP: Read the following passage and use a note-taking method to identify the main points. Then, compose a summary sentence summarizing the paragraph's main points. This exercise will automatically check to make sure you've included key words.

Several factors about the environment influence our behaviour. First, temperature can influence us greatly. We seem to feel best when the temperature is in the high teens to low 20s. If it is too hot or cold, we have trouble concentrating. Lighting also influences how we function. A dark lecture hall may interfere with the lecture, or a bright nightclub might spoil romantic conversation. Finally, our behaviour is affected by colour. Some colours make us feel a peaceful while others are exciting. If you wanted a quiet room in which to study, for example, you would not paint it bright orange or red.

Passage taken from: Ueland, B. (2006). *Becoming a Master Student*. Boston, MA : Houghton Mifflin College Div., p. 121.

INTRODUCTORY AND CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS

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

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

An introduction serves the following purposes:

- 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
- Provides signposts of what you will discuss in your essay

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

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving smoothly and logically from your introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be achieved using a **funnel technique**, as illustrated in **Figure 7.1: Funnel Technique**.

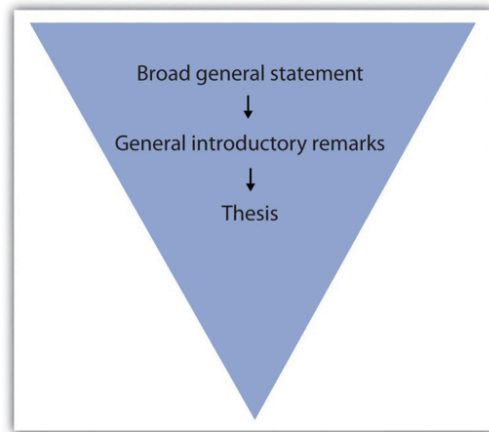


Figure 7.1 Funnel Technique

Self-Practice Exercise 7.6



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=182#h5p-50>

H5P: Capturing Attention

Imagine you are writing an essay arguing for domesticated cats to be kept indoors. What follows are a list of potentially attention-grabbing first sentences for the introductory paragraph. Match the kind of appeal to the best example of it in the list.

Examples:

1. A little girl weeps at the untimely death of her beloved cat; an elderly neighbour misses the company of the neighbourhood songbirds.
2. Most people love neighbourhood wildlife and most pet owners love their pets; a mutually beneficial strategy for keeping both safe is to keep cats indoors.
3. Cats are cute, but they are also murderous killing machines bent on destroying your neighbourhood.
4. Every year, cats kill between 100 million and 350 million birds in Canada alone; 38% of those birds are killed by domesticated cats.
5. If you knew there was one single behavioural change that would improve your neighbourhood for generations, would you do it?
6. The purpose of this essay is to protect neighbourhood wildlife from cats, and to protect cats from the

hazards of this neighbourhood.

7. "Curiosity killed the cat," goes the famous adage.
8. Imagine the sight of a beloved family cat who has been struck by a car on the highway.
9. When I was a child, our family cat loved to roam free in the neighbourhood. I never wondered why there were no birds in our backyard, like my friends enjoyed and experienced.

Appeal:

- A. Beginning with a provocative question or opinion
- B. Opening with a striking image
- C. Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- D. Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
- E. Including a personal anecdote
- F. Raising a question or series of questions
- G. Appealing to their emotions
- H. Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
- I. Using logic

Answer Key

- | | | |
|------|------|------|
| 1. G | 4. D | 7. H |
| 2. I | 5. F | 8. B |
| 3. A | 6. C | 9. E |

Tip: Remember that your diction, or word choice, while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your discussion. Choose words that create images or express action. You may want to use a relevant, attention-grabbing quote about your topic to use in your introduction.

Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade by the time they get to the end. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as 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 manoeuvre your readers out of the essay.

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

Tip: Avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

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

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

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view. When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.

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

Self-Practice Exercise 7.9



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=182#h5p-52>

H5P: Drafting Introduction and Conclusion**Introduction**

In this exercise, we will apply what we have learned about Introductions and Conclusions in order to draft both for your essay. It's okay if you don't think this will be the final, perfect version of either — you have lots of time to revise. The goal here is to practice your skills and understanding while it's fresh in your mind.

- Identify one or two strategies for attracting attention to your essay, and draft sentences using them.
- The other job of an introduction is to make sure your reader has a sense of how they essay will develop. Draft a sentence of two that gestures to how you will prove your thesis statement.
- Restate your thesis statement.
- Combine all of what you've done so far into an introductory paragraph.

Conclusion

1. Start by restating your thesis in different words using your paraphrasing skills.
2. Make note of any concluding remarks you would like to include. Remember: these sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and manoeuvre your readers out of the essay. Look at Mariah's example again if you want guidance.
3. Come up with a final, emphatic statement for your essay. A good way to structure this is to articulate in one sentence why the topic of your essay matters, and why you care about it.
4. Combine all of what you've done so far into a concluding paragraph.

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

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- A clear paragraph provides your audience with an appropriate amount of information and is structured so that the reader can see the connection between ideas.
- The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph combined with the writer's attitude or opinion about the topic.
- Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence by offering facts, reasons, statistics, quotations, or examples.
- Concluding sentences summarize the key points in a paragraph and reiterate the main idea without repeating it word for word.
- You can use transitional words to help the reader see the connection between ideas and between paragraphs
- A summary concisely restates the main ideas of a source in the writer's own words.

Activities for Further Learning

- Group activity: Working in a group of four or five, assign each group member the task of collecting one document each. These documents might include magazine or newspaper articles, workplace documents, academic essays, chapters from a reference book, film or book reviews, or any other type of writing. As a group, read through each document and discuss the author's purpose for writing. Use the information you have learned in this chapter to decide whether the main purpose is to summarize,

analyze, synthesize, or evaluate. Write a brief report on the purpose of each document, using supporting evidence from the text.

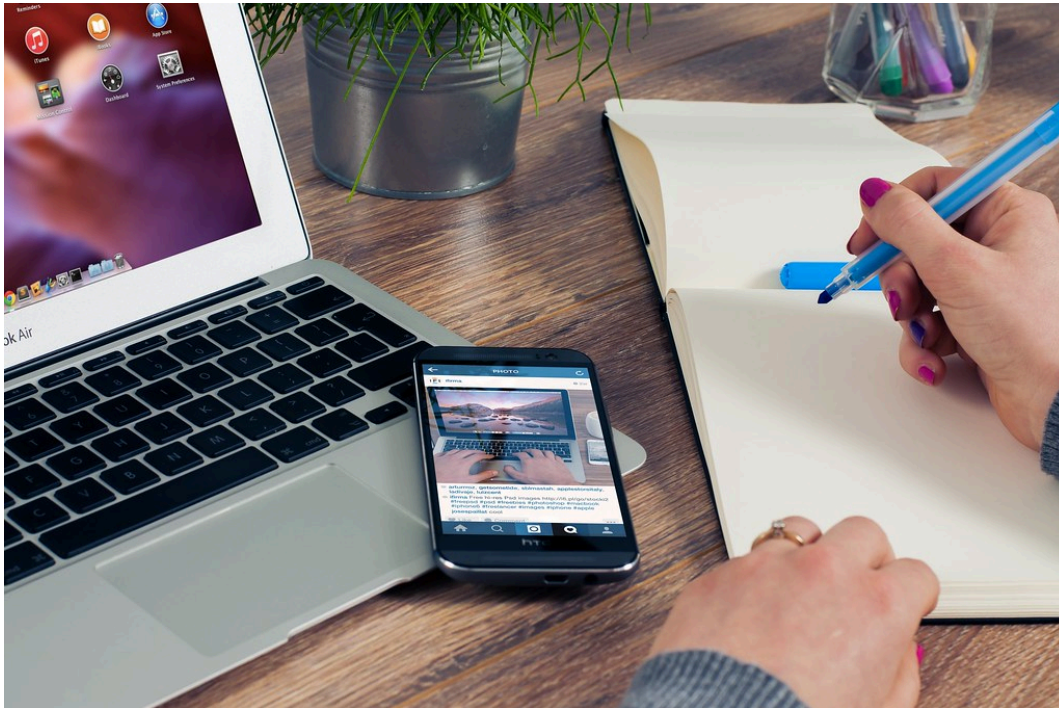
- Pick an assignment you've recently completed. Underline the topic sentence of each paragraph. If you don't have a topic sentence, write one in the margins. Next, number the rest of the sentences within your paragraph from most to least important. When you're done, take a look at your paragraphs. Did you notice any trends? Are all of the paragraphs organized from most to least important, or did you use a different organizational pattern? Based on what you've learned, rewrite any paragraphs that could use stronger organization.
- Pick an assignment you've recently completed. In the margins, write the purpose of each paragraph (or why it exists in the document). Next, take out a highlighter and highlight any sentence that fulfills the purpose. Look at your document. Does everything in the paragraph meet the purpose? If not, edit your document to split paragraphs or create new paragraphs.

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CHAPTER 8: WRITING FOR BUSINESS



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In this section, you will:

- Recognize the genres of business communication
- Demonstrate the ability to select a genre for your purpose
- Develop examples of business communications including emails, memos, letters, and instant messages

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- Brands use social media all the time. Think of an example of a brand's use of social media that you didn't like. Why didn't you like it? What would you have done differently?
- How does the choice of medium (memo, letter, social media) impact the tone, style and content of a business message? When do you think each medium is most important?
- In the age of digital communication, how has the role of formal letters and printed memos evolved, and when are they still relevant?
- How does the use of visual elements, such as images, infographics, and videos enhance the effectiveness of social media business communication?

WRITING MEMOS

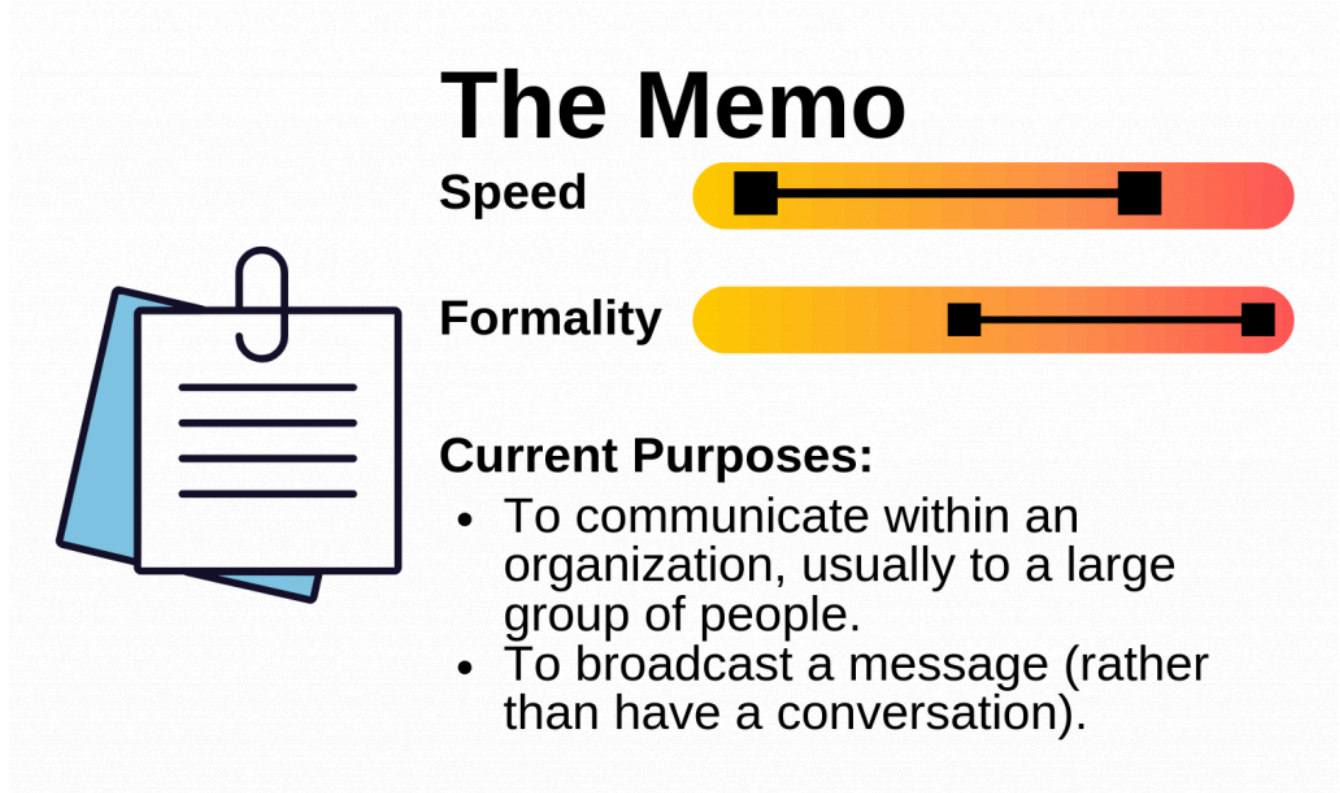


Figure 8.1 The Memo [\[Image Description\]](#)

A memo (or memorandum, meaning “reminder”) is normally used for communicating policies, procedures, or related official business **within** an organization. It is often written as a masscommunication, broadcasting a message to a larger audience, rather than a one-on-one communication. It may also be used to update a team on activities for a given project or to inform a specific group within a company of an event, action, or observance.

Memos can be tricky because they often communicate to multiple audiences who have different levels of knowledge about the context. For example, if you are communicating a new company policy, different types of employees will want to know exactly how the policy impacts them.

Format

Memos have a header that includes DATE, TO, FROM, and SUBJECT lines. Other lines, such as CC or BCC, may be added as needed. An RE (“Reference”) line may be used instead of SUBJECT, but this use is becoming rarer as “RE” is often mistaken as “Reply” because of its use in email.

- **DATE:** List the date on which the memo is distributed.
- **TO:** List the names of the recipients of the memo. If there are several recipients, it's acceptable to use a group name, such as "All Employees" or "Personnel Committee Members."
- **FROM:** List the name and job title of the writer(s).
- **SUBJECT:** Think of this as the title for the memo. Make it specific so that readers can immediately identify the topic.

Many organizations have their own style preferences on these issues. If not, the order listed above, double-spaced, is the most common.

The text of memos typically uses block format, with single-spaced lines, an extra space between paragraphs, and no indentions for new paragraphs.

Organization

Depending on whether you're breaking good, neutral or bad news, you will choose between a direct, or indirect approach.

When organizing your memo, you should make decisions with a few principles in mind:

- **Meeting the needs of multiple audiences:** Because memos are used to broadcast a message, they often have a large audience. Memos are structured to allow all of these audiences to easily find the information they need. Most memos use headings, for example. Memos also often start with a clear statement of purpose that explains what the memo is about. They also might contain a 'background' section for those who are unfamiliar with the memo's topic. For example, if the purpose of the memo is to outline the new work-from-home policy, the background might explain the previous policy or why the policy has been updated.
- **Conveying Seriousness:** In the past, memos were used routinely. Now that email exists, however, memos are most often used to send out official announcements. You might ignore an email, but most employees will read a memo. Memos may also be printed, or posted on a bulletin board in common work spaces. Sometimes, memos have legal implications. (How often have you read a news article that contains the line "In a leaked memo, the company said..."). Memos therefore tend to be more clearly edited, precise and formal.
- **Telling the Reader What to Do:** Because memos often go to large audiences and because they're for broadcasting, not conversation, it's important to tell the reader what steps they're expected to take, if any. For example, if you're updating the work-from-home policy, are employees expected to contact someone if they're interested in working from home? Do they need to follow a new procedure? Who should they talk to if they have questions? Clearly laying out the next steps will avoid confusion and frustration.

Sample Memo

Memorandum

Date: March 18, 2019

To: Department Managers

From: Safiyya Dev, Store Manager

Subject: Customer Service Excellence Nominations

Please submit your nominations for the quarterly Customer Service Excellence Award by April 8. Help us identify great employees!

Do you have an employee who you feel fortunate to have in your department? Does this employee show a positive and professional attitude when helping customers? Do you get frequent comments about this person's friendliness and helpfulness? Now, you have an opportunity to give this employee the recognition they deserve.

According to the nomination criteria, nominees must:

- demonstrate excellent customer service consistent with Variety Craft Supplies' policies;
- have worked at Variety Craft Supplies for at least six months;
- work 20 or more hours per week;
- not have received the Customer Service Excellent Award within the last year; and
- have a record clear of oral and written warnings for the last six months.

The winner of the award will receive a framed certificate and a \$100 check.

A nominating form is attached. Please complete and return it to me by Monday, April 8. Thank you for your help in identifying and rewarding excellent customer service representatives.

As you can see, this memo has a direct and concise opening that states the purpose of the memo. The body paragraph provides the award criteria, which will help managers follow through on the request. The conclusion provides action information, a deadline and a courteous closing message.

Style and Tone

While memo reports and policy memos have a more formal tone, the audience of memos are coworkers, so the writing style usually assumes a relationship with them (and therefore a certain lack of formality). Just keep in mind that the relationship is a professional one, so the writing should reflect that. Furthermore, as with all workplace documents, the

audience may contain a variety of readers, and the style and tone should be appropriate for all of their technical and authority levels.

Common Memo Writing Situations

Memos are used in a variety of workplace communication situations, from documentation of procedures and policies to simple announcements.

Image Description

Figure 8.1 image description: This photo shows that the memo has variable speed (because it can be sent through email or in hard copy) and is moderately to very formal. Its purpose is to communicate within an organization and to broadcast a message. Memos aren't used for conversations. [\[Return to Figure 8.1\]](#)

WRITING LETTERS

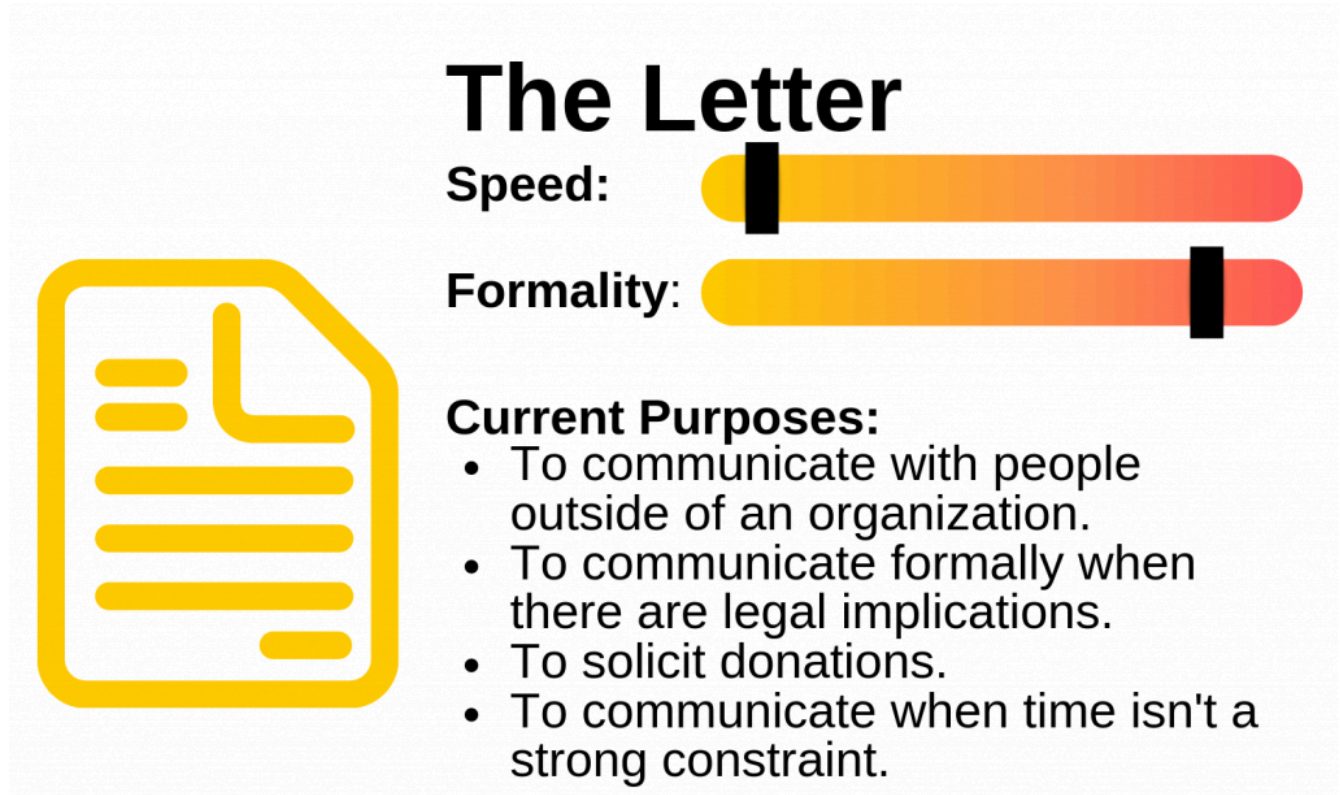


Figure 8.3 The Letter [\[Image Description\]](#)

Though letters were the main mode of communication for thousands of years, today they're mostly brief messages sent to recipients that are usually **outside** the organization (Bovee & Thill, 2010). They are often printed on letterhead and represent the business or organization in one or two pages. Because communications are increasingly electronic, letters are getting rarer in the workplace. Often, they're reserved for important communications that have legal implications, such as offering someone a job or trying to collect money your organization is owed.

As genres shift, business communicators are trapped in a weird situation where business documents are set up like letters but are set electronically. For example, your cover letter might be attached as a PDF to an email.

Regardless of the type of letter you need to write, it can contain up to fifteen elements in five areas. While you may not use all the elements in every case or context, they are listed below.

Elements of a Business Letter

Content	Guidelines
1. Return address	This is your address where someone could send a reply. If your letter includes a letterhead with this information, either in the header (across the top of the page) or the footer (along the bottom of the page), you do not need to include it before the date.
2. Date	The date should be placed at the top, right or left justified, five lines from the top of the page or letterhead logo.
3. Reference (Re:) *optional	Like a subject line in an e-mail, this is where you indicate what the letter is in reference to, the subject or purpose of the document.
4. Delivery *optional	Sometimes you want to indicate on the letter itself how it was delivered. This can make it clear to a third party that the letter was delivered via a specific method, such as certified mail (a legal requirement for some types of documents).
5. Recipient note *optional	This is where you can indicate if the letter is personal or confidential.

6. Salutation	A common salutation may be “Dear Mr. (full name).” If you are unsure about titles (i.e., Mrs., Ms., Mr., Mx., Dr.), you may simply write the recipient’s name (e.g., “Dear Cameron Rai”) followed by a colon. A comma after the salutation is correct for personal letters, but a colon should be used in business. The salutation “To whom it may concern” is appropriate for letters of recommendation or other letters that are intended to be read by any and all individuals. If this is not the case with your letter, but you are unsure of how to address your recipient, make every effort to find out to whom the letter should be specifically addressed. For many, there is no sweeter sound than that of their name, and to spell it incorrectly runs the risk of alienating the reader before your letter has even been read. Avoid the use of impersonal salutations like “Dear Prospective Customer,” as the lack of personalization can alienate a future client.
7. Introduction	This is your opening paragraph, and may include an attention statement, a reference to the purpose of the document, or an introduction of the person or topic depending on the type of letter. An emphatic opening involves using the most significant or important element of the letter in the introduction. Readers tend to pay attention to openings, and it makes sense to outline the expectations for the reader up front. Just as you would preview your topic in a speech, the clear opening in your introductions establishes context and facilitates comprehension.
8. Body	If you have a list of points, a series of facts, or a number of questions, they belong in the body of your letter. You may choose organizational devices to draw attention, such as a bullet list, or simply number them. Readers may skip over information in the body of your letter, so make sure you emphasize the key points clearly. This is your core content, where you can outline and support several key points. Brevity is important, but so is clear support for main point(s). Specific, meaningful information needs to be clear, concise, and accurate.
9. Conclusion	An emphatic closing mirrors your introduction with the added element of tying the main points together, clearly demonstrating their relationship. The conclusion can serve to remind the reader, but should not introduce new information. A clear summary sentence will strengthen your writing and enhance your effectiveness. If your letter requests or implies action, the conclusion needs to make clear what you expect to happen. This paragraph reiterates the main points and their relationship to each other, reinforcing the main point or purpose.
10. Close	“Sincerely” or “Cordially” are standard business closing statements. Closing statements are normally placed one or two lines under the conclusion and include a hanging comma, as in Sincerely,
11. Signature	Five lines after the close, you should type your name (required) and, on the line below it, your title (optional).
12. Preparation line	If the letter was prepared or typed by someone other than the signatory (you), then inclusion of initials is common, as in MJD or abc.
13. Enclosures (attachments)	Just like an e-mail with an attachment, the letter sometimes has additional documents that are delivered with it. This line indicates what the reader can look for in terms of documents included with the letter, such as brochures, reports, or related business documents. Only include this line if you are in fact including additional documentation.
14. Courtesy copies or “CC”	The abbreviation “CC” once stood for carbon copies but now refers to courtesy copies. Just like a “CC” option in an e-mail, it indicates the relevant parties that will also receive a copy of the document.
15. Logo and contact information	A formal business letter normally includes a logo or contact information for the organization in the header (top of page) or footer (bottom of page).

Sample Letter

Marge Gagnon

1111 Random St.

Vancouver, BC

T3T 3T301/01/2020Re: Offer of Employment at XYZ Company

Delivery: Canada Post Registered Mail

Note: ConfidentialDear Ms. Gagnon,This letter is to formally offer you employment as a Bean Counter at Bubba's Bean Barn. As a member of our bean counting team, you will be responsible for using best practices in bean counting to efficiently count a wide variety of beans and work effectively with a team of other bean counters. Your starting salary will be \$65,000, including benefits, which have been outlined in the attached benefits package. You will start on Feb. 1st 2020 at 8:30 am.On behalf of all of us at Bubba's Bean Barn, welcome to our bean team! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Bubba Jean McBean

GSM/ep

Enclosures: Benefits package, full job description.

CC: Jen Yee

bubba.jean.mcbean@bubbasbeans.com

604-222-3333

Image Description

Figure 8.3 image description: This diagram shows that the letter is a slow medium and these days is quite formal. It's mostly used to communicate with people outside of organizations or if there are legal implications. As well as, solicit documents and to communicate when time isn't a strong constraint. [\[Return to Figure 8.3\]](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

If you were starting your career in the 1980s or 90s, few people outside of the company would read your writing. Thanks to email, messaging tools like Microsoft Teams, and social media, however, it's normal for even very new employees to communicate with clients, often with very little time for revision. It's still unfortunately common for small companies to assume that young employees must know something about social media and assign them the responsibility of managing the company's entire social media platforms. That means that hundreds of thousands of people could see the messages you create for social media. Obviously, the stakes are very high.

Social media fulfills many roles within an organization's communications plan, including:

- Marketing
- Responding to customer questions and complaints.
- Recruiting potential employees
- Getting new leads on clients.
- Learning about new advancements in your field.
- Communicating with other companies and experts.

While social media marketing is outside of the scope of this textbook, social media can teach us a lot about how the communication fundamentals you've been exploring in this course are applicable in multiple contexts. Our goal with this chapter is not to teach you how to use social media, but to invite you to bring together multiple elements we've learned this semester. We'll ask more questions than we answer.

Many people, especially older people, see social media as a world apart from their other communication efforts. But the basic of communication still apply.

A communicator should consider the context, message, audience and purpose of their communication before creating the product.

Context: One of the challenges of communicating online is that each platform has its own context and this context is always changing. For example, a message on X used to be less than 140 characters. Recently, however, that limit has been increased to 280 characters. It's also become easier to integrate photos, GIFs, and other links, and to write "threads" by linking multiple posts. This changes how communicators can effectively communicate.

Often, miscommunications occur because communicators don't fully understand the context of each platform. For example, some communicators link their X and Facebook accounts to save time, but because the message isn't tailored to each account, the message might not be effectively received by the audience.

The best way to understand the context of the platform is to experiment. What works in one industry or for one company might not work for another.

Some of the factors to consider when understanding the context of each platform:

- Frequency of posting: For example, you can usually post more often on Twitter than you can on Facebook.
- Timing of posts: When is the best time to post so that the most people will see it?
- Use of amplification tools (hashtags, tagging, etc).
- Specialized language, such as inside jokes, acronyms, memes.
- Paid messages and advertising: How can your business pay to amplify your message?

Purpose

Often, companies feel that they “should” be on social media, but to be effective in social media, you must have a purpose. Before you embark on a social media campaign, you should ask yourself, “What real-world effects do I want to produce?” Or, put more simply, “How will this social media campaign make me money?”

Are you trying to meet new clients? Sell a particular product? Address a stereotype of misconception? Make a particular audience familiar with your product? Establish yourself as an expert in a particular area?

Your purpose will determine what platform you use, how you create your message, when you release your message, what amplification tools you’ll use, and much more.

Audience

Once you have determined your purpose, you can define your audience. Audience analysis is key to success online. Luckily, most platforms provide business communicators access to sophisticated analytics, which you can use to refine your social media approach. Here’s an example of the analytics Twitter offers, though external tools like Hootsuite will offer even more extensive insights.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Memos are used to communicate a message throughout an organization – usually to a large group of people.
- Letters are generally used to communicate outside of an organization. They should be formatted a specific way.
- Businesses use social media to gain new clients, sell products, address stereotypes or misconceptions, build familiarity, and to establish themselves as experts in an area.
- Purpose and audience are important for business communications.

Activities for Further Reflection

- Look at your social media presence. Which content gets the most likes/comments/interactions? Why do you think this is?
- Choose a brand that you admire and perform the same type of analysis that we did with Special K. Write a short paragraph explaining your results.
- Choose one of the following scenarios, then write an email, memo or letter as a response. Think about what genre would be most effective, then use the models discussed in the chapter to write your response.
 - Easter is coming up in a few weeks and you work for a flower shop. Many people order lilies for Easter, but these can be toxic to pets. The florist has come up with a pet-friendly Easter bouquet. He asks you to let the customers know about the dangers of lilies and suggest that they order a non-toxic Easter bouquet instead.
 - You work for a non-profit that gives out scholarships to disadvantaged teenagers. You've

already informed the winners of the scholarship by phone, but your boss wants you to send them something in writing with all of the official details and any forms that need to be filled out to claim the scholarship.

- You volunteer on your condo's strata. The strata has approved painting the outside of the building. Between April 5-10, the residents must not open their windows and must remove anything from their balconies. You don't have email addresses for every resident, but you do have access to their physical mailboxes.
- You recently purchased a new guitar at a local music shop. One of the shop's employees, Maria, spent over an hour helping you make your purchase. She was very knowledgeable, and was the reason that you purchased the guitar at the small local store instead of going to a larger store with more selection. You want to let Maria's boss know about her excellent service.

References

Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2010). *Business communication essentials: A skills-based approach to vital business English* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

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CHAPTER 9: WRITING ESSAYS



In this section, you will:

- Identify the steps required to select an appropriate thesis statement.
- Compare different types of essays and the utilization of each type.
- Describe how to organize your information and ideas into essay format.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- When you are assigned an essay, what are the first steps that you take?
- In your past experiences with essay writing, what parts of the process did you find most challenging? Why do you think that was?
- Think of an essay that you have written in the past. Did the feedback from that essay surprise you? How has it changed your writing process?
- What goals do you have for further improvement of your essay-writing skills?

TYPES OF WRITING

Narrative Writing

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Anytime 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. A **fictional story** is made up; the writer of a fictional story can create characters and events as he or she sees fit. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories; novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Tip: Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning.

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 humour, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.1



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=211#h5p-57>

H5P: Narrative Writing Practice

Exercise Preamble

For this exercise, you will be writing a rough plot summary of a narrative-style expository essay. We will use the freewriting strategy, where you set a timer (this time for five minutes) and write as freely as you can, trying not to worry too much about what is on the page but instead just working to get your ideas on paper. Don't censor yourself — you can always edit later.

Choose one of these topics, or select something else you find more interesting:

- Childhood
- School
- Adventure
- Work
- Love
- Family
- Friends
- Vacation
- Nature
- Space

Before you start, you'll need to decide if your narrative will be factual (true story) or fictional (made up). Either is fine!

Set your timer for **five minutes** and write without distraction until it goes off. (If you would prefer not to type, you can of course do your freewriting on paper.)

Organize Freewrite

1. Look back at your freewriting and think about whether your narrative makes sense **chronologically**. Revise your freewriting into a rough draft that uses transitions in order to show the relationship between the events and express time. Share your rough draft here.
2. Remember to use transitions! In fact, let's make note of the transitions you used above, and what they did for your draft (how did they help you explain the chronology of your narrative?).

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. Using transitional words and phrases, like “during”, “meanwhile”, “now”, and “finally” help to keep the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story.

The following are the basic components of a narrative:

- **Plot.** The events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Character.** 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.

Tip: When interviewing candidates for jobs, employers often ask about conflicts or problems a potential employee has had to overcome. They are asking for a compelling personal narrative. To prepare for this question in a job interview, write out a scenario using the narrative mode. This will allow you to troubleshoot rough spots as well as better understand your own personal history. It will make both your story your presentation of it better.

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite about topics that are of general interest to you.

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

Tip: To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an interesting event that helps to get the story going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece.

Illustration

To **illustrate** means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader “see” your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

Using evidence effectively can be challenging, though. The evidence you choose will usually depend on your subject and who your reader is (your audience). When writing an illustration essay, keep in mind the following:

- Use evidence that is appropriate to your topic as well as to your audience.
- Assess how much evidence you need to adequately explain your point depending on the complexity of the subject and the knowledge your audience has of the subject.

For example, if you were writing about a new kind of communication software and your audience was a group of English major undergrads, you might want to use an analogy or a personal story to illustrate how the software worked. You might also choose to add a few more pieces of evidence to make sure the audience understands your point. However, if you were writing about the same subject and your audience was information technology (IT) specialists, you would likely use more technical evidence because they would be familiar with the subject. Keeping in mind your subject in relation to your audience will increase your chances of effectively illustrating your point.

Tip: You never want to insult your readers' intelligence by over explaining concepts they may already be familiar with, but it may be necessary to clearly articulate your point. When in doubt, add an extra example to illustrate your idea.

The Structure of an Illustration Essay

The controlling idea, or thesis, belongs at the beginning of the essay. Evidence is then presented in the essay's body sections/paragraphs to support the thesis. You can start supporting your main point with your strongest evidence first, or you can start with evidence of lesser importance and have the essay build to increasingly stronger evidence.

Phrases of Illustration

- case in point
- for example
- for instance
- in particular
- in this case
- one example
- another example
- specifically
- to illustrate

Tip: Vary the phrases of illustration you use. Do not rely on just one. Variety in choice of words and phrasing is critical when trying to keep readers engaged in your writing and your ideas.

Writing an Illustration Essay

First, choose a topic you are interested in. Then create an interesting introduction to engage the reader. The main point, or thesis, should be stated at the end of the introduction. Gather evidence that is appropriate to both your subject and your audience. You can order the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or

from most important to least important. Be sure to fully explain all your examples using strong, clear supporting details. See [Appendix 1: Readings: Examples of Essays](#) to read a sample illustration essay.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.2



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=211#h5p-58>

H5P: Illustration Writing Practice

Thesis Statement

Choose a topic from this list (or choose something you might prefer to write about more!) and think about what you might like to illustrate about this topic:

- Cooking
- Baseball
- Work hours
- Exercise
- Traffic

Draft a thesis for your illustration essay. A thesis for an illustration-style expository essay about raising children, for example, would need to make a claim (state an opinion) and suggest how the illustrations will help to support that claim. It might be something like, “Overly permissive or unregulated parenting is troubling for children and their caregivers, as several infamous examples can attest.” The claim is clear here — our author opposes permissive parenting. This essay would then go on to illustrate examples that support the argument that permissive parenting is bad for children.

Take a run at drafting your own thesis statement.

Supporting Details

- What examples will you use to illustrate this claim for your reader? Try to identify at least three.
- Consider your options for organizing your illustration-style expository essay. How will you order your points?

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 thinking about it. Cell phones, for example, have now become part of a broad category. They can be classified as feature phones, media phones, and smartphones. 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.

The Structure of a Classification Essay

The classification essay opens with an introductory 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 British Columbia, they often think of only Vancouver. However, British Columbia is actually a diverse province with a full range of activities to do, sights to see, and cultures to explore. In order to better understand the diversity of the province of British Columbia, it is helpful to break it into seven separate regions: the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, the North and Central Coast, Northern British Columbia, Canyons and the Cariboo, the Thompson-Okanagan, and the Kootenays.

The underlined thesis in this example explains not only the category and subcategories but also the rationale for breaking it into those categories. In this classification essay, the writer hopes to show readers a different way of considering the province.

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each of the seven regions of British Columbia would have its own paragraph.

The conclusion should bring all the categories and subcategories 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 British Columbia add to its diversity and complexity.

Tip: 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.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=211#h5p-59>

H5P: Classification Writing Practice

Exercise Preamble

Pick one of the following categories to use for this practice exercise (or pick something else that interests you more):

- Vehicles
- Colleges and universities
- Beverages
- Fashion

Give three options for how you might classify items within this category. Consider classification strategies that think a little bit “outside the box.” For example, breakfast cereals could be classified by target market, or by mascots and spokespeople, or by sugar content.

Writing a Classification Essay

Start with an engaging opening that will adequately introduce the general topic that you will be dividing into smaller subcategories. Your thesis should come near the end of your introduction. It should include the topic, your subtopics, and the reason you are choosing to break down the topic in the way that you are. Use the following classification thesis equation:

topic + subtopics + rationale for the subtopics = thesis.

The organizing strategy of a classification essay is dictated by the initial topic and the subsequent subtopics. Each body paragraph is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subtopics. In a way, coming up with a strong topic pays double rewards in a classification essay. Not only do you have a good topic, but you also have a solid organizational structure within which to write.

Be sure you use strong details and explanations for each subcategory paragraph that help explain and support your thesis. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points. Finally, write a conclusion that links all the subgroups together again. The conclusion should successfully wrap up your essay by connecting it to your topic initially discussed in the introduction. See [Appendix 1: Readings: Examples of Essays](#) to read a sample classification essay.

Process Analysis

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

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process. From riding a bike as children to learning various jobs as adults, we initially need 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 next time you have to explain a process to someone at work, be mindful of how clearly you articulate each step. Strong communication skills are critical for workplace satisfaction and advancement. Effective process analysis plays a critical role in developing that skill set.

The Structure of a Process Analysis Essay

The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process. The organization of a process analysis essay is typically chronological. That is, the steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur. 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 easier to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

The time transitional phrases provided earlier are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays. Words such as first, second, third, next, and finally are helpful cues to orient reader and organize the content of essay.

Tip: Always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. When a writer becomes very close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a friend or co-worker read it over will help identify any confusing spots.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.4



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=211#h5p-60>

H5P: Process Analysis Practice

Exercise Preamble

Choose a process to write about. Remember that you will need to clearly articulate all the necessary steps, so it should be a process you know really well. If you're feeling stuck, here are some ideas:

- Tying a shoelace
- Parallel parking
- Planning a successful first date
- Being an effective communicator

Begin by listing all the steps you need to undertake to achieve this process. Be as detailed as possible and include everything at this stage. Point form is fine. Just get everything out — you can edit and revise at the next step.

Now, revise your list to put the points you have already articulate above in the order that makes the most sense for your process analysis

Thesis Statement

- What will the thesis statement of your process analysis be? Remember that it should articulate the goal of the process.
- Decide how many paragraphs you will need. Remember that the steps should be articulated in order, and that you can combine smaller steps, but more complex ones may need their own paragraphs. Make a note of what will be covered in each paragraph.
- What transition words will you use to show the connections between your ideas?

Writing a Process Analysis Essay

Choose a topic that is interesting, is relatively complex, and can be explained in a series of steps. As with other rhetorical writing modes, you should choose something you know well so that you can more easily describe the finer details about each step in the process. Your thesis statement should come at the end of your introduction, and it should state the final outcome of the process you are describing.

Body paragraphs are composed of the steps in the process. Each step should be expressed using strong details and clear examples. Use time transitional phrases to help organize steps in the process and to orient readers. The conclusion should

thoroughly describe the result of the process described in the body paragraphs. See [Appendix 1: Readings: Examples of Essays](#) to read an example of a process analysis essay.

Definition

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: to simply define something. 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 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 laws governing drinking alcohol; parents may define alcoholism in terms of morality; and doctors may 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 enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Think about conversations couples may have in which words like commitment, respect, or love need clarification.

Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can at first be difficult, but once a definition is established between two people or in 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.

Tip: When writing definition essays, think in terms of concepts, such as heroism, 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.

Definitions play a critical role in all workplace environments. Take the term sexual harassment, for example. Sexual harassment is broadly defined on the federal level, but individual companies may have additional criteria that define it further for a particular work setting. Knowing how your workplace defines and treats all sexual harassment allegations is important. Think, too, about how your company defines lateness, productivity, or contributions.

The Structure of a Definition Essay

The definition essay opens with a general discussion of the term to be defined. You then state as your thesis your definition of the term.

The rest of the essay should explain the rationale for your definition. Remember that a dictionary's definition is limiting, and you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. 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 than a leader in an elementary school setting. If context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be confusing or misunderstood.

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 the person according to personality traits: patience, consistency, and flexibility. Each attribute would be explained in its own paragraph.

Tip: For definition essays, try to think of concepts that you have a personal stake in. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has personal value and importance.

It is a good idea to occasionally assess your role in the workplace. You can do this through the process of definition. Identify your role at work by defining not only the routine tasks but also those grey areas where your responsibilities might overlap with those of others. Coming up with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities can add value to your resumé and even increase productivity in the workplace.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.5



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HSP: Definition Writing Practice

Exercise Preamble

In this exercise, we'll think about why definitions are important. If you've ever been in a lengthy argument only to discover everyone is actually arguing about different things, you'll understand why clear definitions are so important.

Today, you'll write about a time in your own life in which the definition of a word, or the lack of a definition, caused an argument. Your term could be something as simple as the category of an all-star in sports or how to define a good movie: for example, does everyone have the same criteria for deciding who the best actor is? Or it could be something with higher stakes and wider impact, such as a political argument: for example, does everyone mean the same thing when they use a phrase like "cancel culture"?

First, explain how the argument began.

Drafting

Next, explain how the argument hinged on the definition of the word.

Finally, explain how the incident was resolved.

You could develop this into a longer essay by using what you've done so far as an introduction, and then focusing on the parts of the definition. Structurally, each idea or unique component of the definition should have its own paragraph.

Writing a Definition Essay

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to be discussed at length. Choosing a word or phrase of personal relevance often leads to a more interesting and engaging essay.

After you have chosen your word or phrase, start your essay with an introduction that establishes the relevance of the term in the chosen specific context. Your thesis comes at the end of the introduction, and it should clearly state your definition of the term in the specific context. Establishing a functional context from the beginning will orient readers and minimize misunderstandings.

The body paragraphs should each be dedicated to explaining a different facet of your definition. Make sure to use clear examples and strong details to illustrate your points. Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis. See [Appendix 1: Readings: Examples of Essays](#) to read a sample definition essay.

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 comparing them, contrasting them, or doing 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 contrast two types of oranges or two types of apples to highlight subtle differences: 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 different types of apples as in the example above because they share so many of the same properties already. Rather, you might try to compare apples and oranges. The more divergent the two subjects initially seem, the more interesting a comparison essay will be.

Comparing and contrasting is also an evaluative tool. In order to make accurate evaluations about a given topic, you must first know the critical points of similarity and difference. Comparing and contrasting is a primary tool for many workplace assessments. You have likely compared and contrasted yourself to other colleagues. Employee advancements, pay raises, hiring, and firing are typically conducted using comparison and contrast. Comparison and contrast could be used to evaluate companies, departments, or individuals.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.6



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H5P:Comparison/Contrast Writing Practice

Exercise Preamble

Comparison and Contrast-style expository essays can be challenging. We're going to break down the steps in this exercise.

You can write about anything you like, but if you need help deciding, it's helpful to think about whether you want to focus on comparison or contrast. Remember that if you write a contrast essay, you want to pick two things that seem similar on the surface, and explore their differences. If you write a comparison essay, you want to pick two things that seem different on the surface, and explore their similarities. In this way, you're explore something your reader may not be aware of — and it prevents you from picking a topic that is too obvious.

Some ideas for a contrast essay are:

- Romantic comedies
- Internet search engines
- Cell phones

Some ideas for a comparison essay are:

- Department stores and discount retail stores

- Fast-food chains and fine-dining restaurants
- Dogs and cats

Pick your topic, set a timer for five minutes, and freewrite about the similarities and differences you already know about your topic.

Drafting Your Ideas

Now, try to formalize your ideas into the key points for your draft.

- **If you are writing a contrast essay**, select one similarity and three differences.
- **If you are writing a comparison essay**, select one difference and three similarities. Remember that you want to focus on what is surprising and new, or that shows insight, not what is obvious.

Let's identify the thesis statement for your draft now. Remember: The compare and contrast essay starts with a thesis that clearly states the two subjects being compared, contrasted, or both, and the reason for doing so. That reason is your claim or the stand you are taking on the topic.

How will you organize your essay? In the example of my thesis statement above, I might move **subject-by-subject** — eg. explore everything I have to say about the social/environmental impacts of SUVs and then move on to do the same for compact cars — or **point-by-point** — eg. write first about the social impacts of both types of vehicles, and then about the environmental impacts.

Decide on the organizational method and share the order you will develop your points below.

The Structure of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

The compare and contrast essay starts with a thesis that clearly states the two subjects being compared, contrasted, or both, and the reason for doing so. The thesis could lean more toward either comparing or contrasting, or balance 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 conventionally grown 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:

- According to the subjects themselves, discussing one then the other
- According to individual points, discussing each subject in relation to each point

See **Figure 4.1: Planning a Comparison and Contrast Essay**, which illustrates the ways to organize the organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

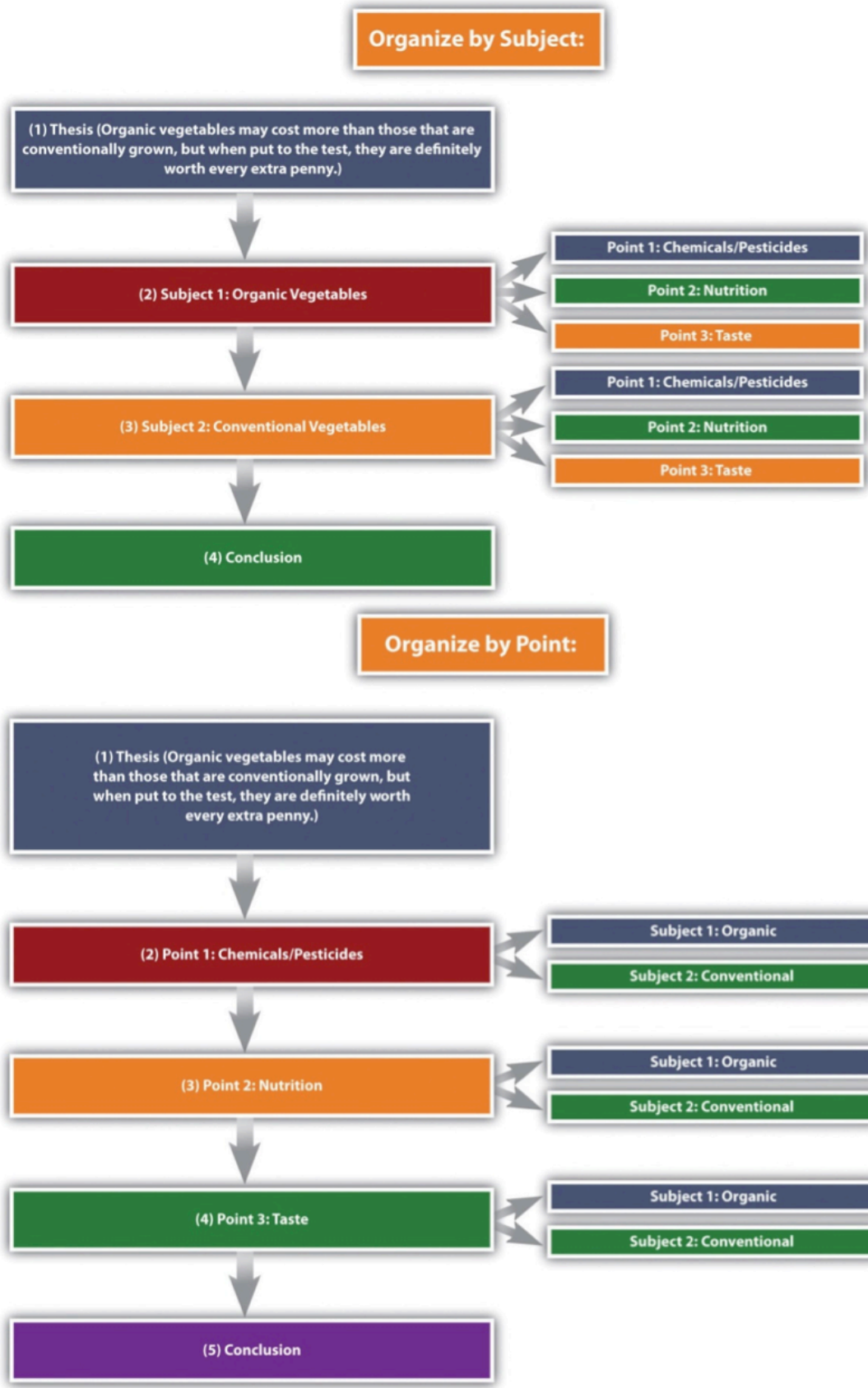


Figure 9.1 Planning a Comparison and Contrast Essay [Image description]

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

Given that compare and contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis. See **Table 4.1: Phrases of Comparison and Contrast** for examples.

Table 9.1 Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Comparison	Contrast
one similarity	one difference
another similarity	another difference
both	conversely
like	in contrast
likewise	unlike
similarly	while
in a similar fashion	whereas

Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay

First choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects. Once you have decided on a topic, introduce it with an engaging opening paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of the introduction, and it should establish the subjects you will compare, contrast, or both, as well as state what can be learned from doing so.

The body of the essay can be organized in one of two ways: by subject or by individual points. The organizing strategy that you choose will depend on, as always, your audience and your purpose. You may also consider your particular approach to the subjects as well as the nature of the subjects themselves; some subjects might better lend themselves to one structure or the other. Be sure to use comparison and contrast phrases to cue the reader to the ways in which you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis. See [Appendix 1: Readings: Examples of Essays](#) to read a sample compare and contrast essay.

Cause and Effect in Writing

It is often considered human nature to ask “why?” and “how?” We may 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 cause 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.

Tip: 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 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:

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

For example, if your essay is 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 completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Because cause and effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of words and phrases that denote such linkage. See below Phrases of Causation for examples of such terms.

Phrases of Causation

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| • as a result | • hence |
| • because | • since |
| • consequently | • therefore |
| • due to | • thus |

The conclusion should wrap up the discussion and reinforce the thesis, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of the relationship that was analyzed.

Tip: Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to this trap 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.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.7



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HSP: Cause and Effect Writing Practice

Exercise Preamble

In this exercise, we will think through the steps of a cause and effect essay. This can be tricky. We'll start by choosing a topic. You want to pick something you know enough about to make claims about the relationships between cause and effect. For this in-class exercise, there's no need to do external research, but remember that in a more formal assignment, you'll want to have good sources for all your claims and to avoid speculation.

Some areas where cause and effect thinking is common include:

- Health and nutrition
- Sports
- Media
- Politics
- History

For example, you might write a cause and effect essay about whether violent video games cause children to act out, or whether universal basic income programs cause people to live more stable lives. Choose something you can argue from a position of confidence.

Set a timer and freewrite for **five minutes** about the topic you have chosen.

Can you identify a potential thesis statement from your freewriting? Remember: 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. In other words, you don't need to claim the **only** cause or effect — we know that ideas are complex.

Organizing Your Draft

The cause and effect essay can be organized in one of the following two primary ways:

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

Which makes the most sense for what you are trying to argue in your thesis statement?

Using point form, sketch out the structure of your essay: how many paragraphs, what will each one focus on, and how will you support it?

Writing a Cause and Effect Essay

Choose an event or condition that you think has an interesting cause and effect relationship. Introduce your topic in an engaging way. End your introduction with a thesis that states the main cause, the main effect, or both.

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause then effect structure, or the effect then cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence. If you are writing about multiple causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in order of importance. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least important to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis. See [Appendix 1: Readings: Examples of Essays](#) to read a sample cause and effect essay.

Exposition in Writing

This is an essay that explains a writer's ideas by defining, explaining, informing, or elaborating on points to allow the reader to clearly understand the concept.

Many of your future academic workplace writing assignments will be expository—explaining your ideas or the significance of a concept or action. An expository essay allows the writer the opportunity to explain his or her ideas about a topic and to provide clarity for the reader by using:

- Facts

- Explanations
- Details
- Definitions

It may also include the writer outlining steps of a procedure in a way that is straightforward for the reader to follow. It is purely informative and often contains elements of summary.

Imagine you need to verbally explain a concept to your classmates, maybe a behavioural theory. What are the key elements on which you would focus? How would you organize the information? You could explain who came up with the theory, the specific area of study to which it is related, its purpose, and the significant details to explain the theory. Telling these four elements to your classmates would give them a complete, yet summarized, picture of the theory, so they could apply the theory in future discussions.

Although you did this verbally, you were still fulfilling the elements of an expository essay by providing definition, details, explanations, and maybe even facts if you have a really good memory. This is the same process that you would use when you write an expository essay. You may actually be doing this all the time; for example, when you are giving someone directions to a place or explaining how to cook something. In the following sections of the chapter, you will practise doing this more in different expository written forms.

The Structure of an Expository Essay

Sections versus Paragraphs

Before looking at the general structure of an expository essay, you first need to know that in your post-secondary education, you should not consider your essay as writing being constructed with five paragraphs as you might have been used to in high school. You should instead think of your essay in terms of sections (there may be five), and each section may have multiple paragraphs.

To understand further why you need to think beyond the five-paragraph essay, imagine you have been asked to submit a six-page paper (approximately 1,500 words). You already know that each paragraph should be roughly 75 to 200 words long. If you divide the required word count by five paragraphs (1,500 by 5), you end with 300 words per paragraph, way above the number you should have in a paragraph. If your paragraphs are too long, they likely have too many ideas and your reader may become confused. Your paragraphs should be two-third of a page at most, and *never* longer than a page.

Instead, if you think of your essays being divided into sections (with possibly more than one paragraph per section), your writing will likely be more organized and allow your reader to follow your presentation of ideas without creating too much distance between your paragraph's supporting points and its topic sentence.

Sections of an Expository Essay

An expository essay, regardless of its purpose, should have at least five sections, which are:

- Introduction
- First body section/paragraph
- Second body section/paragraph
- Third body section/paragraph
- Conclusion

The **introduction** should state the topic of your paper: your thesis statement as well as brief signposts of what information the rest of the paper will include. That is, you only want to mention the content of the body paragraphs; you do not want to go in to a lot of detail and repeat what will be in the rest of the essay.

The **first body section** or **paragraph** should focus on one of your main points and provide evidence to support that point. There should be two to three supporting points: reasons, facts, statistics, quotations, examples, or a mix of these. Both the **second** and **third body sections** should follow the same pattern. Providing three body sections with one point each that supports the thesis should provide the reader with enough detail to be convinced of your argument or fully understand the concept you are explaining. However, remember that some sections will require more explanation, and you may need to separate this information into multiple paragraphs.

You can order your sections in the most logical way to explain your ideas. For example, if you are describing a process, you may use chronological order to show the definite time order in which the steps need to happen. You will learn about the different ways to organize your body paragraphs in the next chapter.

The **concluding paragraph**, or conclusion, can be a little tricky to compose because you need to make sure you give a concise summary of the body paragraphs, but you must be careful not to simply repeat what you have already written. Look back at the main idea of each section/paragraph, and try to summarize the point using words different from those you have already used. Do not include any new points in your concluding paragraph.

Image descriptions

Figure 9.1 Planning a Comparison and Contrast Essay

A flowchart illustrating the ways to organize by subject and organize by point about organic versus conventional vegetables.

Organize by subject:

1. Thesis (Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.)
2. Subject 1: Organic vegetables
 - Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides
 - Point 2: Nutrition
 - Point 3: Taste

3. Subject 2: Conventional vegetables

- Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides
- Point 2: Nutrition
- Point 3: Taste

4. Conclusion

Organize by point:

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

2. Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides

- Subject 1: Organic
- Subject 2: Conventional

3. Point 2: Nutrition

- Subject 1: Organic
- Subject 2: Conventional

4. Point 3: Taste

- Subject 1: Organic
- Subject 2: Conventional

5. Conclusion

[Return to place in text \(Figure 9.1\)](#)

DEVELOPING A STRONG, CLEAR THESIS STATEMENT

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

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a **thesis statement** to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body. The thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

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

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

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

A Strong Thesis Statement

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

Specificity: A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of

a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.

Precision: A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.

Arguability: A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.

Demonstrability: For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.

Forcefulness/Assertiveness: A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.

Confidence: In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as I feel or I believe actually weaken the readers' sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.8



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H5P: Drafting Thesis Statements

Write a clear, confident thesis statement for an essay on the following topic:

- Texting while driving.
- The legal drinking age in different provinces of Canada.
- Steroid use among professional athletes.

- Abortion.
- Racism.

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

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

- Shakespeare’s use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
- J. D. Salinger’s character in *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet in an effort to protect himself, he acts like a phony on many occasions.
- Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
- Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
- In today’s crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.

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

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

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.
 - 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.
 - Religious radicals across the country are trying to legislate their puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.
- A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

- Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.
- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.
 - The life of Pierre Trudeau was long and accomplished.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.9



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=213#h5p-65>

H5P: Read the following thesis statements and identify each as weak or strong.

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

Answer Key

- | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|
| 1. Weak | 3. Weak | 5. Strong |
| 2. Strong | 4. Weak | 6. Weak |

Writing a Thesis Statement

One legitimate question readers always ask about a piece of writing is “What is the big idea?” (You may even ask this question when you are the reader, critically reading an assignment or another document.) Every nonfiction writing task—from the short essay to the 10-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a controlling idea.

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

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

Look at **Table 5.1: Topics and Thesis Statements** for a comparison of topics and thesis statements.

Table 5.1 Topics and Thesis Statements: A Comparison

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

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

Self-Practice Exercise 9.10



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HSP: Working Toward a Working Thesis

We're going to use that free writing strategy again. This time, try to write for ten minutes, and write down

anything you know right now about your newly narrowed thesis statement. Don't worry about looking material up or whether you're getting everything exactly right. Instead, just focus on getting words on the screen. This is rough work to help you approach an answer to a question, not the final essay. So just keep writing.

Can you find something in your freewriting that looks like a "controlling idea"? Something that might centre your argument, something you can structure your argument around? We'll call that your working thesis. Draft a working thesis below.

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

Revising a Thesis Statement

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

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

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

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

1. Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as people, everything, society, or life, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.
 - Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.
 - Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing the general words

like people and work hard, the writer can better focus his or her research and gain more direction in his or her writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.
 - Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.
 - Revised thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

Joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for joke. The writer should ask questions similar to the 5WH questions. By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, the writer more accurately defines his or her stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

3. Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs gives information about the subject, such as a condition or relationship (is, appear, smell, sound), but they do not show any action. The most common linking verb is any forms of the verb to be, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.
 - Working thesis: British Columbian schoolteachers are not paid enough.
 - Revised thesis: The legislature of British Columbia cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word are. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Reading the original thesis statement above, readers might wonder why teachers are not paid enough, but the statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask him- or herself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue. For example, the writer could ask:

1. Who is not paying the teachers enough?
 2. What is considered “enough”?
 3. What is the problem?
 4. What are the results
4. Omit any general claims that are hard to support.
 - Working thesis: Today’s teenage girls are too sexualized.
 - Revised thesis: Teenage girls who are captivated by the sexual images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a woman’s worth depends on her sensuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behaviour. 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 behaviour show up?
- What are the repercussions?

Self-Practice Exercise 9.11



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HSP: Polishing the Thesis Statement

A working thesis statement is always a work in progress, and we make it stronger by asking questions of it and challenging the first draft. That's the next job you have! It takes many revisions to make your work the best it can be, so try not to get frustrated by the process.

- Copy your working thesis statement for reference here.
- Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as people, everything, society, or life, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness. Recopy the newly revised thesis below.
- Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs gives information about the subject, such as a condition or relationship (is, appear, smell, sound), but they do not show any action. The most common linking verb is any forms of the verb to be, a verb that simply states that a situation exists. Recopy the newly revised thesis below.
- Omit any general claims that are hard to support. Recopy the newly revised thesis below.

Just Asking Questions

Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis. The most straightforward way to do this is to ask yourself the 5WHs again — who, what, where, when, why, and how — and see where you can make your thesis statement more specific. List the questions you have about your own thesis below.

Now do your best to answer those questions.

And finally, revise your thesis in relation to these points and share it below.

ORGANIZING YOUR IDEAS

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

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

Table 5.2: Order versus Purpose shows the connection between order and purpose.

Table 5.2 Order versus Purpose

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

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

Writing at Work

At some point in your career you may have to prepare an incident report, submit case notes, or file a complaint with your human resources department. Using chronological order is a useful tool in describing the events. You would logically lay out the events in the order that they occurred using the key transitional words. In these instances, your professionalism is determined by how logical and organized your writing is.


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

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

Tip: When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate the information you will cover and in what order, and 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).

Self-Practice Exercise 9.12



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H5P: Chronological Order

Put the statements in the correct chronological order. Remember: 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.

- A. Every morning I make my coffee in the same way for maximum flavour.
- B. When I have the shot pulled, I use a milk steamer to steam one cup of milk.
- C. Finally, I slowly pour the steamed milk into my espresso.
- D. Next, I use an espresso machine to pull an espresso shot directly into my coffee cup.
- E. First, I freshly grind my espresso beans.
- F. And that's how I start my day with my perfect latte!

Answer Key

A, E, D, B, C, F

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 your most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading.

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

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

Self-Practice Exercise 9.13



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

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H5P: Order of Importance

Put the statements in the correct order of importance. Some key transitional words that offer clues to this method of organization are most importantly, almost as importantly, just as importantly, and finally.

- A. Most importantly, it prevents unexpected harm from coming to the dog or to the people and animals he encounters.
- B. And finally, dogs love the sense of achievement they feel when they master simple tasks.
- C. Adequate training is critical to the success of a relationship between a person and their dog.
- D. Almost as important, though, is the bond that it helps create between the dog and his caretaker.
- E. For all of these reasons, proper dog training is important and should not be overlooked.

Answer Key

C, A, D, B, E

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 reader, whose perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you.

The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to

place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then guide the reader to follow your eye as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

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

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

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

The following are possible transitional words and phrases to include when using spatial order:

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



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H5P: Spatial Order

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

- A. When you first enter the property through the farm gate, there is a red barn to the right.
- B. To the immediate left of the red barn is a pig pen and a chicken coup.
- C. The rest of the area within the gate is a meadow of clover and flowers.
- D. Reflecting on this space reminds me that nice to have somewhere to go that is so calm and soothing.
- E. The farmyard is a peaceful and familiar space.
- F. Across the farmyard from the animals is the farm house, which has a duck pond in the backyard.

Answer Key

E, A, B, F, C, D

Writing an Outline

For an essay question on a test or a brief oral presentation in class, all you may need to prepare is a short, informal outline in which you jot down key ideas in the order you will present them. This kind of outline reminds you to stay focused in a stressful situation and to include all the good ideas that help you explain or prove your point. For a longer assignment, like an essay or a research paper, many instructors will require you to submit a formal outline before writing a major paper as a way of making sure you are on the right track and are working in an organized manner. The expectation is you will build your paper based on the framework created by the outline.

When creating outlines, writers generally go through three stages: a **scratch outline**, an **informal** or **topic outline**, and a **formal** or **sentence outline**. The scratch outline is basically generated by taking what you have come up with in your freewriting process and organizing the information into a structure that is easy for you to understand and follow (for example, a mind map or hierarchical outline). An informal outline goes a step further and adds topic sentences, a thesis, and some preliminary information you have found through research. A formal outline is a detailed guide that shows how all your supporting ideas relate to each other. It helps you distinguish between ideas that are of equal importance and

ones that are of lesser importance. If your instructor asks you to submit an outline for approval, you will want to hand in one that is more formal and structured. The more information you provide for your instructor, the better he or she will be able to see the direction in which you plan to go for your discussion and give you better feedback.

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

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

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

1. **Introduction** → Thesis statement
2. **Main point 1** → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*
 - Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
 - Subpoint
 - Subpoint
 - Supporting detail
 - Subpoint
 - Subpoint
 - Supporting detail
 - Subpoint
 - Subpoint
3. **Main point 2** → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2 [same use of subpoints as with Main point 1]*
 - Supporting detail
 - Supporting detail
 - Supporting detail
4. **Main point 3** → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3 [same use of subpoints as with Main points 1&2]*
 - Supporting detail
 - Supporting detail
 - Supporting detail
5. **Conclusion**

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

Tip: Formal outlines are often quite rigid in their organization. As many instructors will specify, you cannot subdivide one point if it is only one part. For example, for every Roman numeral I, there needs to be an A. For every A, there must be a B. For every Arabic numeral 1, there must be a 2. See for yourself on the sample outlines that follow.

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

Here is the informal topic outline. The purpose is to inform, and the audience is a general audience of college students. It begins with the thesis statement. The main points and supporting details are included in outline form using short phrases in parallel grammatical structure.

- I. Introduction
 - Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.
- II. E-book readers and the way that people read
 - A. Books easy to access and carry around
 - 1. Electronic downloads
 - 2. Storage in memory for hundreds of books
 - B. An expanding market
 - 1. E-book readers from booksellers
 - 2. E-book readers from electronics and computer companies
 - C. Limitations of current e-book readers
 - 1. Incompatible features from one brand to the next

- 2. Borrowing and sharing e-books
- III. Film cameras replaced by digital cameras
 - A. Three types of digital cameras
 - 1. Compact digital cameras
 - 2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs
 - 3. Cameras that combine the best features of both
 - B. The confusing “megapixel wars”
 - C. The zoom lens battle
- IV. The confusing choice among televisions
 - A. 1080p vs. 768p
 - B. Plasma screens vs. LCDs
 - C. Home media centres
- V. Conclusion
 - How to be a wise consumer

Self-Practice Exercise 9.18



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H5P: Creating a Topic Outline

The purpose of an outline for your essay is to collect your ideas and organize them in a logical order. For many people, this doesn't need to be a formal process to be helpful. However, some instructors will require a more traditionally structured outline, so we will practice that skill today.

Take a moment to review the structure outlined in Mariah’s outline so that you can understand the structure that is expected. Feel free to use her outline as a model for your own work.

The first thing to consider is how you will organize your essay. Chronological order — where points follow the passage of time — is best for explaining how to undertake something. Spatial order — where points follow movement through space — is best for descriptive, sensory writing. And order of importance — where you decide the order based on significance — is good for persuasive writing. Which type of structure makes the most sense for your essay?

Following the model above, take a first run at outlining your essay. We will have lots of time to revise this work over the next few exercises, so just do your best to be clear and logical in the development of your ideas.

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

Outlining Checklist

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



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=223#h5p-75>

H5P: Supporting Details

Review your outline and decide what your three strongest points are. They should be specific and directly, clearly related to the thesis statement. Make note of those points below.

These points will become topic sentences for the body paragraphs of your essay. Take a run at writing those topic sentences now. Remember that nothing is set in stone, and you will be able to revise your work again in the next exercise.

Constructing Formal or Sentence Outlines

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

Here is the sample formal sentence outline.

I. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.

1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
 2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries.
- III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced by film cameras.
- A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.
 1. Compactible digital cameras are light by have fewer megapixels.
 2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large and heavy but can be sued for many functions.
 3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts an SLRs.
 - B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing “megapixel wars.”
 - C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.
- IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions
- A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?
 - B. In the screen-size war, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
 - C. Does every home really need a media centre?
- V. Conclusion
- The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

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

Re-evaluate Your Working Thesis

A careful analysis of your notes will help you re-evaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your ideas changed based on what you read. Even if your sources generally confirmed

your preliminary thinking on the topic, it is still a good idea to rewrite your thesis to incorporate the specific details you learned from research.

Tip: Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, “The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on.” This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is low or insufficient.

Synthesizing and Organizing Information

By now, your thinking on your topic is taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing information—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing information is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign! It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

Synthesizing Information

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Organize your notes with headings that correspond to points and subpoints you came up with. As you proceed, you might identify some more important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some points are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the sources are reliable and whether the connections between ideas are clear.

Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and subquestions.) You might record these big ideas on sticky notes or type and highlight them within an electronic document.

See the below example of a rough outline of an essay.

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

Main question: Are low carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

Thesis: Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Main points:

- How do low-carb diets work?
 - Low carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
 - The Atkins diet was created in 1972 by Richard Atkins, but it didn’t gain wide-scale attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a low-carb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
 - They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue to eat protein and fats while dieting.
- What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet?
 - Eating foods high in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the two.

Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the relationship between different facts from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

Plan How to Organize Your Paper

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments,

this may be determined by the instructor's requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose.

The purpose of this paper is primarily to persuade. With that in mind, we can plan the following outline.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Background
 - B. Thesis
- II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets
 - A. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition guidelines
 - B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines
 - 1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin
 - 2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity
- III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss
 - A. Short-term effectiveness for weight-loss
 - B. Long-term effectiveness not established
- IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes
 - A. Cholesterol and heart disease
 - B. Blood pressure
 - C. Diabetes
- V. Conclusion

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Writers must put their ideas in order so the assignment makes sense. The most common orders are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance.
- After gathering and evaluating the information you found for your essay, the next step is to write a working thesis statement.
- The working thesis statement expresses the main idea you want to develop in the entire piece of writing. It should be modified as you continue the writing process.
- Effective writers prepare an outline to organize their main ideas and supporting details in the order they will be presented.

Activities for Further Reflection

- Share an essay that you are working on with someone in the class. Your partner will edit your paper and provide feedback based on the peer feedback section of this chapter.
- Find an example of an essay online.
 - Determine what type of essay is it and explain why.
 - Identify the thesis of the essay.
 - Identify the evidence supporting the thesis.
- Think of 3 ideas for an essay. Generate a list of potential thesis statements and main point for each of these ideas.
- Prepare a short presentation summarizing the main points of this chapter.

DRAFTING

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop different versions of a piece of writing.

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

Getting Started: Strategies for Drafting

Your objective for this portion is to draft the body paragraphs of a standard five-paragraph essay. A five-paragraph essay contains an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can begin that way and then later 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.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

Begin writing with the part you know the most about. You can start with the third paragraph of your outline if ideas come easily to mind. 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.

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, 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 limit your breaks to 10 minutes, 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.

Remember, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important 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 students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

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

Setting Goals for Your First Draft

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

Self-Practice Exercise 9.15



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H5P: Goal Setting

As we work towards a full essay draft, it is critical to keep track of why we are doing what we are doing. Yes, you're writing an essay for marks and to learn how to write an essay, but you can't do that well unless you have an over-arching purpose.

What is the **purpose** of your essay? Be as specific and concrete as possible, and consider your answers to the following questions.

- Why are you writing it?

- What type of expository essay have you selected?
- Why is this the best type for what you want to achieve?
- What is the controlling idea or claim of your essay?

Who is the **audience** for this essay? Be as specific as you can be and think about why you know about this audience. Remember the concepts you learned previously, like thinking through the expectations and prior experience of your audience.

Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft

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



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

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H5P: Elements of a Draft (Pre-Test 6)

You've already seen these terms in context elsewhere in your textbook. Can you identify the correct definition for each of the following words?

- thesis statement
- supporting sentences
- introduction
- conclusion
- topic sentence

Definitions:

1. An _____ piques the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.
2. A _____ presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.
3. A _____ in each paragraph states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea

connects to the thesis statement.

4. The _____ in each paragraph develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.
5. A _____ that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

Answer Key

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. C | 4. B |
| 2. A | 5. D |
| 3. E | |

The Role of Topic Sentences

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

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

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

Choosing where to position the topic sentence depends not only on your audience and purpose but also on the essay's arrangement, or order. When you organize information according to order of importance, the topic sentence may be the final sentence in a paragraph. All the supporting sentences build up to the topic sentence. Chronological order may also position the topic sentence as the final sentence because the controlling idea of the paragraph may make the most sense at the end of a sequence.

When you organize information according to spatial order, a topic sentence may appear as the middle sentence in a paragraph. An essay arranged by spatial order often contains paragraphs that begin with descriptions. A reader may first

need a visual in mind before understanding the development of the paragraph. When the topic sentence is in the middle, it unites the details that come before it with the ones that come after it.

Starting Your First Draft

Let's take a look at an example of the beginning of an essay on digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face.

Below you will find the thesis statement:

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

Here are the notes that were taken to characterize purpose and audience:

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

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

With this thesis statement and purpose and audience notes, we can look at the sentence outline. The following is the portion of the outline for the first body paragraph. The Roman numeral II identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label subpoints.

- II. E-book readers and the way that people read.
 - A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry

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

We can then begin to expand the ideas in the outline into a paragraph. Notice how the outline helps guarantee that all sentences in the body of the paragraph develop the topic sentence.

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

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

As we continue writing the essay, let's move to the second and third body paragraphs. There are supporting details but no numbered subpoints in the outline, so we would need to consult our prewriting notes for specific information to include.

Always reference your outline as you are writing your essay. You may find it useful to write your paragraphs between the sections on your outline in your first draft. Notice how you can expand Roman numeral III from your outline into a first draft of the second body paragraph. How closely does this stay on purpose and how well were the audience needs reflected?

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

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

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

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

- A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?

- B. In the screen-size war, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
- C. Does every home really need a media centre?

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

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research paper, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully.

You may feel like you need a break from your paper before you edit it. That feeling is understandable, so you want to be sure to leave yourself enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. This section presents a number of opportunities for you to focus on different aspects of the editing process; as with revising a draft, you should approach editing in different stages.

Some of the content in this section may seem repetitive, but again, it provides you with a chance to double-check any revisions you have made at a detailed level.

Editing Your Draft

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

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

Tip: Editing takes time. Be sure to budget time into the writing process 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 will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document.

Identifying Wordiness

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

- **Sentences that begin with *There is* or *There are***
 - **Wordy.** There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.
 - **Revised.** The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.
- **Sentences with unnecessary modifiers**
 - **Wordy.** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favour of the proposed important legislation.
 - **Revised.** Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favour of the proposed legislation.
- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of*, *with a mind to*, *on the subject of*, *as to whether or not*, *more or less*, *as far as...is concerned*, and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.
 - **Wordy.** As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy. A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.
 - **Revised.** As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy. Researchers are preparing a report about using geysers as an energy source.
- **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 performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use strong active voice verbs in place of forms of *to be*, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can.

- **Wordy.** It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
- **Revised.** Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
- **Sentences with constructions that can be shortened**
 - **Wordy.** The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-60 uncle bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too.
 - **Revised.** The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-60 uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most essays at the post-secondary level 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 *bummer*, *kewl*, and *rad*.
- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about “men and women” rather than “girls and guys” unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions.** Use *do not* in place of *don't*, *I am* in place of *I'm*, *have not* in place of *haven't*, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech.
- **Avoid clichés.** Overused expressions such as *green with envy*, *face the music*, *better late than never*, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may not appeal to your audience.
- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings.** Some examples are *illusion/illusion*; *complement/compliment*; *council/counsel*; *concurrent/consecutive*; *founder/flounder*; and *historic/historical*. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
- **Choose words with the connotations you want.** Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word *proud* and the negative connotations of *arrogant* and *conceited*.
- **Use specific words rather than overly general words.** Find synonyms for *thing*, *people*, *nice*, *good*, *bad*, *interesting*, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read these revisions to make the third paragraph clearer and more concise.

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

screen to watch sports and DVDs on. There's and with good reason. for this confusion: You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. The first big decision is the involves screen resolution, you want. Screen resolution which means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often expressed as 1080p, or full HD, or as 768p, which is half that. The trouble is that if you have on a smaller screen, 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal screen, viewers will not you won't be able to tell the difference between them with the naked eye. The second other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer deeper blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't let someone make you by more television than you need! Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets.

Self-Practice Exercise 9.16



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H5P: Understanding Word Choice

Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph.

- Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Mariah's writing.
- Do you agree with the changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?
- What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun you have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?

Now return once more to your essay in progress. Read carefully for problems with word choice. Be sure that your draft is written in formal language and that your word choice is specific and appropriate.

Editing Your Writing Checklist

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **grammar**.

- Does every verb agree with its subject?
- Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
- Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies (eg. no dangling modifier)?
- Have you ensured there are no run-on sentences?
- Are subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns used correctly?
- Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- Are all sentences complete sentences (eg. not fragments)?
- Are independent clauses joined with conjunctions?
- Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
- Are the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs used?
- Are who and whom used correctly?
- Is every verb in the correct tense?

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **sentence structure**.

- Is my parallel structure accurate?
- Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
- Are my sentences clear?
- Do I vary my sentence structure?

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **sentence structure**.

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

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **mechanics and usage**.

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

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

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

Formatting

Your finished assignment should be properly formatted, following the style required of you. Formatting includes the style of the title, margin size, page number placement, location of the writer's name, and other factors. Your instructor or department may require a specific style to be used. The requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide, 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.

Checking Citations and Formatting

When editing a research paper, it is also important to check that you have cited sources properly and formatted your document according to the specified guidelines. There are two reasons for this. First, citing sources correctly ensures that you give proper credit to other people for ideas and information that helped you in your work. Second, using correct formatting establishes your paper as one student's contribution to the work developed by and for a larger academic community. Increasingly, American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines are the standard for many academic fields.

Citation and Formatting Checklist

Reread your paper and check whether you have achieved the following goals in working towards proper citation and formatting.

- Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, where applicable, the organization name or source title) and year of publication. I have used the correct format of in text and

parenthetical citations.

- Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source.
- My paper includes a running head.
- Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the references section of my paper.
- My references section includes a heading and double-spaced alphabetized entries.
- Each entry in my references section is indented on the second line and all subsequent lines.
- The margins of my paper are set at one inch. Text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.
- My paper includes a title page.
- Each entry in my references section includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.

Final Revision Checklist

Although you probably do not want to look at your paper again before you submit it to your instructor, take the time to do a final check. Since you have already worked through all of the checklists above focusing on certain aspects at one time, working through one final checklist should confirm you have written a strong, persuasive essay and that everything is the way you want it to be. Then you can compare to see how your perceptions of your paper match those of someone else, essentially having that person act as the one who will be grading your paper.

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **organization**.

- Are your paragraphs organized in a logical manner?
- Focus: Have you clearly stated your thesis (your controlling idea) in the first paragraph?
- Check whether your paragraphs are organized according to a specific pattern.
- Unity: Write your opening and closing paragraphs and place each topic sentence in between. You should have a “mini essay”
 - with several different main points supporting your thesis.
- Have you provided a comprehensive conclusion to your essay? Does it summarize your main points (using different words)?
- Do you show you understand the assignment: purpose, audience, and genre?
- Does your thesis statement catch the reader’s attention?

- Does each topic sentence (per paragraph) logically follow the one preceding it?
- Do you have several points to support your thesis?
- Are your paragraphs organized in the best way to support your thesis?

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **paragraphs and sentences**.

- Does each sentence logically follow the preceding one?
- Are there several sentences giving details, facts, quotes, reasons, and arguments in each paragraph?
- Is each supporting detail specific, concrete, and relevant to the topic sentence?
- Have you used transitional words to help the reader follow your thoughts?
- Does each paragraph have only one main point?
- Does your essay have an appropriate tone and point of view?
- Does each paragraph have main points and supporting details?
- Is each sentence relevant to the main point of the paragraph?
- Is your approach or pattern used to develop your paragraph's main point followed?
- Are your paragraphs all an appropriate length?

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **sentences and usage**.

- Verb tenses are consistent.
- Weak adverbs (may be) are replaced with strong verbs (is).
- Pronoun referents are clear.
- Wordiness has been eliminated.
- Subject and verbs agree.
- Subjects are person are consistent.
- Sentence structure is varied.
- Repetition has been eliminated.
- Fragments, splices, and run-on sentences have been revised.
- Each sentence has a subject and a verb.
- Lists are written in parallel.
- Wordiness has been corrected.
- All verbs are active.
- Modifiers have been checked for clarity.

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **documentation**.

- Reference section is complete.
- All references are documented.
- In-text citations are formatted correctly.
- In-text citations are present for every reference.

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **mechanics**.

- All spelling and typographical errors have been corrected.
- All words and sentences are punctuated according to common usage.

Reread your paper and use the list below to check your **content**.

- I have provided enough background information. The details I have provided are relevant and necessary.
- I believe what I have written.
- My controlling idea and the development of my argument make sense.
- I have primarily used paraphrasing (not direct quotation).

You should now be confident you have produced a strong argument that is wonderfully constructed and that you will be able to persuade your audience that your points and point of view are valid.

CHAPTER 10: WRITING REPORTS



Photo by William Iven on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Examine how audience analysis impacts reports.
- Recognize different types of reports.
- Differentiate features of formal reports

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- Have you ever written a report in the workplace? (Incident report, progress report, etc.?) How did you compose the report? Did you encounter any challenges? If so, what were they?
- Have you ever written a report as part of a course? What was the purpose of the report? How did you write it? Did you encounter any challenges? If so, what were they?
- Select one or more concepts that we've studied so far this semester. How do you think it will be useful when writing reports?
- How do you think a report differs from an essay?

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Reports are a flexible genre. A report can be anything from a one-page accident report when someone gets a minor injury on the job to a 500+ page report created by a government commission, such as [The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report](#). Your report could be internal or external, and it could be a printed document, a PDF or even an email.

The type of report is often identified by its primary purpose, as in an **accident report**, a **laboratory report**, or a **sales report**. Reports are often analytical or involve the rational analysis of information. Sometimes they report the facts with no analysis at all. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends. This section will introduce you to the basics of report writing.

Many business professionals need to write a formal report at some point during their career, and some professionals write them on a regular basis. Key decision makers in business, education, and government use formal reports to make important decisions. Although writing a formal report can seem like a daunting task, the final product enables you to contribute directly to your company's success.

There are several different organizational patterns that may be used for formal reports, but all formal reports contain front matter material, a body, and back matter (supplementary) items. The body of a formal report discusses the findings that lead to the recommendations. The following section will explain how to write a formal report with an audience in mind.

Analyzing your Audience

As with any type of writing, when writing reports, it is necessary to know your audience. Will you be expected to write a one-page email or a formal report complete with a Table of Contents and an Executive Summary? Audience analysis will tell you.

For example, if your audience is familiar with the background information related to your project, you don't want to bombard them with details. Instead, you will want to inform your audience about the aspects of your topic that they're unfamiliar with or have limited knowledge of. In contrast, if your audience does not already know anything about your project, you will want to give them all of the necessary information for them to understand. Age and educational level are also important to consider when you write. You don't want to use technical jargon when writing to an audience of non-specialists.

One of the trickier parts of report writing is understanding what your audience expects. Why is your audience reading the report? Do different parts of the report serve different purposes? Will you be expected to follow a specific template? Make sure that you have specifically responded to the expectations of your boss, manager, or client. If your audience expects you to have conducted research, make sure you know what type of research they expect. Do they want research from

scholarly journal articles? Do they want you to conduct your own research? No matter what type of research you do, make sure that it is properly documented using whatever format the audience prefers (MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual of Style are some of the most commonly-used formats).

Here are some questions to consider about your audience as you write:

- What does your audience expect to learn from your report?
- Do you have only one audience or multiple audiences? Do they have different levels of knowledge about the topic?
- How much research does your audience expect you to have done?
- How current does your research need to be?
- What types of sources does your audience expect you to have?
- What is the educational level of your audience?
- How much background information does your audience need?
- What technical terms will your audience need defined? What terms will they already be familiar with?
- Is there a template or style guide that you should use for your report?
- What is the cultural background of your audience?

TYPES OF REPORTS

Reports vary by function, style, and tradition. Within your organization, you may need to address specific expectations. This section discusses reports in general terms, focusing on common elements and points of distinction. Reference to similar documents at your workplace may serve you well as you prepare your own report. As shown in Table 10.1, there are many types of reports.

Progress report

A progress report is used to give management an update on the status of a project. It is generated at timed intervals (for example, once a month) or on completion of key stages. It records accomplishments to date and identifies any challenges or concerns. It is usually written by the project lead and is one to two pages long.

When you write a progress report, begin by stating why you are writing the report:

- Identify what you've accomplished
- List any problems you have encountered
- Outline what work still remains
- Conclude by providing an overview of the project's status and what should be done next.

It's helpful to think about a report not just in terms of what should be included, but **why** certain elements are included. Most reports have a persuasive element, so when reporting your progress you are trying to:

- Demonstrate that you have taken appropriate, competent action so far.
- Assure the reader that they can trust you to finish the remainder of the work effectively and that your plan remains a good one.
- Convince the reader that the project has been successful so far.
- If the project hasn't been successful, then you will want to explain why and suggest ways to improve. Never downplay or lie about challenges you are experiencing. Not only will this damage your reputation when the truth comes out, but you'll also be defeating the purpose of the progress report: which is to evaluate the project and address issues as they happen.

Understanding your persuasive strategy will help you organize and write your progress report.

Recommendation report

A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions. The goal of this report is to identify a solution

to a problem or suggest a course of action. In it, the writer might suggest that a procedure be adopted or rejected, assess an unsatisfactory situation, or persuade decision makers to make a change that will benefit the organization. For example, the report might suggest ways to enhance the quality of a product, increase profit, reduce cost, or improve workplace conditions. The intention of a recommendation report is not to assign blame or be overly critical, but to suggest improvements in a positive manner.

The persuasive goals of most recommendation reports are:

- That a problem or opportunity exists and the organization should take it seriously. Why should your organization devote its resources to this issue? Why now?
- That you have done the necessary research and have the expertise to solve the problem.
- That your research and expertise has led you to a solution, which is the best of all possible solutions.
- That your solution offers benefits to the company and has minimal risks. If there are risks, you are aware of them and have a plan to mitigate them.

The importance and expense of what you're recommending will dictate the form, amount of detail, length and use of visual aids like charts and graphs. It will also dictate how you lay out your argument.

A Very Short Report

To: Ralph Niblet, CEO
 From: Hannah Vuong, Communications Manager
 Subject: Migrating to MailChimp
 Date: Sept. 1st, 2018

Hi Ralph,

Last week, you asked me to research whether we should switch our email marketing software from Constant Contact to MailChimp. I think that we should go with MailChimp for the following reasons:

1. MailChimp is free for a business of our size, while Constant Contact costs us \$57 a month.
2. MailChimp integrates with Salesforce and would allow us to use our database more effectively. I spoke to Sam Cho, who currently administers our Salesforce account, and he shared many exciting ways that we could integrate the two platforms without much effort. He also offered to host a webinar to train our staff.
3. MailChimp allows us segment audiences more effectively. I've included some links to a few blog posts that illustrate what we could do. A lot of our current unsubscribes happen because we can't target

emails to specific groups of customers effectively. Our email marketing report from last quarter showed that 70% unsubscribed because of emails that were “not relevant.”

Some colleagues have voiced the objection that they already know how to use Constant Contact and they find MailChimp less intuitive. We will also have to migrate our existing data and clean it. I believe, however, that these barriers can easily be overcome with employee training and good data migration practices.

I am happy to show you a demo of MailChimp this week if you are free.

Thanks,

Hannah

If Hannah wanted to turn this email into a report, she would likely find that the major elements are there. She’s done some research, she has used that research to come up with a solution, and she’s anticipated some potential risks or downsides to her plan. As you read about the parts of the report, think about how Hannah might turn her email into a recommendation report.

Summary Report

A summary report is used to give management information. For example, if you work in the marketing department, your boss might ask you to find out about your competitors’ online activities so that your company can effectively compete with them. To do this, you would research your competitors’ websites, social media profiles, digital advertising campaigns, and so on. You would then distill what you find down to the key points so that your boss can get the essential information in a short time, and then decide how to act on it. Unlike the recommendation report, the summary report focuses on the facts, leaving it to management to decide on a course of action.

In general, the main persuasive point that you are making in summary reports is that you have done enough research and have used appropriate sources, and that you have organized this information in a logical and useful manner. Because summary reports give a general overview, it’s important to think about how your reader can skim through the document. Remember: your goal is to save your audience time, so part of the challenge of the report is determining what information your audience needs, and what is irrelevant. You will also have to condense material.

ORGANIZING REPORTS

Reports vary by size, format, and function. You need to be flexible and adjust your report to the needs of the audience. Reports are typically organized around six key elements:

- Who the report is about and/or prepared for
- What was done, what problems were addressed, and the results, including conclusions and/or recommendations
- Where the subject studied occurred
- When the subject studied occurred
- Why the report was written (function), including under what authority, for what reason, or by whose request
- How the subject operated, functioned, or was used

Pay attention to these essential elements when you consider your stakeholders. That may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, and the larger audience of the organization. Ask yourself who the key decision makers are, who the experts will be, and how your words and images may be interpreted. While there is no universal format for a report, there is a common order to the information. Each element supports the main purpose or function, playing an important role in the transmission of information. Some common elements in a report are shown in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Parts of a report

Page	Description
Title page	<p>Report title; date of submission; name, title, and organization of the person who prepared the report; name, title, and organization of the person receiving the report.</p> <p>If your report contains sensitive information or if it is going to be exposed to the elements, it might also contain a cover page.</p> <p>No page number.</p>
Table of contents	<p>A list of the sections in the report and their respective page numbers.</p> <p>All headings/sub-headings in the report should be listed on this page.</p> <p>This page is not labelled with a page number.</p>
Executive summary	<p>The executive summary is a one-page overview of the entire report aimed at managers or people in a position of power. It discusses the managerial implications of your report: basically what managers or other people who have the authority to approve your report need to know. Summarize the topic, methods, data/evidence, results, and conclusions/recommendations.</p> <p>On its own page.</p> <p>Labelled as page iii.</p>
Introduction	<p>Introduces the topic of the report, states the purpose of the report, and previews the structure of the report. This section often contains similar information to the Executive Summary, but in a clear, factual manner.</p> <p>Begins on a new page.</p> <p>Labelled as page 1.</p>
Body	<p>Key elements of the report body may include the background, methods, results, and analysis or discussion.</p> <p>Uses descriptive or functional headings and sub-headings (is not labelled “Body”).</p> <p>Pagination continues from the introduction.</p>
Conclusion and/or recommendations	<p>Concise presentation of findings and/or recommendations. Indicate the main results and their relation to the recommended action(s) or outcome(s).</p> <p>Pagination continues from the body of the report.</p>

References	A list of all references used in the report.
	All in-text citations included in the report should have an accompanying entry in the reference list.
	Begins on a new page.
	Pagination continues from the conclusions and/or recommendations.

Appendix or appendices	Related supporting materials.
	All materials in the appendix (or appendices) must be referred to in the body of the report.
	Only one item per appendix.
	Each appendix begins on a new page, is labelled as Appendix A, B, C, etc, and is given a title.

	Pagination continues from the reference list.
--	---

Here is a checklist for ensuring that a report fulfills its goals:

- Report considers the audience's needs
- Form follows function of report
- Format reflects institutional norms and expectations
- Information is accurate, complete, and documented
- Information is easy to read
- Terms are clearly defined
- Figures, tables, and art support written content
- Figures, tables, and art are clear and correctly labelled
- Figures, tables, and art are easily understood without text support
- Words are easy to read (font, arrangement, organization)
- Results are clear and concise
- Recommendations are reasonable and well-supported
- Report represents your best effort
- Report speaks for itself without your clarification or explanation

ELEMENTS OF FORMAL REPORTS

While you may write much shorter, more casual reports, it's helpful to go into a bit of detail about formal reports. Formal reports are modular, which means that they have many pieces. Most audience members will not read every piece, so these pieces should stand on their own. That means that you will often repeat yourself. That's okay. Your audience should be able to find exactly what they need in a particular section, even if that information has been repeated elsewhere.

While it's fine to copy and paste between sections, you will likely need to edit your work to ensure that the tone, level of detail and organization meet the needs of that section. For example, the Executive Summary is aimed at managers. It's a short, persuasive overview of everything in the report. The Introduction may contain very similar information, but it focuses on giving a short, technical overview of everything in the report. Its goal is to inform, not to persuade.

Let's take a look at some of the parts of the report in greater detail.

Title Page

The title page provides the audience with the:

- Name of the report
 - This should appear 2 inches from the top margin in uppercase letters.
- Name, title, and organization of the individual receiving the report
 - Type "Prepared for" on one line, followed by two separate lines that provide the receiving organization's name and then the city and state. Some reports may include an additional line that presents the name of a specific person.
- Name of the author and any necessary identifying information
 - Type "prepared by" on one line, followed by the name(s) of the author(s) and their organization, all on separate lines.
- Date of submission
 - This date may differ from the date the report was written. It should appear 2 inches above the bottom margin.

The items on the title page should be equally spaced apart from each other.

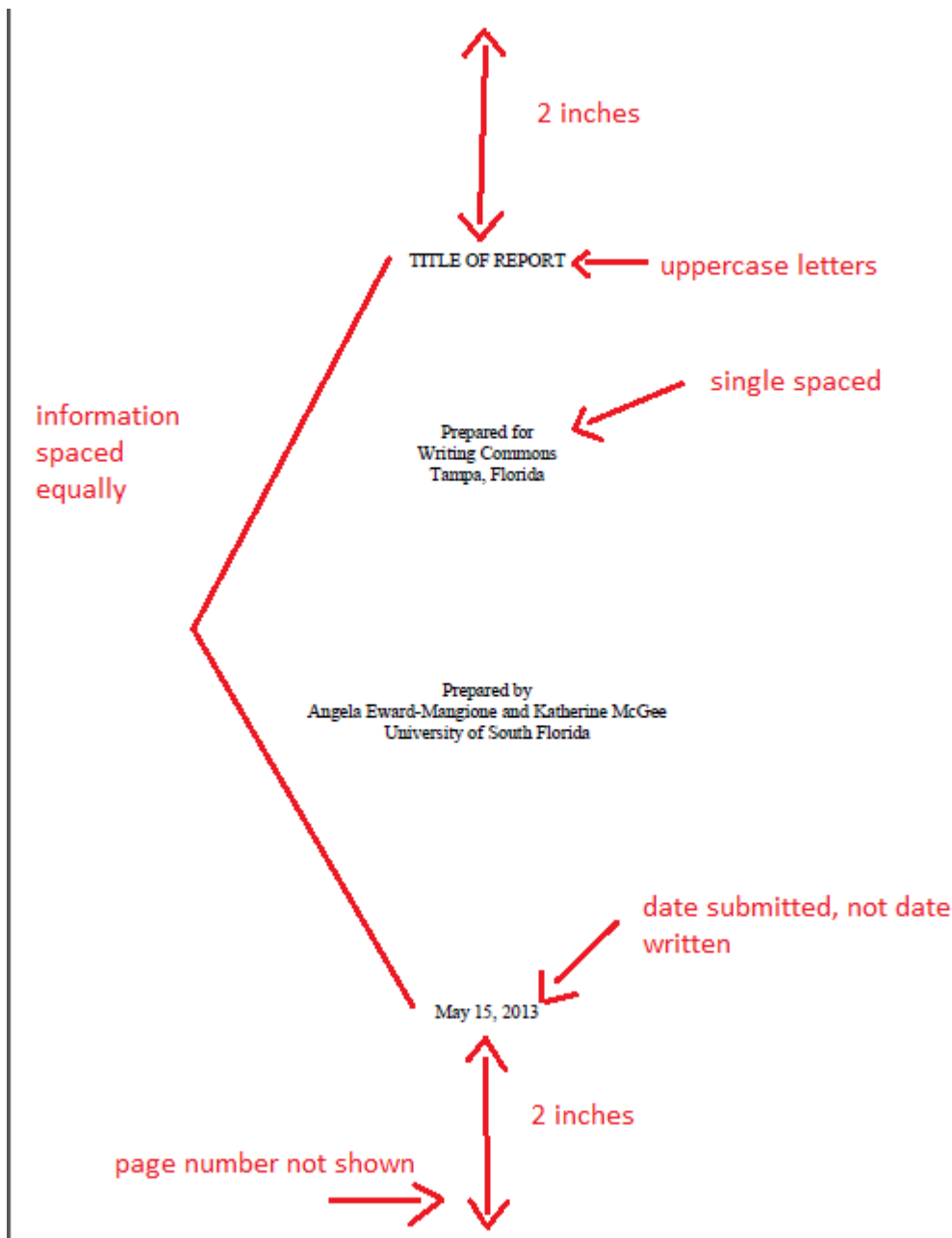


Figure 10.1 Report Title Page Components [\[Image Description\]](#)

A note on page numbers:

The title page should not include a page number, but this page is counted as page “i.” Use software features to create two sections for your report. You can then utilize two different types of numbering schemes. When numbering the pages (i.e., i, ii, iii, etc.) for a formal report, use lowercase roman numerals for all front matter components. Utilize arabic numbers for the other pages that follow. Additionally, if you intend to bind the report on the left, move the left margin and center 0.25 inches to the right.

Letter of Transmittal

A letter of transmittal announces the report topic to the recipient(s).

If applicable, the first paragraph should identify who authorized the report and why the report is significant. Provide the purpose of the report in the first paragraph as well. The next paragraph should briefly identify, categorize, and describe the primary and secondary research of the report. Use the concluding paragraph to offer to discuss the report; it is also customary to conclude by thanking the reader for their time and consideration.

The letter of transmittal should be formatted as a business letter. Some report writers prefer to send a memo of transmittal instead.

When considering your audience for the letter or memo of transmittal, make sure that you use a level of formality appropriate for your relationship with the reader. While all letters should contain professional and respectful language, a letter to someone you do not know should pay closer attention to the formality of the word choice and tone.

Table of Contents

The table of contents page features the headings and secondary headings of the report and their page numbers, enabling audience members to quickly locate specific parts of the report. Leaders (i.e. spaced or unspaced dots) are used to guide the reader's eye from the headings to their page numbers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

centered, bold, all uppercase letters

all uppercase letters

double space

single space secondary headings

leaders guide the reader's eyes to the page number

the body and back matter use Arabic numerals

front matter uses roman numerals

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
PROBLEM	1
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	2
Direct Benefits	2
Enhanced Writing Skills	3
Increased Computer Literacy Skills	5
Improved Research Skills	6
Indirect Benefits	7
Increased Marketability	7
Enhanced Career Opportunities	9
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10
WORKS CITED	11

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1 Types of Graphics	5
2 Average Increase in Research Skills	6

iii

Figure 10.2 Table of Contents and List of Figures components [Image Description]

The words “TABLE OF CONTENTS” should appear at the top of the page in all uppercase and bolded letters. Type the titles of major report parts in all uppercase letters as well, double spacing between them. Secondary headings should be indented and single spaced, using a combination of upper- and lowercase letters.

Executive Summary

An executive summary presents an overview of the report that can be used as a time-saving device by recipients who do not have time to read the entire report.

The executive summary should include a:

- Summary of purpose
- Overview of key findings
- Identification of conclusions
- Overview of recommendations

To begin, type “EXECUTIVE SUMMARY” in all uppercase letters and centered. Follow this functional head with paragraphs that include the above information, but do not use first-level headings to separate each item. Each paragraph of information should be single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. Everything except for the title should be left-aligned.

An executive summary is usually ten percent of the length of the report. For example, a ten-page report should offer a one-page summary. A 100-page report should feature a summary that is approximately ten pages.

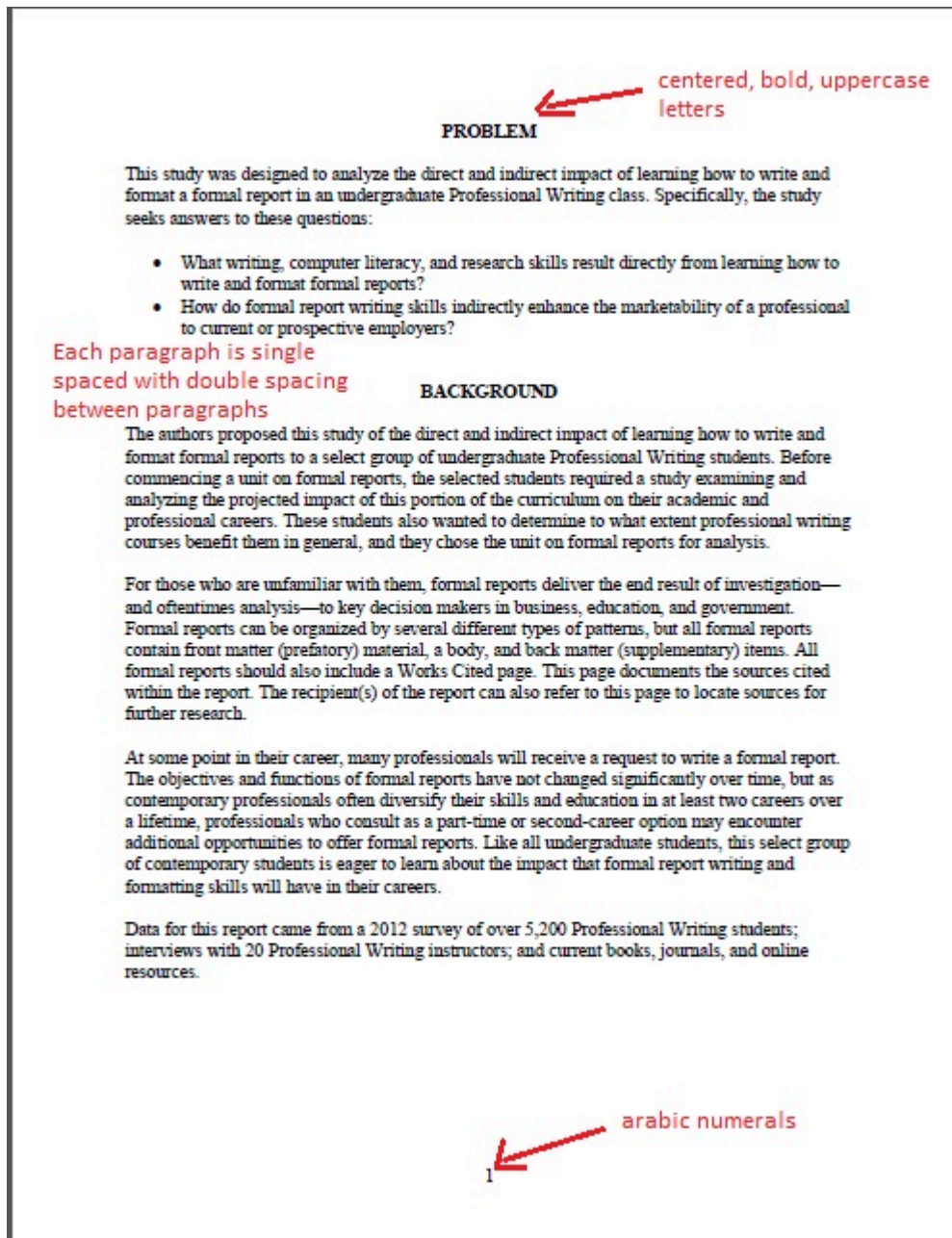
The executive summary is usually seen as the most important part of the report, and it should be written last. When you’re writing the executive summary, imagine that you’re sitting across from your most important audience member. If you only have a few minutes to talk to them, what do you want them to know? What would be most persuasive?

Introduction

The body of a formal report begins with an introduction. The introduction sets the stage for the report, clarifies what need(s) motivated it, and helps the reader understand what structure the report will follow.

Most report introductions address the following elements: background information, problem or purpose, significance, scope, methods, organization, and sources. As you may have noticed, some parts of a formal report fulfill similar purposes. Information from the letter of transmittal and the executive summary may be repeated in the introduction. Reword the information in order to avoid sounding repetitive.

Figure 10.3
Introduction Page
[\[Image Description\]](#)



To begin this section, type “BACKGROUND” or “INTRODUCTION” in all uppercase letters. This functional head should be followed by the information specified above (i.e., background information, problem or purpose, etc.). You do not need to utilize any first-level headings in this section. Because this section includes background information, it would be the appropriate place to address the needs of audiences that may need additional knowledge about the topic. Provide definitions of technical terms and instruction about the overall project if necessary. If you are uncertain if your audience needs a particular piece of information, go ahead and include it; it’s better to give your reader a little bit too much background than not enough.

Discussion of Findings

The Discussion of Findings section presents the evidence for your conclusions.

This key section should be carefully organized to enhance readability.

Useful organizational patterns for report findings include but are not limited to:

- Best Case/Worst Case
- Compare/Contrast
- Chronology
- Geography
- Importance
- Journalism Pattern

Use a Best Case/Worst Case organizational pattern when you think that the audience may lack interest in the topic. When examining a topic with clear alternatives to your proposed solution, consider using a Compare/Contrast pattern. Geographical patterns work effectively for topics that are discussed by location.

When describing the organization of the report in the first paragraph, broadly identify how the material in the report is organized rather than state that the report uses a specific pattern (e.g. Chronology, Geography). For example, write, “The research findings address curriculum trends in three provinces: (a) British Columbia, (b) Alberta, and (c) Ontario,” not, “This report uses a geographical organizational pattern.”

Follow the first paragraph with a first-level heading. Use first-level headings for all other major parts of this section. First-level headings should appear in bold, uppercase letters. Center first-level headings, but align any second-level headings with the left margin. Type any second-level headings in bold, upper- and lowercase letters.

As you present, interpret, and analyze evidence, consider using both text and graphics. Take into account what will be easiest for your audience to understand.

Include citations for all quoted or paraphrased material from sources as well; check with your organization as to whether they prefer parenthetical citations or footnotes.

Integrating Graphics

Formal report authors use graphics to present data in different forms. Paragraphs of text and complex or numerical data tend to bog readers down, making graphics a beneficial enhancement. Graphics also make data easier to understand, so they sometimes make a stronger impact on the audience.

Knowing when—and how—to effectively employ graphics is the key to successfully integrating them. Keeping the audience in mind is also critical.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations section conveys the key results from the analysis in the discussion of findings section. Up to this point, readers have carefully reviewed the data in the report; they are now logically prepared to read the report’s conclusions and recommendations.

Type “CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS” in all uppercase letters. Follow this functional head with the conclusions of the report. The conclusions should answer any research questions that were posed earlier in the report. Present the conclusions in an enumerated or bulleted list to enhance readability.

Recommendations offer a course of action, and they should answer any problem or research questions as well. Think back to the expectations of your audience. Have all of their requirements been addressed?

Works Cited

All formal reports should include a works cited page; this page documents the sources cited within the report. The recipient(s) of the report can also refer to this page to locate sources for further research.

Conclusion

While some of the formatting rules may seem tedious at first, they are necessary in order for your audience to better understand the report. Using a regulated format allows for a more universal organization that everyone will understand. Being aware of your audience’s needs and expectations will allow for a strong report that will satisfy your employee and demonstrate your competence in your field.

Test Your Knowledge

Understanding the parts of the report can be challenging, so test your knowledge by dragging the part of the report to its definition.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=239#h5p-76>

Image Description

Figure 10.1 image description: This is a diagram of a report title page. Leave 2 inches between the top and the title of

the report (which should be in uppercase letters), then write in the middle of the page who the report was prepared for. 3/4 of the way down the page, say who the report was prepared for. Then write the date submitted. [\[Return to Figure 10.1\]](#)

Figure 10.2 image description: A sample table of contents and List of Figures. Use uppercase letters for major parts and use leaders to guide the reader's eye to the page numbers. The list of figures should be separate from the table of contents. [\[Return to Figure 10.2\]](#)

Figure 10.3 image description: A sample body page of an introduction. This one is separated into 'PROBLEM' (all in uppercase letters, bold, and in the center) and BACKGROUND. Each paragraph is single spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. [\[Return to Figure 10.3\]](#)

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Audience analysis is key to reports. Most reports are modular, which means that they are organized into parts that stand on their own. This helps the reader to look for just the information that's relevant to them.
- Reports have a wide variety of purposes and styles. The three major types are progress reports, recommendation reports and summary reports.
- In a progress report, identify what you've accomplished, listed any problems you've encountered, outline what work still remains and conclude by providing an overview of the project's status and what should be done next.
- A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions. You should identify that a problem or opportunity exists and your organization should take it seriously, that you've done the research necessary to solve the problem, that your research and expertise has led you to a solution, and that this solution is the best one, and that you're aware of any risks and have a plan for them.
- A summary report gives management information. The main point is that you've done enough research, have used enough sources and have organized them in an appropriate manner.
- Formal reports usually have an executive summary, an introduction, a body (which might be separated into background, methods, results, and analysis), a conclusions/recommendations section, references, and an appendix.

Activities for Further Reflection

- Look online to find a report. See if you can identify the parts of the report that we've discussed. If it's organized in a different way, why do you think that is? What is the author trying to accomplish?
- Find an essay or project that you've done in another class. Try writing a short Executive Summary for it. How did writing an Executive Summary change the way you looked at the material? How did you decide what to put in the Executive Summary?
- Find a famous report online, such as [The Mueller Report](#) or the [Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#). What tone does the report have? How does it try to persuade its audience? How does it use evidence?

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CHAPTER 11: REVISING YOUR WORK



Photo by KAL
VISUALS on
Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Demonstrate strategies for revising your work

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- In the beginning of the semester, we discussed the writing process. Have you made any changes to your writing process over the semester? How are these changes working?
- How do you approach the revision process? What steps or strategies do you follow to revise your writing effectively?
- What feedback sources do you seek when you finish a piece of writing? How do you decide whose feedback to incorporate and why?
- Are there specific areas of your writing that you find challenging to revise, such as grammar, structure or content organization?
- Consider the impact of the revision process on your overall growth as a writer. How have your revision skills evolved over time, and what steps can you take to continue improving?

REVISION

While you may feel that you write best “under pressure” the night before your assignment is due or in the minutes before sending an email at work, writing a single draft at the last minute rarely results in anyone’s best work. You may feel that you’ve put a lot of effort into your first draft, so it can be challenging to think about changing your work or even eliminating words that you’ve carefully selected. You might worry about ruining your first draft and over-editing. However, it’s well worth the pain of revising, editing, and proofreading to produce a polished piece of writing that others can easily understand.

You may think that a completed first draft means that 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 practise, 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.

Many writing experts describe writing this way: the first draft is for the writer and the second draft is for the reader. Revisions help to meet your audience’s needs.

You should revise and edit in stages: do not expect to catch everything in one go. If each time you review your paper you focus on a different aspect of construction, you will be more likely to catch any mistakes or identify any issues. Throughout this chapter, you will see a number of checklists containing specific things to look for with each revision. For example, you will first look at how the overall paper and your ideas are organized.

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.

For many people, the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* provoke only negative 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. To do this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

Revising Your Paper: Higher Order and Lower Order Concerns

Higher Order Concerns

Revising for higher order concerns means working on the organization of your ideas. You might insert sentences, words, or paragraphs; you might move them elsewhere in your document; or you might remove them entirely (Meyer, 2017).

When you revise at the “big picture” stage, you are looking at the most important aspects of the writing tasks, and the ones that require the most thought. Here’s a set of questions to help you revise for these higher order concerns:

- Have I met the purpose and requirements?
- Does my draft say what I mean?
- What will my audience think about what I’ve written?
- Have I changed my thinking through writing or researching?
- Are there parts that do not belong here?
- Are there pieces missing?
- Are there places where the reader would struggle to understand my meaning?
- Is the tone right for my reader?
- Are my sources the right kind for my purpose and reader?
- Are all the pieces in the right place?
- Will the reader understand the connections between my ideas?
- Are sources documented?
- Are the visuals appropriate? Could they be clearer?

One of the hardest parts of learning revision is building trust in your ability to make big changes and stray from original plan. It can be tempting to keep trying to tinker: moving words around in a sentence or rearranging a paragraph, hoping that the problem you’ve identified can be solved. A key part of the writing process is embracing that you’ve learned something new from the time you started your draft to the time you finished it. With that new information, you may realize that a new approach is needed.

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographical entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper.

A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. **Organization** means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. **Cohesion** means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer’s ideas.

Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. Use **Checklist 12.1: Revise for Organization** to help you.

Checklist 12.1: Revise for Organization



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=249#h5p-77>

H5P: Review your essay and determine if you have achieved the following goals.

- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs follow a logical order?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?

Review each and every body paragraph in your essay and ensure you've achieved the following goals.

- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow of sentences?

Self-Practice Exercise 11.1



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=249#h5p-78>

H5P: Revising for Organization

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper's overall organization.

Print out a hard copy of your paper. (You will use this for multiple self-practice exercises in this chapter.) If you prefer to work on a screen, make sure you have the ability to mark up or annotate your work.

Read your paper paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph.

Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented—just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Do not look at the outline you created during prewriting. You may write in the margins of your draft or make your notes in the space below.

Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically.

Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas. You may write in the margins of your draft or make your notes in the space below.

Begin to revise your paper to improve organization. Start with any major issues, such as needing to move an entire paragraph. Then proceed to minor revisions, such as adding a transitional phrase or tweaking a topic sentence so it connects ideas more clearly.

Tip: Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose and avoid overusing the same ones.

Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essays. Earlier chapters have discussed using transitions for specific purposes in the planning of your writing. **Common Transitional Words and Phrases** groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

Common Transitional Words and Phrases According to Purpose

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

Tip: Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.

Revise to Improve Cohesion

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out of place material fits in smoothly.

In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect. Use the following checklist to review your essay for cohesion.

Checklist 12.2: Revise for Cohesion



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=249#h5p-79>

H5P: Reread your paper and check whether you have achieved the following goals in working towards cohesion in your writing.

- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose.

Self-Practice Exercise 11.2



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H5P: Revising for Organization

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper's overall organization.

- Print out a hard copy of your paper. (You will use this for multiple self-practice exercises in this chapter.) If you prefer to work on a screen, make sure you have the ability to mark up or annotate your work.
- Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.
- You may write in the margins of your draft or make your notes in the space below.
- Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete. You may write in the margins of

your draft or make your notes in the space below.

- Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources. You may write in the margins of your draft or make your notes in the space below.
- Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of the paper. You may write in the margins of your draft or make your notes in the space below.
- Revise the places you identified in your paper to improve cohesion.

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

Creating Unity

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

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 add 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.

Using a Consistent Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve **style** and **tone**. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

Determining an Appropriate Style and Tone

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humour can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what he or she is talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night's sleep.

A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious. It is generally best to avoid writing in the first person, as this can make your paper seem overly subjective and opinion based.

Revise for Style Checklist

- I have used the active voice whenever possible.
- My paper avoids excessive wordiness.
- My sentences are varied in length and structure.
- I have avoided using first person pronouns such as I and we.
- My paper states my point of view using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful.
- I have used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon.
- I have defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.

Keeping Your Style Consistent

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies you can use include the following:

- **Read your paper aloud.** Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
- **Share your paper with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback.** It is often difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
- **Edit your paper slowly, sentence by sentence.** You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover up everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing. This practice forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

Lower Order Concerns

Lower order concerns focus on editing and proofreading. When you edit, you work from your revised draft to systematically correct issues or errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, and other things related to writing mechanics (Meyer, 2017). Proofreading is the last stage where you work from your almost-finished document to fix any issues or errors in formatting or typos you missed (Meyer, 2017). Here's another way of distinguishing these two tasks. Editing is the act of making changes or indicating what to change; proofreading means checking to make sure those changes were made.

Perhaps you are the person who proofreads and edits as you write a draft, so when you are done drafting and revising for content and structure, you may not have that much editing or proofreading to do. Or maybe you are the person who pays no attention to grammar and spelling as you draft, saving all of the editing until you are finished writing. Either way, plan to carefully edit and proofread your work. For most people, proofreading on a printed copy is more effective than working entirely on screen.

Here are some additional strategies for editing and proofreading your work:

- Take a break between writing and editing. Even a 15 minute break can help you look at your document anew.
- Read your work aloud.
- Work through your document slowly, moving word by word.
- Start at the end of your document and work towards the beginning.
- Focus on one issue at a time. Trying to look for spelling errors, punctuation issues, awkward phrasing, and more all at once can make it easier to miss items needing correction.
- Don't rely exclusively on spelling- or grammar-checking software. ([This poem](#) was run through such a program and no problems were detected!)
- Review through your document several times.

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 need most is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

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

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

Self-Practice Exercise 11.3



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H5P: Peer Review

Peer Review Introduction

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

- Title of my peer's essay:
- Peer's name:
- This essay is about:
- The main points in this essay are:
- What I liked most about this essay is:

Strengths in This Essay

- One strong aspect of this essay is:
- It is strong because:
- A second strong aspect of this essay is:
- It is strong because:
- A final strong aspect of this essay is:
- It is strong because:

Room for Improvement in This Essay

- One aspect of this essay that is not clear to me is:
- It needs improvement because:
- A second aspect of this essay that is not clear to me is:
- It needs improvement because:
- A final aspect of this essay that is not clear to me is:
- It needs improvement because:
- One additional change you could make to strengthen this essay is:

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 consider that feedback 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.



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Create a Revision Plan

This activity will help you create a revision plan for a writing project. First, pick a writing project that you care about. You could pick writing you've done in this class, another class, or in the workplace. Then, follow the steps to come up with a revision plan.

Step 1: Read your document. Then, write 1-2 sentences that describes what you're most proud of

about this document. This will help you be aware of what's good about the document, so you don't lose any positive qualities in the revision.

Step 2: Now, consider the purpose of the document. What do you want to happen after the reader reads the document? For example, if you were working on an essay for your history class, your goal might be to convince your teacher that you have created an original thesis and supported it with evidence. After the teacher reads your essay, you want them to give you an A. If you're working on a poster to advertise a speaker coming to your campus, your purpose might be to spark people's interest in the speaker. After they read the poster, you want them to go online to search for more information and attend the event.

Write 1 – 2 sentences explaining the purpose of the document and what you want the reader to do after reading it.

Step 3: Now, see if you can identify any factors preventing the reader from doing what you want them to do. You might consider:

- Organization.
- Tone.
- Level of detail.
- Use of evidence.
- Length of paragraphs.
- Headings and other organizational aids.
- Use of visuals.
- Spelling and grammar

From here, identify the top 3 changes you want to make to help your audience understand your message and do what you want them to do. Be as specific as you can. For example, it's more helpful to say "I want to move my thesis statement to the beginning of my essay and do a reverse outline to help me focus my essay" than to say "I want to improve the organization."

Congratulations! You have created a revision plan for your document. Now, it's time to revise and make your document achieve its purpose.

REVERSE OUTLINING

Often, outlining is recommended as an early component of the writing process as a way to organize and connect thoughts so the shape of what you are going to write is clear before you start drafting it. This is a tool many writers use that is probably already familiar to you.

Reverse outlining, though, is different in a few ways. First, it happens later in the process, after a draft is completed rather than before. Second, it gives you an opportunity to review and assess the ideas and connections that are actually present in the completed draft. This is almost an opposite approach from traditional outlining, which considers an initial set of ideas that might shift as the draft is written and new ideas are added or existing ones are moved, changed, or removed entirely. A reverse outline can help you improve the structure and organization of your already-written draft, letting you see where support is missing for a specific point or where ideas don't quite connect on the page as clearly as you wanted them to.

How to Create a Reverse Outline

1. At the top of a fresh sheet of paper, write your primary purpose for the text you want to outline. This should be the purpose exactly as it appears in your draft, not the purpose you know you intended. If you can't find the actual words, write down that you can't find them in this draft of the message—it's an important note to make!
2. Draw a line down the middle of the page, creating two columns below your message purpose.
3. Read, preferably out loud, the first body paragraph of your draft.
4. In the left column, write the single main idea of that paragraph (again, this should be using only the words that are actually on the page, not the ones you want to be on the page). If you find more than one main idea in a paragraph, write down all of them. If you can't find a main idea, write that down, too.
5. In the right column, state how the main idea of that paragraph supports the purpose.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for each body paragraph of the draft.

Once you have completed these steps, you have a reverse outline! It might look a little something like the reverse outline shown below.

Thesis: Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of The Hunger Games, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film.

Main idea

How it supports the thesis

Body #1: She volunteers to fight in the games.

This is the root of most of the immediate danger she finds herself in, so her directly volunteering to do it definitely helped put her in front of that danger.

Body #2: Shooting the apple out of the pig's mouth.

This draws more attention to her and essentially puts a target on her back the other tributes will very much want to hit.

Figure: An example of a reverse outline

Working with the Results of your Reverse Outline

Now what? You've probably already made some observations while completing this. Do you notice places where you are repeating yourself in your message? Do you notice places where some of your paragraphs have too many points or don't clearly support the purpose of the message?

There are a number of observations that can be made with the aid of a reverse outline, and a number of ways it can help you strengthen your messages.

If multiple paragraphs share the same idea

You might try combining them, reducing the information for that idea so your paper doesn't feel imbalanced, and/or organizing these paragraphs about the same point so they are next to each other in the paper.

If any paragraphs have multiple main ideas

Each paragraph should have only one primary focus. If you notice a paragraph does have more than one main idea, you could look for where some of those ideas might be discussed in other paragraphs and move them into a paragraph already focusing on that point. You could also select just the one main idea you think is most important to this paragraph and cut the other points out. Another option would be to split that paragraph into multiple paragraphs and expand on each main idea.

If any paragraph lacks a clear main idea

If it was hard for you to find the main idea of a paragraph, it will also be hard for your reader to find. For paragraphs that don't yet have a main idea, consider whether the information in that paragraph points to a main idea that just isn't written on the page yet. If the information does all support one main idea, adding that idea to the paragraph might be all that is needed. Alternatively, you may find that some of the ideas fit into other paragraphs to support their ideas, or you may not need some of them in the next draft at all.

If any ideas don't connect well to the purpose of the message

It should be clear how the main idea of each paragraph supports the purpose of the message. If that connection is not clear, ask yourself how the main idea of that paragraph does further your purpose and then write that response.

If there are gaps in reasoning

If a message starts out introducing something that is a problem in a community, then presents a solution to the problem, and then talks about why the problem is a problem, this organization is likely to confuse readers. Reorganizing to introduce the problem, discuss why it is a problem, and then move on to proposing a solution would do good work to help strengthen the next draft of this paper. If there are gaps in reasoning, you may need to move, revise, or add transition statements after moving paragraphs around.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Many students see revision as just checking spelling and grammar, but revision is about re-thinking the piece. The first draft is for you, so that you can get your thoughts down, and the second is for your audience. When you revise, think about your audience.
- When you revise, start with higher-order concerns. Don't be afraid to reorganize or even cut pieces and start over.
- After you've revised the big picture pieces, focus on editing (looking for punctuation, spelling and grammar mistakes), and then proofreading (taking one last look at your almost-finished document to make sure all the changes were made).

Activities for Further Reflection

- Organize a peer review session where students exchange drafts of their work and provide constructive feedback to each other.
- Develop a revision checklist that you can follow when submitting your final assignments this semester.
- Create a reverse outline of one of the papers that you are currently working on or have recently finished.
- Write reflection on your revision process including areas that you found uncomfortable and ways that you may improve your papers in the future using this process.

References

Meyer, C. (2017). *Communicating for results: A Canadian student's guide* (4th ed.). Don Mills, Canada: Oxford University Press.

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CHAPTER 12: COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS



In this section, you will:

- Discuss intrapersonal, interpersonal and intercultural communication
- Identify and solve conflict in the workplace
- Interpret team dynamics
- Describe Social Penetration Theory, the principles of self-disclosure, and the developmental view of interpersonal relationships
- Identify how culture influences communication, including common and divergent cultural characteristics

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- How do you typically approach interpersonal communication? What are your strengths and weaknesses in this area?
- Reflect on your use of feedback in interpersonal communication. How do you provide constructive feedback, and how do you receive it?
- Consider your communication in various contexts, such as professional, personal, and social. Are there areas where you need to adapt your communication style?
- Reflect on your cultural awareness. How aware are you of your own cultural background and biases, and how do they influence your communication with people from different cultures?

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

We communicate with each other to meet our needs, regardless of how we define those needs. From the time you are a newborn infant crying for food or the time you are a toddler learning to say “please” when requesting a cup of milk, to the time you are an adult learning the rituals of the job interview and the conference room, you learn to communicate in order to gain a sense of self within the group or community—meeting your basic needs as you grow and learn.

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages between two people whose lives mutually influence one another in unique ways in relation to social and cultural norms (University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, 2013). A brief exchange with a grocery store clerk who you don’t know wouldn’t be considered interpersonal communication, because you and the clerk are not influencing each other in significant ways. If the clerk were a friend, family member, coworker, or romantic partner, the communication would fall into the interpersonal category.

Aside from making your relationships and health better, interpersonal communication skills are highly sought after by potential employers, consistently ranking in the top ten in national surveys (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2010). Interpersonal communication meets our basic needs as humans for security in our social bonds, health, and careers. But we are not born with all the interpersonal communication skills we’ll need in life.

Social Penetration Theory

How do you get to know other people? If the answer springs immediately to mind, we’re getting somewhere: communication. Communication allows us to share experiences, come to know ourselves and others, and form relationships, but it requires time and effort. Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor describe this progression from superficial to intimate levels of communication in social penetration theory, which is often called the Onion Theory because the model looks like an onion and involves layers that are peeled away (Altman & Taylor, 1973). According to social penetration theory, we fear that which we do not know. That includes people. Strangers go from being unknown to known through a series of steps that we can observe through conversational interactions.

At the outermost layer of the onion, in this model, there is only that which we can observe. We can observe characteristics about each other and make judgments, but they are educated guesses at best. Our nonverbal displays of affiliation, like a team jacket, a uniform, or a badge, may communicate something about us, but we only peel away a layer when we engage in conversation.

As we move from public to private information we make the transition from small talk to substantial, and eventually intimate, conversations. Communication requires trust and that often takes time. Beginnings are fragile times and when expectations, roles, and ways of communicating are not clear, misunderstandings can occur.

According to the **social penetration theory**, people go from superficial to intimate conversations as trust develops through repeated, positive interactions. **Self-disclosure** is “information, thoughts, or feelings we tell others about

ourselves that they would not otherwise know” (McLean, 2005). Taking it step by step, and not rushing to self-disclose or asking personal questions too soon, can help develop positive business relationships. Figure 9.1 below, an image of onion layers resembles the process of building interpersonal communication relationships.

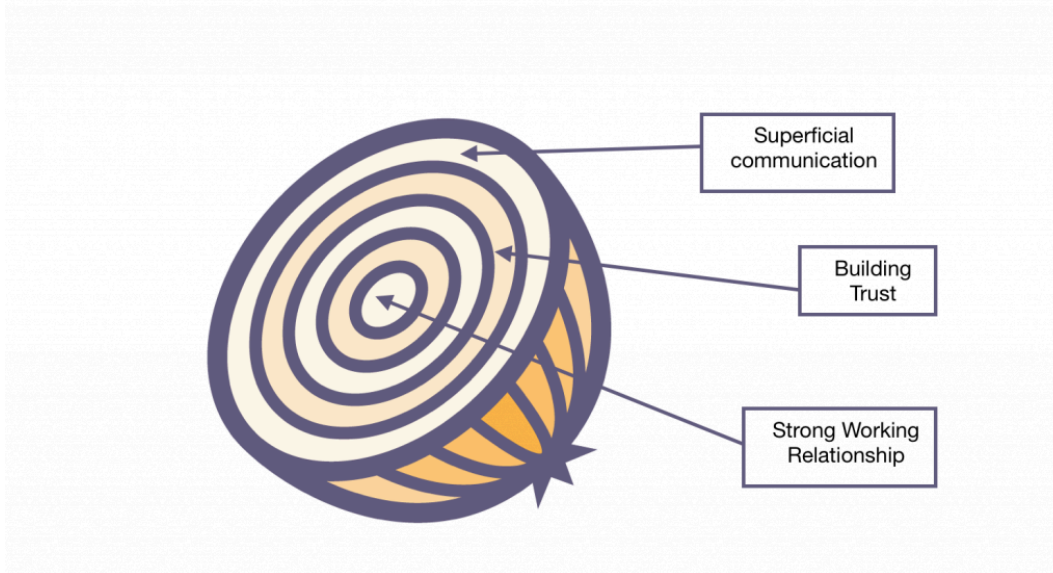


Figure 12.1 Layers of disclosure in interpersonal communication
[Image Description]

Principles of Self-Disclosure

From your internal monologue and intrapersonal communication, to verbal and nonverbal communication, communication is constantly occurring. What do you communicate about yourself by the clothes (or brands) you wear, the tattoos you display, or the piercing you remove before you enter the workplace? Self-disclosure is a process by which you intentionally communicate information to others, but can involve unintentional, but revealing slips.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal communication can be defined as communication between two people, but the definition fails to capture the essence of a relationship. This broad definition is useful when we compare it to intrapersonal communication, or communication with ourselves, as opposed to mass communication, or communication with a large audience, but it requires clarification. The developmental view of interpersonal communication places emphasis on the relationship rather than the size of the audience, and draws a distinction between impersonal and personal interactions.

For example, one day your coworker and best friend, who you know on a personal as well as a professional level, gets promoted to the position of manager. She didn't tell you ahead of time because it wasn't certain, and she didn't know how to bring up the possible change of roles. Your relationship will change as your roles transform. Her perspective will change, and so will yours. You may stay friends, or she may not have as much time as she once did. Over time, you and Iris gradually grow apart, spending less time together. You eventually lose touch. What is the status of your relationship?

If you have ever had even a minor interpersonal transaction such as buying a cup of coffee from a clerk, you know that some people can be personable, but does that mean you've developed a relationship? For many people that transaction is an impersonal experience, however pleasant. What is the difference between the brief interaction of a transaction and the interactions you periodically have with your colleague, who is now your manager?

The developmental view places an emphasis on the prior history, but also focuses on the level of familiarity and trust. Over time and with increased frequency we form bonds or relationships with people, and if time and frequency are diminished, we lose that familiarity. The relationship with the clerk may be impersonal, but so can the relationship with the manager after time has passed and the familiarity is lost. From a developmental view, interpersonal communication can exist across this range of experience and interaction.

Regardless of whether we focus on collaboration or competition, we can see that interpersonal communication is necessary in the business environment. We want to know our place and role within the organization, accurately predict those within our proximity, and create a sense of safety and belonging. Family for many is the first experience in interpersonal relationships, but as we develop professionally, our relationships at work may take on many of the attributes we associate with family communication. We look to each other with similar sibling rivalries, competition for attention and resources, and support. The workplace and our peers can become as close, or closer, than our birth families, with similar challenges and rewards.

To summarize, interpersonal relationships are an important part of the work environment. We come to know one another gradually (layer by layer). The principle of self-disclosure is a normal part of communication.

Image Description

Figure 12.1 image description: This diagram shows three layers inside an onion symbolizing interpersonal communication. The outermost layer represents superficial communication, the middle layer represents building trust and the innermost layer represents a strong working relationship. [\[Return to Figure 12.1\]](#)

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

First, let's define culture. **Culture** refers to the collection of language, values, beliefs, knowledge, rituals, and attitudes shared amongst a group ("Culture and Communication," 2002). Your college campus, for example, may have certain cultural elements (like a school song) that band students together toward similar beliefs and values.

Canada, more broadly, has certain cultural characteristics – celebrating Canada Day or being seen as polite and hockey-loving, for example. You don't, however, just belong to one or even two cultures. We are all influenced by multiple cultural norms and values.

Communication is cultural because cultures rely on symbols – the bedrock of communication – to determine the norms, expectations, and values within the group. This means two things:

- First, culture is created through the communication process. In other words, we use communication to negotiate (and create) our cultural values;
- Second, communication reflects the cultural values and norms of the people communicating. We can often glean what cultural values are present by looking at someone's communication.

When we communicate, we are relying on the cultural norms that we've been taught and, by using those symbols, advocating for those ideals.

When you are advocating for an idea and communicating why that idea matters, it's important not to assume that your cultural perspective or location is *the* best or only perspective (it's contextual, remember?!). Public speaking is a privilege – not everyone, every day is given an audience of people willing to listen to their ideas. So it's important, it matters, and it's meaningful.

So far, we've discussed public speaking as a form of advocacy and identified some core communication principles to keep in mind. There is one additional (albeit unwelcome) component that defines many speakers' experience with public speaking: apprehension. In the final major section of this chapter, we walk through communication apprehension.

Intercultural communication is communication between people with differing cultural identities. It is through intercultural communication that you come to create, understand, and transform culture and identity. One reason you should study intercultural communication is to foster greater self-awareness (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). An important aspect of intercultural communication is to become more aware of your own culture by better understanding other cultures and perspectives. Intercultural communication can allow you to step outside of your comfortable, usual frame of reference and see your culture through a different lens. Additionally, as you become more self-aware, you may also become more ethical communicators as you challenge your ethnocentrism, or your tendency to view your own culture as superior to other cultures.

Ethnocentrism, focusing your view of others' cultures through the lens of your own culture, makes you far less likely to be able to bridge the gap with others and often increases intolerance of difference.

Communication with yourself is called **intrapersonal** communication, which may also be intracultural, as you may only represent one culture. But most people belong to multiple groups, each with their own culture. Does a conversation with yourself ever involve competing goals, objectives, needs, wants, or values? How did you learn of those goals, or values? You may struggle with the demands of each group of people in your life, and their expectations and could consider this internal struggle intercultural conflict or simply intercultural communication.

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and you cannot separate yourself from it, even as you leave home. Every business or organization has a culture, and within what may be considered a global culture, there are many subcultures or co-cultures. For example, consider the difference between the sales and accounting departments in a corporation. You can quickly see two distinct groups with their own symbols, vocabulary, and values. Within each group, there may also be smaller groups, and each member of each department comes from a distinct background that in itself influences behaviour and interaction.

Intercultural communication is a fascinating area of study, and it is essential to your success. One idea to keep in mind as you examine this topic is the importance of considering multiple points of view. If you tend to dismiss ideas or views that are “unlike culturally,” you will find it challenging to learn about diverse cultures. If you cannot learn, how can you grow and be successful?

How to Understand Intercultural Communication

The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall is often cited as a pioneer in the field of intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Born in 1914, Hall spent much of his early adulthood in the multicultural setting of the American Southwest, where Native Americans, Spanish-speakers, and descendents of pioneers came together from diverse cultural perspectives. He then traveled the globe during World War II and later served as a U.S. State Department official. Where culture had once been viewed by anthropologists as a single, distinct way of living, Hall saw how the perspective of the individual influences interaction. By focusing on interactions rather than cultures as separate from individuals, he asked people to evaluate the many cultures they belong to or are influenced by, as well as those with whom they interacted. While his view makes the study of intercultural communication far more complex, it also brings a healthy dose of reality to the discussion. Hall is generally credited with eight contributions to the study of intercultural communication as follows:

1. Compare cultures. Focus on the interactions versus general observations of culture.
2. Shift to local perspective. Local level versus global perspective.
3. You don't have to know everything to know something. Time, space, gestures, and gender roles can be studied, even if we lack a larger understanding of the entire culture.
4. There are rules we can learn. People create rules for themselves in each community that we can learn from, compare, and contrast.
5. Experience counts. Personal experience has value in addition to more comprehensive studies of interaction and culture.
6. Perspectives can differ. Descriptive linguistics serves as a model to understand cultures, and the U.S. Foreign Service adopted it as a base for training.

7. Intercultural communication can be applied to international business. U.S. Foreign Service training yielded applications for trade and commerce and became a point of study for business majors.
8. It integrates the disciplines. Culture and communication are intertwined and bring together many academic disciplines (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; McLean, 2005).

Hall indicated that emphasis on a culture as a whole, and how it operated, might lead people to neglect individual differences. Individuals may hold beliefs or practice customs that do not follow their own cultural norm. When you resort to the mental shortcut of a stereotype, you lose these unique differences. **Stereotypes** can be defined as a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999).

The American psychologist Gordon Allport explored how, when, and why people formulate or use stereotypes to characterize distinct groups. When you do not have enough contact with people or their cultures to understand them well, you tend to resort to stereotypes (Allport, 1958).

As Hall notes, experience has value. If you do not know a culture, you should consider learning more about it firsthand if possible. The people you interact with may not be representative of the culture as a whole, but that is not to say that what you learn lacks validity. Quite the contrary; Hall asserts that you can, in fact, learn something without understanding everything, and given the dynamic nature of communication and culture, who is to say that your lessons will not serve you well? Consider a study abroad experience if that is an option for you, or learn from a classmate who comes from a foreign country or an unfamiliar culture. Be open to new ideas and experiences, and start investigating. Many have gone before you, and today, unlike in generations past, much of the information is accessible. Your experiences will allow you to learn about another culture and yourself, and help you to avoid prejudice.

Prejudice involves a negative preconceived judgment or opinion that guides conduct or social behaviour (McLean., 2005). As an example, imagine two people walking into a room for a job interview. You are tasked to interview both, and having read the previous section, you know that Allport (1958) rings true when he says we rely on stereotypes when encountering people or cultures with which we have had little contact. Will the candidates' dress, age, or gender influence your opinion of them? Will their race or ethnicity be a conscious or subconscious factor in your thinking process? Allport's work would indicate that those factors and more will make you likely to use stereotypes to guide your expectations of them and your subsequent interactions with them.

People who treat other with prejudice often make assumptions, or take preconceived ideas for granted without question, about the group or communities. As Allport illustrated, you often assume characteristics about groups with which you have little contact. Sometimes you also assume similarity, thinking that people are all basically similar. This denies cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and many other valuable, insightful differences.

Hall also introduced the concept of the cultural iceberg. He suggested that culture is comparable to an iceberg in that only about 10% of the iceberg is visible at any given time. A large part of the iceberg exists below the surface. Hall determined that surface culture is the culture that people see, with relatively low emotional level. This would include items like language, celebrations, food and dress. Deep culture consists of unspoken rules (with a very high emotional level), and unconscious rules (with an intense emotional level). Some examples of unspoken rules include rules of

conduct, courtesy, and concept of time. Some examples of unconscious rules are attitudes towards dependents and rules in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth. See the image below for further examples.



Figure 12.3 Iceberg Concept of Culture

Common Cultural Characteristics



Figure 12.4 Culture Characteristics [\[Image Description\]](#)

Groups come together, form cultures, and grow apart across time. How do you become a member of a community, and how do you know when you are full member? What aspects of culture do people have in common and how do they relate to business communication? Researchers who have studied cultures around the world have identified certain characteristics that define a culture. These characteristics are expressed in different ways, but they tend to be present in nearly all cultures.

Rites of Initiation

Cultures tend to have a ritual for becoming a new member. A newcomer starts out as a nonentity, a stranger, an unaffiliated person with no connection or even possibly awareness of the community. Newcomers who stay around and learn about the culture become members. Most cultures have a rite of initiation that marks the passage of the individual within the community; some of these rituals may be so informal as to be hardly noticed (e.g., the first time a coworker asks you to join the group to eat lunch together), while others may be highly formalized (e.g., the ordination of clergy in a religion). The nonmember becomes a member, the new member becomes a full member, and individuals rise in terms of responsibility and influence.

Across the course of your life, you have no doubt passed several rites of initiation but may not have taken notice of them. Did you earn a driver's license, register to vote, or acquire the permission to purchase alcohol? In North American culture, these three common markers indicate the passing from a previous stage of life to a new one, with new rights and responsibilities.

Rites of initiation mark the transition of the role or status of the individual within the group. Your first day on the job may have been a challenge as you learned your way around the physical space, but the true challenge was to learn how the group members communicate with each other. If you graduate from college with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, you will already have passed a series of tests, learned terms and theories, and possess a symbol of accomplishment in your diploma, but that only grants you the opportunity to look for a job—to seek access to a new culture.

Over time, the person comes to be an important part of the group, a “keeper of the flame.” The “flame” may not exist in physical space or time, but it does exist in the minds of those members in the community who have invested time and effort in the business. It is not a flame to be trusted to a new person, as it can only be earned with time. Along the way, there may be personality conflicts and power struggles over resources and perceived scarcity (e.g., there is only one promotion and everyone wants it). All these challenges are to be expected in any culture.

Common History and Traditions

Think for a moment about the history of a business like Tim Hortons—what are your associations with Tim Horton, the relationship between hockey, coffee, and donuts? Traditions form as the organization grows and expands, and stories are told and retold to educate new members on how business should be conducted. The history of every culture, of every corporation, influences the present. There are times when the phrase “we’ve tried that before” can become stumbling block for members of the organization as it grows and adapts to new market forces. There may be struggles between members who have weathered many storms and new members, who come armed with new educational perspectives, technological tools, or experiences that may contribute to growth.

Common Values and Principles

Cultures all hold values and principles that are commonly shared and communicated from older members to younger (or newer) ones. Time and length of commitment are associated with an awareness of these values and principles, so that new members, whether they are socialized at home, in school, or at work, may not have a thorough understanding of their importance.

Common Purpose and Sense of Mission

Cultures share a common sense of purpose and mission. Why are we here and whom do we serve? These are fundamental questions of the human condition that philosophers and theologians all over the world have pondered for centuries. In business, the answers to these questions often address purpose and mission, and they can be found in mission and vision statements of almost every organization. Individual members will be expected to acknowledge and share the mission and vision, actualize them, or make them real through action. Without action, the mission and vision statements are simply an arrangement of words. As a guide to individual and group behavioural norms, they can serve as a powerful motivator and a call to action. For example, Boeing Canada’s Purpose and Mission, and Aspiration statements are as follows:

Purpose and Mission: Connect, Protect, Explore and Inspire the World through Aerospace Innovation

Aspiration: Best in Aerospace and Enduring Global Industrial Champion

Based on these two statements, employees might expect a culture of innovation, quality, and safety as core to their work. What might those concepts mean in your everyday work if you were part of Boeing “culture?”

Common Symbols, Boundaries, Status, Language, and Rituals

Many people learn early in life what a stop sign represents, but not everyone knows what a ten-year service pin on a lapel, or a corner office with two windows means. Cultures have common symbols that mark them as a group; the knowledge of what a symbol stands for helps to reinforce who is a group member and who is not. Cultural symbols include dress, such as the Western business suit and tie. Symbols also include slogans or sayings, such as “Mr. Christie you make good cookies” or “Nooooobody”. The slogan may serve a marketing purpose but may also embrace a mission or purpose within the culture. Family crests and clan tartan patterns serve as symbols of affiliation. Symbols can also be used to communicate rank and status within a group.

Space is another common cultural characteristic; it may be a nonverbal symbol that represents status and power. In most of the world’s cultures, a person occupying superior status is entitled to a physically elevated position—a throne, a dais, a podium from which to address subordinates. Subordinates may be expected to bow, curtsy, or lower their eyes as a sign of respect. In business, the corner office may offer the best view with the most space. Movement from a cubicle to a private office may also be a symbol of transition within an organization, involving increased responsibility as well as power. Parking spaces, the kind of vehicle you drive, and the transportation allowance you have may also serve to communicate symbolic meaning within an organization.

The office serves our discussion on the second point concerning boundaries. Would you sit on your boss’s desk or sit in his chair with your feet up on the desk in his presence? Most people indicate they would not, because doing so would communicate a lack of respect, violate normative space expectations, and invite retaliation. Still, subtle challenges to authority may arise in the workplace. A less than flattering photograph of the boss at the office party posted to the recreational room bulletin board communicates more than a lack of respect for authority. By placing the image anonymously in a public place, the prankster clearly communicates a challenge, even if it is a juvenile one. Movement from the cubicle to the broom closet may be the result for someone who is found responsible for the prank. Again, there are no words used to communicate meaning, only symbols, but those symbols represent significant issues.

Communities have their own vocabulary and way in which they communicate. Consider the person who uses a sewing machine to create a dress and the accountant behind the desk; both are professionals and both have specialized jargon used in their field. If they were to change places, the lack of skills would present an obstacle, but the lack of understanding of terms, how they are used, and what they mean would also severely limit their effectiveness. Those terms and how they are used are learned over time and through interaction. While a textbook can help, it cannot demonstrate use in live interactions. Cultures are dynamic systems that reflect the communication process itself.

Cultures celebrate heroes, denigrate villains, and have specific ways of completing jobs and tasks. In business and industry, the emphasis may be on effectiveness and efficiency, but the practice can often be “because that is the way

we have always done it.” Rituals serve to guide our performance and behaviour and may be limited to small groups or celebrated across the entire company.

Rituals can serve to bind a group together, or to constrain it. Institutions tend to formalize processes and then have a hard time adapting to new circumstances. While the core values or mission statement may hold true, the method of doing things that worked in the past may not be as successful as it once was. Adaptation and change can be difficult for individuals and companies, and yet all communities, cultures, and communication contexts are dynamic, or always changing. As much as we might like things to stay the same, they will always change—and we will change with (and be changed by) them.

Divergent Cultural Characteristics

We are not all the same. Cultures reflect this diversity, and the divergent range of values, symbols, and meanings across communities. People have viewpoints, and they are shaped by their interactions with communities. Let’s examine several points of divergence across cultures.

Individualistic versus Collectivist Cultures

The Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede explored the concepts of individualism and collectivism across diverse cultures (Hofstede, 2005). He found that in individualistic cultures like the United States and Canada, people value individual freedom and personal independence, and perceive their world primarily from their own viewpoint. They perceive themselves as empowered individuals, capable of making their own decisions, and able to make an impact on their own lives.

Cultural viewpoint is not an either/or dichotomy, but rather a continuum or range. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collective viewpoint. Collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1982), including many in Asia and South America, and many Indigenous cultures, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures, property is almost exclusively private, while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, but that has been changing as business and organizations have purchased water rights and gained control over resources. How does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence? In the following sections these viewpoints will be examined.

Explicit-Rule Cultures versus Implicit-Rule Cultures

Do you know the rules of your business or organization? Did you learn them from an employee manual or by observing the conduct of others? Your response may include both options, but not all cultures communicate rules in the same way. In an explicit-rule culture, where rules are clearly communicated so that everyone is aware of them, the guidelines and agenda for a meeting are announced prior to the gathering. In an implicit-rule culture, where rules are often understood

and communicated nonverbally, there may be no agenda. Everyone knows why they are gathered and what role each member plays, even though the expectations may not be clearly stated. Power, status, and behavioural expectations may all be understood, and to the person from outside this culture, it may prove a challenge to understand the rules of the context.

Outsiders often communicate their “otherness” by not knowing where to stand, when to sit, or how to initiate a conversation if the rules are not clearly stated. While it may help to know that implicit-rule cultures are often more tolerant of deviation from the understood rules, the newcomer will be wise to learn by observing quietly—and to do as much research ahead of the event as possible.

Uncertainty-Accepting Cultures versus Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When people meet each other for the first time, they often use what they have previously learned to understand their current context. People also do this to reduce uncertainty. Some cultures, such as those found in Canada and Britain, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Whereas a Canadian business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese (1975) developed **Uncertainty Reduction theory** to examine this dynamic aspect of communication. Here are seven fundamentals of uncertainty:

1. There is a high level of uncertainty at first. As we get to know one another, our verbal communication increases and our uncertainty begins to decrease.
2. Following verbal communication, nonverbal communication increases, uncertainty continues to decrease, and more nonverbal displays of affiliation, like nodding one’s head to indicate agreement, will start to be expressed.
3. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, we tend to increase our information-seeking behaviour, perhaps asking questions to gain more insight. As our understanding increases, uncertainty decreases, as does the information-seeking behaviour.
4. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, the communication interaction is not as personal or intimate. As uncertainty is reduced, intimacy increases.
5. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, communication will feature more reciprocity, or displays of respect. As uncertainty decreases, reciprocity may diminish.
6. Differences between people increase uncertainty, while similarities decrease it.
7. Higher levels of uncertainty are associated with a decrease in the indication of liking the other person, while reductions in uncertainty are associated with liking the other person more.

Time Orientation

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1987) state that monochronic time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In monochromatic time, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochromatic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. Canada, Germany, and Switzerland are often noted as countries that value a monochromatic time orientation.

Polychromatic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time; business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, but when they actually begin may be another story. Also note that the dinner invitation for 8 p.m. may in reality be more like 9 p.m. If you were to show up on time, you might be the first person to arrive and find that the hosts are not quite ready to receive you.

When in doubt, always ask before the event; many people from polychromatic cultures will be used to a foreigner's tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

Short-Term versus Long-Term Orientation

Do you want your reward right now or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may work in a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Geert Hofstede discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a "time horizon," and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other countries, including Canada, have a more short-term approach to life and results. Indigenous peoples are known for holding a long-term orientation driven by values of deep, long-term reflection and community consultation.

If you work within a culture that has a short-term orientation, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honour, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Direct versus Indirect

In Canada, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. “What can I do for you?” is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state his or her business. In some cultures it is quite appropriate to make direct personal observation, such as “You’ve changed your hairstyle,” while for others it may be observed, but never spoken of in polite company. In indirect cultures, such as those in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, or family, or topics other than business as the partners gain a sense of each other, long before the topic of business is raised. Again, the skilled business communicator researches the new environment before entering it, as a social faux pas, or error, can have a significant impact.

Materialism versus Relationships

Members of a materialistic culture place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank. If you consider the plate of food before you, and consider the labour required to harvest the grain, butcher the animal, and cook the meal, you are focusing more on the relationships involved with its production than the foods themselves. Caviar may be a luxury, and it may communicate your ability to acquire and offer a delicacy, but it also represents an effort. Cultures differ in how they view material objects and their relationship to them, and some value people and relationships more than the objects themselves. The United States and Japan are often noted as materialistic cultures, while many Scandinavian nations feature cultures that place more emphasis on relationships.

Low-Power versus High-Power Distance

In low-power distance cultures, according to Hofstede (2009), people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example. In a high-power distance culture, you would probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. If you are working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem. Unless you are sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may lose valuable information.

Image Description

Figure 12.4 image description: This diagram is showing a large circle with the words Global Village in it and four surrounding circles with the words political, ethical, legal, and economic in them. [\[Return to Figure 12.4\]](#)

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Communication is a necessary skill for effective human interactions and the development of these skills reflects a process of lifelong learning
- Building trust can allow superficial communication to transition into stronger interpersonal relationships
- Recognizing that all aspects of communication are influenced by culture can help foster greater self-awareness, as well as challenge ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice
- Understanding of common cultural characteristics and divergent cultural characteristics can help us develop our intercultural communication skills

Activities for Further Reflection

- Conduct an interview with someone from a different cultural background than yours. Ask questions about cultural values, norms, and experiences.
- Write a reflection on your own cultural identity and how it influences your communication style. Consider how your cultural background has shaped your worldview.
- Think about a time when you have recently experienced conflict in an interpersonal relationship. How do you think the situation could have been handled differently?
- Compare and contrast cultural communication norms between two different cultures. Create a visual aid that shows your findings.

CHAPTER 13: PUBLIC SPEAKING & PRESENTATIONS



In this section, you will:

- Recognize the importance of oral presentations
- Identify the components of public speaking.
- Describe the topic of public speaking anxiety.
- Explain strategies to improve your own public speaking.

EXPLORE YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Consider the following questions.

- Think back to the most impactful speaker you've ever encountered? What made that person impactful? How did they deliver the message?
- What emotions come up when you think about giving an oral presentation? Why do you feel that way?
- If you have experience with a different language or culture, what similarities and differences do you notice in storytelling across cultures?

PUBLIC SPEAKING

In **public speaking**, a speaker attempts to move an audience by advocating for a purposeful message—through informing, persuading, or entertaining—in a particular context. In almost all cases, the speaker is the focus of attention for a specific amount of time. There may be some back-and-forth interaction, such as questions and answers with the audience, but the speaker usually holds the responsibility to direct that interaction either during or after the prepared speech has concluded. As the focus, speakers deliver sound arguments in a well-organized manner. Historically, public speaking was a face-to-face process, but public speaking can now be delivered and viewed digitally.

Broken down, public speaking includes these basic components:

- The sharing of a well-organized, well-supported, message from a designated speaker to an audience;
- In a context;
- Generally prepared;
- With purpose ranging from informative to persuasive to entertaining.

A speaker often feels strongly that the audience would benefit from the message presented. After all, public speaking is purposeful, so giving a speech is the process of providing a group of people with information that is useful and relevant. It may sound like a simple process, but it requires keen delivery – including attention to verbal and nonverbal skills – argument creation, research, and rehearsal to create a captivating experience for your audience. Public speaking is more than a message, it’s an experience.

Brené Brown is one speaker that creates an experience for her audience. You may be familiar with her TedTalk, “[The Power of Vulnerability](#)” from 2014 (she’s done some great stuff since then, too). She created a captivating experience with research around vulnerability, told stories that were intriguing, and used humour to draw the audience in —she advocated for ideas that were made meaningful to and for her audience.

We could, conversely, ask you to imagine a less-captivating public speaker. Sadly, we have these in our minds, too. These are often speakers who didn’t deliver information that you were compelled to listen to: they didn’t advocate that the information was of importance to you, to your community, or to other communities. Perhaps they gave you information that you already knew or had been disproven. Put simply: they didn’t create a meaningful experience.

What you advocate for and how you deliver your message are crucial to creating a captivating experience for your audience. Tracing public speaking back to its roots will underscore the historical relevance of public speaking as a form of advocacy.

Communication and Public Speaking

Communication is the basis of human interaction because we use communication to create shared meaning. We

negotiate this meaning through **symbols** – a word, icon, gesture, picture, object, etc.—that stand in for and represent a thing or experience. “Dog” is a symbol that represents adorable pets. When you see the symbol “dog,” you might picture your own dog, so that symbol has an additional layer of meaning for you. “Dog” also often represents pets as friends (or “humans’ best friend!”), so symbols can refer to literal objects or larger ideals and norms – it’s what makes communication both fascinating and, at times, complex.

The message that you create in your speech matters, because it both extends others’ information (like research) and constructs its own meaning. As communicators and public speakers, realizing that you are creating shared meaning may feel like added responsibility. And it is. It means that we are all responsible in thinking deeply about what we decide to speak about and how we decide to represent those ideas.

Power is thus a core consideration of communication because when we communicate, we are influencing others and selecting certain ways to represent our ideas. When you speak, you are elevating certain perspectives, and those often lead to the empowerment or disempowerment of people, places, things or ideas. Communicating is never neutral because meaning is always being negotiated. When you were a child, for example, a guardian may have looked at you angrily, and you knew to behave or there would be consequences. You are being nonverbally influenced and creating shared meaning with that guardian.

Meaning is being constituted (or created) when you’re in the audience, too. Because public speaking is an experience in a particular context, audience members also contribute to the meaning being shared. Consider these three scenarios (some of which you may have experienced). While someone is giving a formal speech:

- 3 front-row audience members are sleeping;
- 3 front-row audience members are providing positive, nonverbal feedback and taking notes;
- Someone is vacuuming loudly outside the room during the presentation.

These may sound familiar, and you may even experience these in class! Each scenario, however, does not communicate the same thing and all 3 will affect the public speaking experience – for the speaker and other audience members.

As humans, we are constantly communicating to make meaning with others. In public speaking, then, our advocacies are not just recreating information, but our speeches are active contributors to the world we live in. Our worlds, though, are never universal, and communication is also always contextual.

Contextual

Like we’ve mentioned, communication is humans trying to make meaning together. As you’ve experienced, though, that meaning is not received or understood the same all of the time. That’s because communication is **contextual**. It happens in a particular time and place.

Pretend, for example, that you want to break up with your partner. Communicating that desire over text message is a different context than a coffee shop or in a private apartment. As this example demonstrates, context refers to a specific

time and place – the literal context. You may decide that a private apartment is more fitting because a coffee shop may lend itself to external noise, changing the vibe, and disrupting your serious talk.

For public speaking, the time and place are similarly key considerations because that context will inform what you say, why, and for how long. Ask yourself,

- Where will I be speaking? To whom?
- What is the purpose?
- When is it taking place?
- Am I delivering the message through a live or mediated channel?

The literal context can have substantial implications for what and how you're able to communicate. For a public speaker, the place and space will dictate your movement, your presentation aids, and/or the length of your speech.

In addition to the literal context – the time and place – communication occurs within larger dialogues and contexts – historical and cultural.

A communication act – like a speech or interpersonal exchange – occurs in a particular historical context. Have you ever been to a family function where you didn't know that two family members were feuding? Perhaps you loudly commented on their behaviour jokingly, making the room silent and awkward. Unfortunately, you weren't aware of the larger context.

In Canada, major conversations are occurring at municipal, provincial and federal level to address climate change. These conversations may be occurring in your communities, too. If you were discussing or speaking about climate change, being aware of these conversations would situate you to enter the larger context. Are you up-to-date on the scientific findings? Is your community susceptible to certain climate change impacts? What about other communities?

As a communicator and public speaker, being attuned and informed about the larger context is paramount, because it will direct you toward an advocacy. What's relevant? What's important to consider now? What references or examples are timely?

Communication occurs in a context – the literal time and place and the larger historical conversations. The final component of communication is closely connected with context, and below, we explore communication as cultural.

Public Speaking Anxiety

Admittedly, thinking about advocacy or advocating for ideas can sound intimidating. Even experienced professors can feel anxiety before teaching. To advocate or present information to an audience – some more willing to listen actively than others – is a big responsibility. Understandably, this can lead speakers to experiencing apprehension while preparing and delivering a presentation. In this section, we explore public speaking apprehension while providing some useful tips to manage anxiety.

It's common to hear that public speaking is a fear, but why are so many people fearful to speak in public?

The first is fear of failure. This fear can result from several sources: real or perceived bad experiences involving public speaking in the past, lack of preparation, lack of knowledge about public speaking, not knowing the context, and uncertainty about one's task as a public speaker (such as being thrown into a situation at the last minute).

The second fear is fear of rejection of one's self or one's ideas. This one is more serious in some respects. You may feel rejection because of fear of failure, or you may feel that the audience will reject your ideas, or worse, you as a person.

Scholars at the University of Wisconsin-Stout ("Public Speaking Anxiety," 2015) explain that fear in public speaking can also result from one of several misperceptions:

- "all or nothing" thinking—a mindset that if your speech falls short of "perfection" (an unrealistic standard), then you are a failure as a public speaker;
- overgeneralization—believing that a single event (such as failing at a task) is a universal or "always" event; and
- fortune telling—the tendency to anticipate that things will turn out badly, no matter how much practice or rehearsal is done.

We often hold ourselves to "expert-level" standards. We learn that audience members look for proof of our credibility, and new public speakers may wonder, "why am I credible?" or "why should someone listen to me?" At the beginning of this chapter, we asked that you imagine your favourite public speaker, and they may have years of experience speaking in public. While it's important to view these speakers as informal mentors, it can also incite some anxiety. "Am I supposed to speak like them?" you may be wondering.

Likewise, many new college students operate under the false belief that intelligence and skill are "fixed." In their minds, a person is either smart or skilled in something, or they are not. Some students apply this false belief to math and science subjects, saying things like "I'm just no good at math and I never will be," or even worse, "I guess I am just not smart enough to be in college." As you can tell, these beliefs can ruin someone's college career. Unfortunately, the same kind of false beliefs are applied to public speaking, and people conclude that because public speaking is hard, they are just not "natural" at it and have no inborn skill. They give up on improving and avoid public speaking at all costs. The classroom is a cool space to begin building some foundational knowledge around public speaking. Have patience with yourself and trust the educational process.

Finally, we often experience students believing the incongruent ideas that public speaking (as a class) should be an "easy A" *and* that they'd rather die than give a speech. Instead, remember that good public speaking takes time and energy *because* it is difficult. Public speaking asks you to engage and advocate on behalf of yourselves and others who may not be able to access spaces to advocate for themselves.

Unlike writing an essay or posting a picture online, public speaking requires that your entire body deliver a message, and that can feel odd for many of us. Consequently, learning public speaking means you must train your body to be comfortable and move in predictable and effective ways. This all happens in front of other people: scary! This is difficult work, so of course it's viewed as fear-inducing for some.

Addressing Public Speaking Anxiety

If you have experienced some anxiety around speaking, you know that it can be merely aggravating or completely overwhelming. In this section, we provide some guidance and strategies to address public speaking apprehension.

Mental Preparation

Mental preparation is an important part of public speaking. To mentally prepare, you want to put your focus where it belongs, on the audience and the message. Mindfulness and full attention to the task are vital to successful public speaking. If you are concerned about a big exam or something personal going on in your life, your mind will be divided and add to your stress.

The main questions to ask yourself are “Why am I so anxious about giving a presentation?” and “What is the worst that can happen?” For example, you probably won’t know most of your classmates at the beginning of the course, adding to your anxiety. By midterm, you should be developing relationships with them and be able to find friendly faces in the audience. However, very often we make situations far worse in our minds than they actually are, and we can lose perspective.

Physical Preparation

The first step in physical preparation is adequate sleep and rest. You might be thinking, “Impossible! I’m in college.” However, research shows the extreme effects a lifestyle of limited sleep can have, far beyond yawning or dozing off in class (Mitru, Millrood, & Mateika, 2002). As far as public speaking is concerned, your energy level and ability to be alert and aware during the speech will be affected by lack of sleep.

Secondly, eat! Food is fuel, so making sure that you have a nutritious meal is a plus.

A third suggestion is to select what you’ll wear before the day you speak. Have your outfit picked out and ready to go, eliminating something to worry your mind the day-of.

A final suggestion for physical preparation is to utilize some stretching or relaxation techniques that will loosen your limbs or throat. Essentially, your emotions want you to run away but the social system says you must stay, so all that energy for running must go somewhere. The energy might go to your legs, hands, stomach, sweat glands, or skin, with undesirable physical consequences. Tightening and stretching your hands, arms, legs, and throat for a few seconds before speaking can help release some of the tension. Your instructor may be able to help you with these exercises, or you can find some online.

Contextual Preparation

The more you can know about the venue where you will be speaking, the better. For this class, of course, it will be your classroom, but for other situations you should check out the space beforehand or get as much information as possible. For example, if you were required to give a short talk for a job interview, you would want to know what the room will be

like, if there is equipment for projection, how large the audience will be, and the seating arrangements. If possible, you will want to practice your presentation in a room that is similar to the actual space where you will deliver it.

The best advice for contextual preparation is to be on time, even early. If you have to rush in at the last minute, as so many students do, you will not be mindful, focused, or calm for the speech.

Speech Preparation

Please, please, please, rehearse. You do not want the first time that you say the words to be when you are in front of your audience. Practicing is the only way that you will feel confident, fluent, and in control of the words you speak. Practicing (and timing yourself) repeatedly is also the only way that you will be assured that your speech meets the requirements of the context (length, for example).

Your practicing should be out loud, standing up, with shoes on, with someone to listen, if possible (other than your dog or cat), and with your visual aids. If you can record yourself and watch it, that is even better. If you do record yourself, make sure you record yourself from the feet up—or at least the hips up—so you can see your body language. The need for oral practice will be emphasized over and over in this book and probably by your instructor. As you progress as a speaker, you will always need to practice but perhaps not to the extent you do as a novice speaker.

As hard as it is to believe, YOU NEVER LOOK AS NERVOUS AS YOU FEEL. That's not to say that your audience won't see any signs of your anxiety and that you don't want to learn to control it, only that what you are feeling inside is not as visible as you might think. This principle relates back to focus. If you know you don't look as nervous as you feel, you can focus and be mindful of the message and audience rather than your own emotions.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Consider your favourite podcaster or podcast series. Despite being reliant on vocal delivery only, the presenters' voices paint an aesthetic picture as they walk us through stories around crime, murder, and betrayal. So, how do they do it? What keeps millions of people listening to podcasts and returning to their favourite verbal-only speakers? Is it how they say it? Is it the language they choose? All of these are important parts of effective vocal delivery.

Below, we begin discussing vocal delivery—language choices, projection, vocal enunciation, and more.

Language and Aesthetics

It was 5 p.m. As she looked out the smudged window over the Kansas pasture, the wind quickly died down and the rolling clouds turned a slight gray-green. Without warning, a siren blared through the quiet plains as she pulled her hands up to cover her ears. Gasping for breath, she turned toward the basement and flew down the stairs as the swirling clouds charged quickly toward the farm house.

What's happening in this story? What are you picturing? A treacherous tornado? A devastating storm rumbling onto a small Kansas farm? If so, the language in the story was successful.

Like this example demonstrates, the language that you use can assist audiences in creating a mental picture or image – creating a visualization is a powerful tool as a speaker.

Aesthetics is, certainly, based on how you deliver or embody your speech. But aesthetics also incorporates language choices and storytelling – techniques that craft a meaningful picture and encompass *how* you deliver the information or idea to your audience. In this section, we will explore vivid language, implementing rhetorical techniques, and storytelling as an aesthetic tool to create resonance with your audience.

Vivid Language

Vivid language evokes the senses and is language that arouses the sensations of smelling, tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling. Think of the word “ripe.” What is “ripe?” Do ripe fruits feel a certain way? Smell a certain way? Taste a certain way? Ripe is a sensory word. Most words just appeal to one sense, like vision. Think of colour. How can you make the word “blue” more sensory? How can you make the word “loud” more sensory? How would you describe the current state of your bedroom or dorm room to leave a sensory impression? How would you describe your favourite meal to leave a sensory impression?

In the opening Kansas storm example above, the author may want the audience to sense danger or a certain intensity

around the approaching tornado. To create that audience experience, you must craft language that emphasizes these elements.

When using vivid language, you're trying to bring those sensations to life in a way that can create a vivid experience for your audience. "How can I best represent this idea?" you might ask or "how can I best create a scenario where the audience feels like they're a part of the scene?"

Vivid language can take time to craft. As you work through your speech, determine where you'd like the audience to experience a particular sensation, and focus on integrating vivid language.

Remember that pathos is a persuasive appeal that is at your disposal, and using vivid language can assist in creating an emotional experience and sensation for the audience.

Rhetorical Techniques

There are several traditional techniques that have been used to engage audiences and make ideas more attention-getting and memorable. These are called rhetorical techniques. Although "rhetorical" is associated with persuasive speech, these techniques are also effective with other types of speeches. We suggest using alliteration, parallelism, and rhetorical tropes.

Alliteration is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in a sentence or passage. In his "I Have a Dream Speech," Dr. Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character." Do you notice how the consonant of "C" resounds throughout?

Parallelism is the repetition of sentence structures. It can be useful for stating your main ideas. Which one of these sounds better?

"Give me liberty or I'd rather die."

"Give me liberty or give me death."

The second one uses parallelism. Quoting again from JFK's inaugural address: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." The repetition of the three-word phrases in this sentence (including the word "any" in each) is an example of parallelism.

Tropes are a turning of the text where the literal meaning is changed or altered to provide new insight (Brummett, 2019). This is often referred to as figurative language, or using comparisons with objects, animals, activities, roles, or historical or literary figures. A literal statement would say, "The truck is fast." Figurative says, "The truck is as fast as..." or "The truck runs like..."

You are likely most familiar with the metaphor – one type of trope. **Metaphors** are direct comparisons, such as "When he gets behind the wheel of that truck, he is Kyle Busch at Daytona." Here are some more examples of metaphors:

Love is a battlefield.

Upon hearing the charges, the accused clammed up and refused to speak without a lawyer.

Every year a new crop of activists is born.

Note: while tropes, metaphors and similes can be useful tools, remember that neurodiverse members in your audience, or people who are not familiar with the Canadian context, may have trouble understanding you.

Similes are closely related to metaphors, and use “like” or “as” when crafting a comparison. “The truck runs like,” is the beginning of a simile.

Tropes are useful because they assist the audience in seeing an idea in a new way or a new light. This can be particularly helpful if you’re struggling to create a vivid experience but have been unsuccessful at evoking the senses. A metaphor can assist by comparing your argument with an idea that the audience is familiar with. If you’re trying to evoke a particular felt sense, make sure the compared idea can conjure up that particular feeling.

Whatever trope you use, the goal is to craft an interesting comparison or turn the text in a unique way that leads to great comprehension for the audience.

Researchers found that listeners (or, in this case, audience members) had greater aesthetic appreciation when figurative language (like a metaphor) was used compared to conventional, familiar rhetoric (Wimmer et al, 2016).

Storytelling

Stories and storytelling, in the form of anecdotes and narrative illustrations, are a powerful tool as a public speaker. For better or worse, audiences are likely to remember anecdotes and narratives long after a speech’s statistics are forgotten. Human beings love stories and will often will walk away from a speech moved by or remembering a powerful story or example.

So, what makes a good story?

As an art form, storytelling may include:

- Attention to sequence, or the order of the story;
- Embedding a dramatic quality (or using pathos);
- The use of imagery (or figurative language).

While there is no “one-model-fits-all” view of storytelling, we often know a good story when we hear one, and they are a helpful way to expand your argument and place it in a context.

If you have personal experience with an argument or advocacy that you select, it may be helpful to provide a short story for the audience that provides insight into what you know. Remember that anecdotes are a form of evidence, and we can feel more connected with an idea if the story is related to something a speaker has been through. For example, if you selected the impacts of cost of living increases as a speech advocacy, embedding a story about food bank usage may support your thesis statement and allow your audience to visualize what that might be like. It may draw them in to see a perspective that they hadn’t considered.

Similarly, consider the placement of your story. While your speech may rely on a longer narrative form as an organizational pattern, it’s more likely that you’ll integrate a short story within your speech. We most commonly recommend stories as:

- The attention getter
- Evidence within a main point
- A way to wrap up the speech and leave the audience with something meaningful to consider.

Stories, rhetorical techniques, and vivid language are important mechanisms to evoke language with aesthetics. In addition to what you say, verbal delivery also includes *how* you say it, including: vocal projection, verbal enunciation and punctuation, and vocal rate.

Projection

“Louder!”

You may have experienced a situation where an audience notified a speaker that they couldn’t be heard. “Louder!” Here, the audience is letting the speaker know to increase their **volume**, or the relative softness or loudness of one’s voice. In this example, the speaker needed to more fully project their vocals to fit the speaking-event space by increasing their volume. In a more formal setting, however, an audience may be skeptical to give such candid feedback, so it is your job to prepare.

Projection is a strategy to vocally *fill the space*; thus, the space dictates which vocal elements need to be adapted because every person in the room should comfortably experience your vocal range. If you speak too softly (too little volume or not projecting), your audience will struggle to hear and understand and may give up trying to listen. If you speak with too much volume, your audience may feel that you are yelling at them, or at least feel uncomfortable with you shouting. The volume you use should fit the size of the audience and the room.

Vocal Enunciation and Punctuation

Vocal enunciation is often reduced to pronouncing words correctly, but enunciation also describes the expression of words and language.

Have you ever spoken to a friend who replied, “Stop that! You’re mumbling.” If so, they’re signaling to you that they aren’t able to understand your message. You may have pronounced the words correctly but had indistinct enunciation of the words, leading to reduced comprehension.

One technique to increase enunciation occurs during speech rehearsal, and it’s known as the “dash” strategy: *e-nun-ci-ate e-ve-ry syll-a-bal in your pre-sen-ta-tion.*

The dashes signify distinct vocal enunciation to create emphasis and expression. However, don’t go overboard! The dash strategy is an exaggerated exercise, but it can lead to a choppy vocal delivery.

Instead, use the dash strategy to find areas where difficult and longer words need more punctuated emphasis and, through rehearsal, organically integrate those areas of emphasis into your presentational persona.

Verbal punctuation is the process of imagining the words as they’re written to insert purposeful, punctuated pauses to conclude key thoughts. Your speech is not a run-on sentence. Verbal punctuation allows decisiveness and avoids audiences wondering, “is this still the same sentence?”

Verbal punctuation is a strategy to minimize **vocalized fillers**, including common fillers of “like, and, so, uh.” Rather than use a filler to fill a vocal void in the speech, punctuate the end of the sentence through a decisive pause (like a period in writing!).

We know what you’re thinking: “there’s no way that reducing fillers is this easy.” You’re partially right. We all use vocalized fillers, particularly in informal conversation, but the more you rehearse purposeful punctuation and decisive endings to your well-crafted thoughts and arguments, the fewer filler words you will use.

It is also helpful to ask for input and feedback from friends, colleagues, or teachers. “What are my filler words?” We have listed common fillers, but you may unconsciously rely on different words. One author, for example, was never aware that they used “kind of” until a colleague pointed the filler out. Once you’re aware of your filler words, work to carefully, consciously, and meticulously try to catch yourself when you say it. “Consciously” is key here, because you need to bring an awareness about your fillers to the forefront of your brain.

Pace and Rate

How quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech is the **rate**. A slower rate may communicate to the audience that you do not fully know the speech. “Where is this going?” they may wonder. It might also be slightly boring if the audience is processing information faster than it’s being presented.

By contrast, speaking too fast can be overly taxing on an audience’s ability to keep up with and digest what you are saying.

It sometimes helps to imagine that your speech is a jog that you and your friends (the audience) are taking together. You (as the speaker) are setting the pace based on how quickly you speak. If you start sprinting, it may be too difficult for your audience to keep up and they may give up halfway through. Most people who speak very quickly know they speak quickly, and if that applies to you, just be sure to practice slowing down and writing yourself delivery cues in your notes to maintain a more comfortable rate.

You will want to maintain a good, deliberate rate at the beginning of your speech because your audience will be getting used to your voice. We have all called a business where the person answering the phone mumbles the name of the business in a rushed way. We aren't sure if we called the right number. Since the introduction is designed to get the audience's attention and interest in your speech, you will want to focus on clear vocal rate here.

You might also consider varying the rate depending on the type of information being communicated. While you'll want to be careful going too slow consistently, slowing your rate for a difficult piece of supporting material may be helpful. Similarly, quickening your rate in certain segments can communicate an urgency.

And although awkward, watching yourself give a speech via recording (or web cam) is a great way to gauge your natural rate and pace.

Vocal Pauses

The common misconception for public speaking students is that pausing during your speech is bad, but pausing (similar to and closely aligned with punctuation) can increase both the tone and comprehension of your argument. This is especially true if you are making a particularly important point or wanting a statement to have powerful impact: you will want to give the audience a moment to digest what you have said. You may also be providing new or technical information to an audience that needs additional time to absorb what you're saying.

For example, consider the following statement: "Because of issues like pollution and overpopulation, in 50 years the earth's natural resources will be so depleted that it will become difficult for most people to obtain enough food to survive." Following a statement like this, you want to give your audience a brief moment to fully consider what you are saying. Remember that your speech is often *ephemeral*: meaning the audience only experiences the speech once and in real time (unlike reading where an audience can go back).

Use audience nonverbal cues and feedback (and provide them as an audience member) to determine if additional pauses may be necessary for audience comprehension. Audiences are generally reactive and will use facial expressions and body language to communicate if they are listening, if they are confused, angry, or supportive.

Of course, there is such a thing as pausing too much, both in terms of frequency and length. Someone who pauses too often may appear unprepared. Someone who pauses too long (more than a few seconds) runs the risk of the audience feeling uncomfortable or, even worse, becoming distracted or letting their attention wander.

Pauses should be controlled to maintain attention of the audience and to create additional areas of emphasis.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Fear of public speaking comes from fear of failure or a fear of rejection. Preparing yourself mentally and physically, rehearsing your speech and understand your context will help you be effective.
- Effective public speakers use language aesthetics, storytelling and body language to bring their presentations to life.

Activities for Further Reflection

- Find an essay or project that you created in another class. Then, prepare a 3-minute presentation trying to make your audience care about the topic. Tell the story of your assignment. If possible, record your presentation and pay attention to body language, enunciation, and storytelling.
- Watch the first minute of a TED talk or other public speaking video. Then, write a short paragraph about how the speaker tries to hook the audience in. Consider voice, body language, visuals, storytelling and other elements.
- Think back to the last oral presentation that you did. How did it go? Write a very short letter to yourself giving some advice for improvement based on what you've learned.

APPENDIX 1: READINGS: EXAMPLES OF ESSAYS

A.1 Introduction to Sample Essays

Learning Objectives

- Identify the role of reading in the writing process
- Read examples of the rhetorical modes

While you read these essays, remember the purpose of the writing and pay attention to the following:

- **Thesis statement:** What is the author's main point of the essay? Identify the sentence and see how well it is supported throughout the essay.
- **Topic sentence:** How well does each topic sentence support the thesis, and how well does it describe the main idea of the following paragraph?
- **Supporting evidence:** Identify the evidence that the author uses to support the essay's main ideas, and gauge their credibility.

*Note: the citations and references are missing to give you an opportunity to practice identifying when and where citations are required.

The best way to become a better writer is to become a closer reader. As you read each essay carefully take note of the content and the structure as well as the thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting evidence. These should shape your response to the essay and should also shape your writing.

A.2 Narrative Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the narrative rhetorical mode

My Post-Secondary Education

The first class I went to in my post-secondary education was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” I was extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

I entered my post-secondary studies intending to earn a degree in engineering. I always liked the way mathematics had right and wrong answers. I understood the logic and was very good at it. When I received my first philosophy assignment that asked me to write my interpretation of the Camus essay, I was instantly confused. What is the right way to do this assignment, I wondered. I was nervous about writing an incorrect interpretation and did not want to get my first assignment wrong. Even more troubling was that the professor refused to give us any guidelines on what he was looking for; he gave us total freedom. He simply said, “I want to see what you come up with.”

Full of anxiety, I first set out to read Camus’s essay several times to make sure I really knew what it was about. I did my best to take careful notes, yet even after I took all these notes and knew the essay inside and out, I still did not know the right answer. What was my interpretation? I could think of a million different ways to interpret the essay, but which one was my professor looking for? In math class, I was used to examples and explanations of solutions. This assignment gave me nothing; I was completely on my own to come up with my individual interpretation.

Next, when I sat down to write, the words just did not come to me. My notes and ideas were all present, but the words were lost. I decided to try every prewriting strategy I could find. I brainstormed, made idea maps, and even wrote an outline. Eventually, after a lot of stress, my ideas became more organized and the words fell on the page. I had my interpretation of “The Myth of Sisyphus,” and I had my main reasons for interpreting the essay. I remember being unsure of myself, wondering if what I was saying made sense, or if I was even on the right track. Through all the uncertainty, I continued writing the best I could. I finished the conclusion paragraph, had my spouse proofread it for errors, and turned it in the next day simply hoping for the best.

Then, a week or two later, came judgment day. The professor gave our papers back to us with grades and comments. I remember feeling simultaneously afraid and eager to get the paper back in my hands. It turned out, however, that I had nothing to worry about. The professor gave me an A on the paper, and his notes suggested that I wrote an effective essay overall. He wrote that my reading of the essay was very original and that my thoughts were well organized. My relief and newfound confidence upon reading his comments could not be overstated.

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a post-secondary school paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and courage to try a new

career path. I left engineering and went on to study law and eventually became a lawyer. More importantly, that class and paper helped me understand education differently. Instead of seeing post-secondary studies as a direct stepping stone to a career, I learned to see those studies as a place to first learn and then seek a career or enhance an existing career. By giving me the space to express my own interpretation and to argue for my own values, my philosophy class taught me the importance of education for education's sake. That realization continues to pay dividends every day.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingsuccessc2/?p=295#h5p-83>

H5P: Notes on Sample Essays

- Thesis statement.
- Topic sentence.
- Supporting evidence.
- Citations.

A.3 Illustration Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the illustration rhetorical mode

Letter to the City

To: Lakeview Department of Transportation

From: A Concerned Citizen

The intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street is dangerous and demands immediate consideration for the

installation of a controlling mechanism. I have lived in Lakeview my entire life, and during that time, I have witnessed too many accidents and close calls at that intersection. I would like the Department of Transportation to answer this question: how many lives have to be lost on the corner of Central Avenue and Lake Street before a street light or stop sign is placed there?

Over the past twenty years, the population of Lakeview has increased dramatically. This population growth has put tremendous pressure on the city's roadways, especially Central Avenue and its intersecting streets. At the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street, it is easy to see how serious this problem is. For example, when I try to cross Central Avenue as a pedestrian, I frequently wait over ten minutes for the cars to clear, and even then, I must rush to the median. I will then have to continue to wait until I can finally run to the other side of the street. On one hand, even as a physically fit adult, I can run only with significant effort and care. Expecting a senior citizen or a child to cross this street, on the other hand, is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. I am concerned the city does not have any plans to do something about this.

Recent data show that the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street has been especially dangerous. According to the city's own statistics, three fatalities occurred at that intersection in the past year alone. Over the past five years, the intersection witnessed fourteen car accidents, five of which were fatal. These numbers officially qualify the intersection as the most fatal and dangerous in the entire province. It should go without saying that fatalities and accidents are not the clearest way of measuring the severity of this situation because for each accident that happens, countless other close calls never contribute to city data. I hope you will agree that these numbers alone are sufficient evidence that the intersection at Central Avenue and Lake Street is hazardous and demands immediate attention.

Nearly all accidents mentioned are caused by vehicles trying to cross Central Avenue while driving on Lake Street. I think the City of Lakeview should consider placing a traffic light there to control the traffic going both ways. While I do not have access to any resources or data that can show precisely how much a traffic light can improve the intersection, I think you will agree that a controlled busy intersection is much safer than an uncontrolled one. Therefore, at a minimum, the city must consider making the intersection a four way stop.

Each day that goes by without attention to this issue is a lost opportunity to save lives and make the community a safer, more enjoyable place to live. Because the safety of citizens is the priority of every government, I can only expect that the Department of Transportation and the City of Lakeview will act on this matter immediately. For the safety and well-being of Lakeview citizens, please do not let bureaucracy or money impede this urgent project.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen



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- Thesis statement.
- Topic sentence.
- Supporting evidence.
- Citations.

A.4 Descriptive Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the descriptive rhetorical mode

Canada's Pastime

As the coldness hits my face and I breathe in the invigorating air, I temporarily forget that I am at a sporting event. However, when I open my eyes and look around, I am reminded of all things Canadian. From the national anthem to the international players on the ice, all the sights and sounds of a hockey game come together like a big forkful of poutine.

First, the entrance turnstiles click and clank, and then a hallway of noise bombards me. All the fans' voices coalesce in a chorus of sound, rising to a humming clamour. The occasional, "Programs, get your programs, here!" jumps out through the hum to get my attention. I navigate my way through the crowded walkways of the arena, moving to the right of some people, to the left of others, and I eventually find the section number where my seat is located. As I approach my seat, I hear the announcer's voice echo around the arena, "Attention fans. In honour of our country, please stand for the singing of the national anthem." His deep voice echoes around each angle of the arena, and every word is heard again and again. The crowd sings and hums "O Canada," and I feel a surprising amount of national pride through the voices. I take my seat as the referee drops the puck, and the game begins.

Late in the second period of the game, I decide to find a concessions stand. The smell of hot dogs carries through the arena, down every aisle, and inside every concourse. They are always as unhealthy as possible, dripping in grease, while the buns are soft and always too small for the dog. The best way to wash down a hot dog is with a large pop, so I order both.

Doing my best to balance the cold pop in one hand and the wrapped up dog in the other, I find the nearest condiments stand to load up my hot dog. A dollop of bright green relish and chopped onions, along with two squirts of the ketchup and mustard complete the dog. As I continue the balancing act between the loaded hot dog and pop back to my seat, a cheering fan bumps into my pop hand. The pop splashes out of the cup and all over my shirt, leaving me drenched. I make direct eye contact with the man who bumped into me and he looks me in the eye, looks at my shirt, tells me how sorry he is, and then I just shake my head and keep walking. “It’s all just part of the experience,” I tell myself.

Before I am able to get back to my seat, I hear the thud of someone hitting the glass, followed by an uproar from the crowd. Everyone is standing, clapping, and cheering. I missed a goal. I find my aisle and ask everyone to excuse me as I slip past them to my seat. “Excuse me. Excuse me. Thank you. Thank you. Sorry,” is all I can say as I inch past each fan. Halfway to my seat, I can hear discarded food wrappers crunch beneath my feet, and each step is marked with a pronounced crunch.

When I finally get to my seat, I realize it is the start of the intermission. I quickly eat my hot dog and wash it down with what is left of my pop. The organ starts playing and everyone begins to sing “We Will Rock You.” While singing the song, putting my arms around friends and family with me, I watch all the players taking the ice. It is wonderful to see the overwhelming amount of players on one team from around the world: Russia, the United States, Canada, and Finland. I cannot help but feel a bit of national pride at this realization. Seeing the international representation on the ice reminds me of the ways that Canadians, though from many different backgrounds and places, still come together under common ideals. For these reasons and for the whole experience in general, going to a National Hockey League game is the perfect way to glimpse a slice of Canadiana.



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H5P: Notes on Sample Essays

- Thesis statement.
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- Supporting evidence.
- Citations.

A.5 Classification Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the classification rhetorical mode

Types of Higher Education Programs

Today's students have many choices when it comes to pursuing a degree: four year programs, two year programs, large or small classroom settings, and even daytime or evening classes. With all the different options to consider, potential students should learn about the different types of post-secondary institutions, so they can find a school that best fits their personality, budget, and educational goals.

One type of higher education program for students to consider is a liberal arts college. These schools tend to be small in size and offer a range of undergraduate degrees in subjects like English, history, psychology, and education. Students may choose a liberal arts college if they want a more intimate classroom setting rather than large lecture style classes. Students may also consider a liberal arts college if they want to gain knowledge from a variety of disciplines, rather than focus on a single area of study. Liberal arts schools can come with a hefty price tag, and their high cost presents an obstacle for students on a tight budget; moreover, while some students might appreciate a liberal arts school's intimate atmosphere, others might encounter a lack of diversity in the student body. Still, students seeking a well-rounded education in the humanities will find liberal arts schools to be one option.

Universities, another type of higher education program, offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Usually universities are larger than colleges and can accommodate tens of thousands of students in many different majors and areas of study. A large student body means that class sizes are often larger, and some classes may be taught by graduate students rather than professors. Students will feel at home at a university if they want a focused academic program and state of the art research facilities. While some universities are private, many are public, which means they receive funding from the government, so tuition is more affordable and some even offer discounted in state tuition for state residents. Also, universities attract many international students, so those looking for a variety of campus cultural groups and clubs will appreciate a greater sense of diversity among the student body. Universities can be overwhelming for some, but they are the right fit for students who seek research opportunities and academic studies, especially in the fields of mathematics and science.

Community college is a type of higher education program popular with students on a limited budget who want to take college courses but may not know what they want to major in. Most schools offer degrees after two years of study, usually a diploma that prepares students to enter the work force; many students choose to study at a community college for two

years and then transfer to a four year college to complete their undergraduate degree. Like liberal arts schools, classes are small and allow instructors to pay more attention to their students. Community college allows students to live at home rather than in a dormitory, which also keeps costs down. While some young people might not like the idea of living at home for school, many adults choose to attend community college, so they can advance their education while working and living with their families.

Online universities are another type of higher education program that are gaining popularity as technology improves. These schools offer many of the same degree programs as traditional liberal arts colleges and universities. Unlike traditional programs, which require students to attend classes and lectures, online universities offer greater academic flexibility and are a great option for students wishing to pursue a degree while still working full time. At online universities, students access course materials, such as video lectures and assessments, remotely using a personal computer and are able to speed up or slow down their progress to complete their degree at their own pace. Students may attend classes in the comfort of their own home or a local library, but students hoping for the social community of higher education might not enjoy this aspect of higher education.

With so many colleges and universities to choose from, it may be difficult for a student to narrow down his or her selection, but once a student knows what he or she is looking for, the process may become much easier. It is very important for students to learn about the different types of higher education programs available before making their selections.



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- Thesis statement.
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- Supporting evidence.
- Citations.

A.6 Process Analysis Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the process analysis rhetorical mode

How to Grow Tomatoes from a Seedling

Growing tomatoes is a simple and rewarding task, and more people should be growing them. This paper walks readers through the main steps for growing and maintaining patio tomatoes from a seedling.

The first step in growing tomatoes is determining if you have the appropriate available space and sunlight to grow them. All tomato varieties require full sunlight, which means at least six hours of direct sun every day. If you have south facing windows or a patio or backyard that receives direct sunlight, you should be able to grow tomatoes. Choose the location that receives the most sun.

Next, you need to find the right seedling. Growing tomatoes and other vegetables from seeds can be more complicated (though it is not difficult), so I am only discussing how to grow tomatoes from a seedling. A seedling, for those who do not know, is typically understood as a young plant that has only recently started growing from the seed. It can be anything from a newly germinated plant to a fully flowering plant. You can usually find tomato seedlings at your local nursery for an affordable price. Less than five dollars per plant is a common price. When choosing the best seedling, look for a plant that is short with healthy, full leaves and no flowers. This last point tends to be counterintuitive, but it is extremely important. You do not want a vegetable plant that has already started flowering in the nursery because it will have a more difficult time adapting to its new environment when you replant it. Additionally, choose a plant with one strong main stem. This is important because the fewer stems that a tomato plant has, the more easily it can transport nutrients to the fruit. Multiple stems tend to divide nutrients in less efficient ways, often resulting in either lower yields or smaller fruit.

Once you have found the right seedlings to plant back home, you need to find the best way of planting them. I recommend that you plant your tomatoes in containers. If you have the space and sunlight, then you can certainly plant them in the ground, but a container has several advantages and is usually most manageable for the majority of gardeners. The containers can be used in the house, on a patio, or anywhere in the backyard, and they are portable. Containers also tend to better regulate moisture and drain excess water. Choose a container that is at least 10 inches in diameter and at least 1 foot deep. This will provide sufficient room for root development.

In addition to the container, you also need the appropriate soil mixture and draining mechanisms. For the best drainage, fill the bottom of your container with 2 or 3 inches of gravel. On top of the gravel, fill $\frac{3}{4}$ of the container with soil. Choose

a well-balanced organic soil. The three main ingredients you will find described on soil bags are N-P-K—that is, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Without going into too much detail about the role of each element in plant growth, I will tell you that an average vegetable will grow fine in a 10-5-5 mixture. This ratio, too, will be easy to find at your local nursery.

Once you have the gravel in the bottom of the container and the soil on top, you are ready to transplant the tomato. Pick up the tomato in the plastic container it comes in from the nursery. Turn it upside down, and holding the stem between your fingers, pat the bottom lightly several times, and the plant should fall into your hand. Next, you should gently break up the root ball that formed in the nursery container with your hands. Be gentle, but be sure to rip them up a bit; this helps generate new root growth in the new container. Be careful not to damage the roots too much, as this could stunt the growth or even destroy the plant altogether.

Next, carve out a hole in the soil to make space for the plant. Make it deep enough to go about an inch higher than it was previously buried and wide enough so all the roots can comfortably fit within and beneath it. Place the seedling in the hole and push the removed soil back on top to cover the base of the plant. After that, the final step in planting your tomato is mulch. Mulch is not necessary for growing plants, but it can be very helpful in maintaining moisture, keeping out weeds, and regulating soil temperature. Place 2–3 inches of mulch above the soil and spread it out evenly.

Once the mulch is laid, you are mostly done. The rest is all watering, waiting, and maintenance. After you lay the mulch, pour the plant a heavy amount of water. Water the plant at its base until you see water coming through the bottom of the container. Wait ten minutes, and repeat. This initial watering is very important for establishing new roots. You should continue to keep the soil moist but never soaking wet. One healthy watering each morning should be sufficient for days without rain. You can often forego watering on days with moderate rainfall. Watering in the morning is preferable to the evening because it lessens mold and bacteria growth.

Choosing to grow the patio variety of tomatoes is easiest because patio tomatoes do not require staking or training around cages. They grow in smaller spaces and have a determinate harvest time. As you continue to water and monitor your plant, prune unhealthy looking leaves to the main stem and cut your tomatoes down at the stem when they ripen to your liking. As you can see, growing tomatoes can be very easy and manageable for even novice gardeners. The satisfaction of picking and eating fresh food and doing it yourself, outweighs all the effort you put in over the growing season.



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- Thesis statement.
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- Citations.

A.7 Definition Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the definition rhetorical mode

Defining Good Students Means More than Just Grades

Many people define good students as those who receive the best grades. While it is true that good students often earn high grades, grades are just one aspect of how we define a good student. In fact, even poor students can earn high grades sometimes, so grades are not the best indicator of a student's quality. Rather, a good student pursues scholarship, actively participates in class, and maintains a positive, professional relationship with instructors and peers.

Good students have a passion for learning that drives them to fully understand class material rather than just worry about what grades they receive in the course. Good students are actively engaged in scholarship, which means they enjoy reading and learning about their subject matter not just because readings and assignments are required. Of course, good students will complete their homework and all assignments, and they may even continue to perform research and learn more on the subject after the course ends. In some cases, good students will pursue a subject that interests them but might not be one of their strongest academic areas, so they will not earn the highest grades. Pushing oneself to learn and try new things can be difficult, but good students will challenge themselves rather than remain at their educational comfort level for the sake of a high grade. The pursuit of scholarship and education rather than concern over grades is the hallmark of a good student.

Class participation and behaviour are another aspect of the definition of a good student. Simply attending class is not enough; good students arrive punctually because they understand that tardiness disrupts the class and disrespects the professors. They might occasionally arrive a few minutes early to ask the professor questions about class materials or

mentally prepare for the day's work. Good students consistently pay attention during class discussions and take notes in lectures rather than engage in off task behaviours, such as checking their cell phones or daydreaming. Excellent class participation requires a balance between speaking and listening, so good students will share their views when appropriate but also respect their classmates' views when they differ from their own. It is easy to mistake quantity of class discussion comments with quality, but good students know the difference and do not try to dominate the conversation. Sometimes class participation is counted toward a student's grade, but even without such clear rewards, good students understand how to perform and excel among their peers in the classroom.

Finally, good students maintain a positive and professional relationship with their professors. They respect their instructor's authority in the classroom as well as the instructor's privacy outside of the classroom. Prying into a professor's personal life is inappropriate, but attending office hours to discuss course material is an appropriate, effective way for students to demonstrate their dedication and interest in learning. Good students go to their professor's office during posted office hours or make an appointment if necessary. While instructors can be very busy, they are usually happy to offer guidance to students during office hours; after all, availability outside the classroom is a part of their job. Attending office hours can also help good students become memorable and stand out from the rest, particularly in lectures with hundreds enrolled. Maintaining positive, professional relationships with professors is especially important for those students who hope to attend graduate school and will need letters of recommendation in the future.

Although good grades often accompany good students, grades are not the only way to indicate what it means to be a good student. The definition of a good student means demonstrating such traits as engaging with course material, participating in class, and creating a professional relationship with professors. While every professor will have different criteria for earning an A in their course, most would agree on these characteristics for defining good students.



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A.8 Compare and Contrast Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the compare and contrast rhetorical mode

Comparing and Contrasting London and Washington, DC

Both Washington, DC, and London are capital cities of English speaking countries, yet they offer vastly different experiences to their residents and visitors. Comparing and contrasting the two cities based on their history, their culture, and their residents show how different and similar the two are.

Both cities are rich in world and national history, though they developed on very different time lines. London, for example, has a history that dates back over two thousand years. It was part of the Roman Empire and known by the similar name, Londinium. It was not only one of the northernmost points of the Roman Empire but also the epicenter of the British Empire where it held significant global influence from the early sixteenth century on through the early twentieth century. Washington, DC, on the other hand, has only formally existed since the late eighteenth century. Though Native Americans inhabited the land several thousand years earlier and settlers inhabited the land as early as the sixteenth century, the city did not become the capital of the United States until the 1790s. From that point onward to today, however, Washington, DC, has increasingly maintained significant global influence. Even though both cities have different histories, they have both held, and continue to hold, significant social influence in the economic and cultural global spheres.

Both Washington, DC, and London offer a wide array of museums that harbour many of the world's most prized treasures. While Washington, DC, has the National Gallery of Art and several other Smithsonian galleries, London's art scene and galleries have a definite edge in this category. From the Tate Modern to the British National Gallery, London's art ranks among the world's best. This difference and advantage has much to do with London and Britain's historical depth compared to that of the United States. London has a much richer past than Washington, DC, and consequently has a lot more material to pull from when arranging its collections. Both cities have thriving theatre districts, but again, London wins this comparison, too, both in quantity and quality of theatre choices. With regard to other cultural places like restaurants, pubs, and bars, both cities are very comparable. Both have a wide selection of expensive, elegant restaurants as well as a similar amount of global and national chains. While London may be better known for its pubs and taste in beer, DC offers a different bar going experience. With clubs and pubs that tend to stay open later than their British counterparts, the DC night life tend to be less reserved overall.

Both cities also share and differ in cultural diversity and cost of living. Both cities share a very expensive cost of

living—both in terms of housing and shopping. A downtown one bedroom apartment in DC can easily cost \$1,800 per month, and a similar “flat” in London may double that amount. These high costs create socioeconomic disparity among the residents. Although both cities’ residents are predominantly wealthy, both have a significantly large population of poor and homeless. Perhaps the most significant difference between the resident demographics is the racial makeup. Washington, DC, is a “minority majority” city, which means the majority of its citizens are races other than white. In 2009, according to the US Census, 55 percent of DC residents were classified as “Black or African American” and 35 percent of its residents were classified as “white.” London, by contrast, has very few minorities—in 2006, 70 percent of its population was “white,” while only 10 percent was “black.” The racial demographic differences between the cities is drastic.

Even though Washington, DC, and London are major capital cities of English speaking countries in the Western world, they have many differences along with their similarities. They have vastly different histories, art cultures, and racial demographics, but they remain similar in their cost of living and socioeconomic disparity.



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A.9 Cause and Effect Essay

Learning Objectives

- Read an example of the cause and effect rhetorical mode

Effects of Video Game Addiction

Video game addiction is a serious problem in many parts of the world today and deserves more attention. It is no secret that children and adults in many countries throughout the world, including Japan, China, the United States, and Canada play video games every day. Most players are able to limit their usage in ways that do not interfere with their daily lives, but many others have developed an addiction to playing video games and suffer detrimental effects.

An addiction can be described in several ways, but generally speaking, addictions involve unhealthy attractions to substances or activities that ultimately disrupt the ability of a person to keep up with regular daily responsibilities. Video game addiction typically involves playing games uncontrollably for many hours at a time—some people will play only four hours at a time while others cannot stop for over twenty four hours. Regardless of the severity of the addiction, many of the same effects will be experienced by all.

One common effect of video game addiction is isolation and withdrawal from social experiences. Video game players often hide in their homes or in Internet cafés for days at a time—only reemerging for the most pressing tasks and necessities. The effect of this isolation can lead to a breakdown of communication skills and often a loss in socialization. While it is true that many games, especially massive multiplayer online games, involve a very real form of e-based communication and coordination with others, and these virtual interactions often result in real communities that can be healthy for the players, these communities and forms of communication rarely translate to the types of valuable social interaction that humans need to maintain typical social functioning. As a result, the social networking in these online games often gives the users the impression that they are interacting socially, while their true social lives and personal relations may suffer.

Another unfortunate product of the isolation that often accompanies video game addiction is the disruption of the user's career. While many players manage to enjoy video games and still hold their jobs without problems, others experience challenges at their workplace. Some may only experience warnings or demerits as a result of poorer performance, or others may end up losing their jobs altogether. Playing video games for extended periods of time often involves sleep deprivation, and this tends to carry over to the workplace, reducing production, and causing habitual tardiness.

Video game addiction may result in a decline in overall health and hygiene. Players who interact with video games for such significant amounts of time can go an entire day without eating and even longer without basic hygiene tasks, such as using the restroom or bathing. The effects of this behaviour pose significant danger to their overall health.

The causes of video game addiction are complex and can vary greatly, but the effects have the potential to be severe. Playing video games can and should be a fun activity for all to enjoy. But just like everything else, the amount of time one spends playing video games needs to be balanced with personal and social responsibilities.



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