Putting the Pieces Together

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Reason and Writing for Success

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Acknowledgements

About this Textbook

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If sections of this resource appear to contain several writing and/or voice styles, that's intentional! As a compilation, we have attempted to gather sources that reflect and reinforce the core teaching and learning methodologies we use in our reason and writing curriculum.

Original Sources

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About this Book

Putting the Pieces Together: Reason and Writing for Success is a text that provides instruction in steps, builds writing, reading, and critical thinking, and combines a comprehensive grammar review with an introduction to paragraph writing and composition.

Organization

This textbook is divided into four major units and three appendices designed to guide first-year college students who have a high school education or equivalency and support non-native English speakers through the steps toward proficiency in English writing for Canadian college success.

Unit 1: Writing Content
Unit 2: Writing Organization
Unit 3: Writing Style
Unit 4: Writing Mechanics

Appendices

Appendix A: Appendix A: Writing Supports for EAP
Appendix B: Appendix B: Examples of Essays
Appendix C: Appendix C: Documentation

Beginning with the sentence and its essential elements, this book addresses each concept with clear, concise, and effective examples that are immediately reinforced with exercises and opportunities to demonstrate and reinforce learning.

Each unit allows students to demonstrate mastery of the principles of quality writing. With its incremental approach, it can address a range of writing levels and abilities, helping each student in your course prepare for their next writing or university course. Examples and exercises constantly reinforce learning. The text involves students in the learning process through reading, problem-solving, practicing, listening, and experiencing the writing process.

Each chapter also has integrated examples that unify the discussion and form a common, easy-to-understand basis for discussion and exploration. This will put students at ease, and allow for greater absorption of the material.

Writting Tips

Every chapter includes tips for effective writing, as well. Thought-provoking scenarios provide challenges and opportunities for collaboration and interaction. These exercises are especially helpful if group work is incorporated when teaching WRIT. Clear exercises teach sentence and paragraph writing skills that lead to common English composition and research essays.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In addition, many chapters also contain a section entitled "Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work," whereby aspects of academic and essay writing are highlighted in order to demonstrate their application to professional and work-related communication skills.
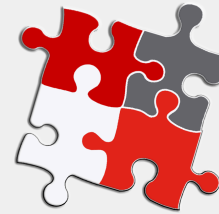
Features

- **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-to-peer engagement, the development of interpersonal skills, and the promotion of critical thinking skills.
- **Exercises that involve self-editing and collaborative writing are featured.** This feature develops and promotes student interest in the areas and content.
- **There are clear internal summaries and effective displays of information.** This contributes to easy access to information and increases your students' ability to locate the desired content.
- **Rule explanations are simplified with clear, relevant, and theme-based examples.** This feature provides context that will facilitate learning and increase knowledge retention.

There is an obvious structure at the unit and chapter levels. Because the text order is based on the sections of the WRIT curriculum rubric for instruction, this allows for easy adaptation to your existing and changing course needs or assessment outcomes.

PREFACE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WRIT CURRICULUM

Preface: An Introduction to the WRIT Curriculum

I. An Overview of the WRIT Curriculum

Putting the Pieces Together: Reason and Writing for Success

Welcome to your new introductory writing textbook! You may feel like English classes should be behind you since you graduated high school but don't worry. This is different.

At [Fanshawe College](#), the Reason and Writing curriculum (or "WRIT" for short) is our level-one writing course for college-level students, and it's required by most programs to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills needed to succeed in college and life.

We place importance on ensuring students are equipped with the essential principles of reading, writing, and reasoning at the post-secondary level. So, WRIT is designed to help students succeed in becoming functional, competent communicators in college. WRIT also lays the foundation for success in our advanced-level professional communications (or "COMM" for short) courses, which are also required for most students in programs at the college.

Ask any professional in your field of study, and they'll set you straight on the enormous importance of practical, clear writing and professional communication in their work.

Are There Different Types of Writing Required at College?

Yes. In college, you can expect to learn how to write for academic purposes as well as work-specific purposes. These two types of writing are equally important, and you'll need to tackle the first type of writing before you can confidently hone your skills in the second type. The kinds of writing you do and the communication skills you use in college are designed to help you achieve a specific purpose: to earn your academic credentials. One of the major differences between academic writing and workplace writing is reflected in the expectations of those who assign the writing.

In college writing, the emphasis is on writing to think critically, writing to learn confidently, and writing to demonstrate your learning competently. For example, at work, you may be expected to write an email to employees to explain a procedural change. In a college assignment, you may be expected to argue for or against an idea, or you may have to justify why something should or should not happen, as well as demonstrate reader-centred writing techniques to make sure your thoughts and ideas are understood by others.

Workplace writing, however, is specific to the needs of your job. You'll learn all about workplace-specific writing in your communication classes, but before you can master specific workplace communications, you'll need to make sure you understand and master the basics of clear and concise academic writing. The content, organization, style and mechanics of your writing are the building blocks needed to be successful in any professional field where writing and communication are expected. So, too, in college,

every assignment you are asked to complete will also require this ability. Your instructors will expect you to use standard writing conventions to express yourself clearly and to demonstrate you have mastered the skills needed to be successful in your program.

Another way academic writing can differ from workplace writing is in the level of original ideas explored and the way personal opinion, individual preference, and unique expression of thought take shape. Academic writing shows knowledge and understanding of both content and process. On the other hand, workplace writing often aims to convey information clearly and concisely about a specific issue at hand. While workplace writing tends to be practical—geared toward completing a work-related task— and college writing enables you to explore new avenues of thought; the two are importantly linked.

Being a practical workplace writer means that you are also able to convey complex thoughts, arguments, ideas, and opinions in a way that is understandable to others. If people don't understand what you are trying to say, then your ability to advance in your chosen career may be a challenge, and it's a challenge that can be easily overcome with a bit of work on your part.

This challenge is something you should think about as you go through WRIT. You may not fully appreciate it yet, but this open text is compiled to help support the vital writing skills you need now in college and in the years ahead as you grow professionally.

So, What is WRIT?

WRIT is a course that introduces students to essential reading, writing, and reasoning principles at the post-secondary level. Students must identify, summarize, analyze, and evaluate multiple short readings and write persuasive response essays to develop their vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, and critical thinking.

WRIT Course Learning Outcomes

If you are taking this course, it means that your program requires a WRIT credit as part of your diploma, certificate or similar credentials. In fact, because almost all diploma programs at Fanshawe have a writing component, you can be sure that your class will be similar in content, structure, and approach; in short, all students will have a common or shared experience in WRIT regardless of their program.

Although each school offers a variation of WRIT and assigns a different course code, they're all consistent in their approach to introductory writing. At Fanshawe, the following are just some examples of the schools that have programs which require WRIT:

- Lawrence Kinlin School of Business (WRIT 1032)
- Donald J. Smith School of Building Technology (WRIT 1039)
- School of Applied Science and Technology (WRIT 1039)
- School of Community Studies (WRIT 1094)
- School of Contemporary Media (WRIT 1032)
- School of Design (WRIT 1036)

- School of Digital and Performing Arts (WRIT 1037)
- School of Health Sciences (WRIT 1048)
- School of Information Technology (WRIT 1043)
- School of Language and Liberal Studies (WRIT 1030)
- School of Nursing (WRIT 1048)
- School of Public Safety (WRIT 1089)
- School of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts (WRIT 1042)
- School of Transportation Technology and Apprenticeship (WRIT 1039)
- All schools have an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) option (WRIT 1034)

Because all WRIT courses are equivalent credits, the courses listed above also share identical course learning outcomes, sometimes referred to as CLOs and appear on your course outline. CLOs provide you with a set of measurable goals to achieve success in your WRIT course. This open textbook is designed to support the learning outcomes of the reason and writing curriculum.

As such, this textbook refers to the following common learning outcomes, and they appear at the beginning of each chapter and section:

1. **IDENTIFY** author, source title, and thesis in written prompts;
2. **INTERPRET** audience, purpose, and tone in written prompts;
3. **DEVELOP** reliable critical thinking and critical reading strategies;
4. **SUMMARIZE** the arguments of written prompts;
5. **EVALUATE** supporting evidence for arguments;
6. **COMPOSE** complete sentences and paragraphs using effective vocabulary;
7. **EXPRESS** a clear written argument;
8. **PROVIDE** evidence in support of arguments;
9. **APPLY** basic principles of quotation and/or paraphrase integration, and
10. **REFLECT** on how prompt topics increase one's awareness of the society and culture in which one lives and works.

II. The WRIT Rubric

When learning how to write clearly and concisely, whether a formal research project or a short, argumentative, non-research essay, it is useful to have a clear guide to help you understand what makes a piece of writing effective. We use a grading rubric in the WRIT curriculum to help students understand the components of a good piece of writing.

So, What is a Rubric?

A rubric is a scoring tool that explicitly represents the performance expectations for an assignment or piece of work. A rubric divides the assigned work into different parts and provides descriptions of the characteristics associated with each part at different levels of mastery. Educators use rubrics for various assignments: papers, projects, oral presentations, artistic performances, group projects, etc. They use rubrics as scoring or grading guides, to provide formative feedback to support and guide ongoing learning efforts, or both.[1]

You'll quickly become familiar with the reason and writing rubric in WRIT. It's a document your instructor will use to assess your writing and provide you with feedback on how to improve.

You should always review your rubric feedback to track how you have improved or locate where you may need more help in some areas of your writing.

WRIT Grading Rubric

Below is the WRIT Grading Rubric used to evaluate your writing. The categories you see also reflect the organization of this textbook (*Content, Organization, Style and Mechanics*).

- *Download a PDF version of the interactive rubric below.*

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/reasonandwriting/?p=614#h5p-8*

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1. Grading and Performance Rubrics. Carnegie Mellon University, 2020

III. What Are Writing Prompts?

What Are Writing Prompts?

Writing prompts or timed essays are learning assignments that guide or "prompt" students to write about a specific topic in a specific way. Prompt writing is a long-standing and effective way to teach writing composition because it encourages students to develop their ability to focus on a specific issue, idea, or concept and to offer their own opinions on the topic the prompt presents. Prompts stimulate critical thinking and allow students to formulate a reasoned and structured argument in response to another writer's viewpoint.

Why Are Prompts Used in WRIT?

Learning to write well takes time and practice. Becoming a better writer, whether for academic or professional purposes, can only begin if you actively engage with other writers and, most importantly, other viewpoints. Responding to another writer involves understanding the argument or position they make and determining whether you agree, disagree, or partially agree with their position. Your goal as a developing writer is to articulate your view clearly and concisely on an issue, support it with solid reasons, and respond to potential arguments other readers may raise about your own argument.

How Are Prompts Used in WRIT?

In WRIT, weekly prompts are used to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the writing process. Through guided writing practice, your instructor will use timely and topical writing scenarios so that you can apply the various aspects of writing competency incrementally each week. Sure, writing weekly can seem daunting for some or repetitive for others. Yet, it is important to remember that learning any new skill involves a level of repetition.

Learning to write is an iterative process, which means you will get better the more often you write. You know what they say: practice makes perfect, especially when learning to write. Using prompts regularly as part of our writing curriculum can boost the chances that you will improve as a writer and feel connected to the writing process.

Understanding Writing Prompts

A strong prompt response contains several components that must all work together to produce a finished product with which other readers can engage. As an emerging writer, we hope you will develop a number of skills to ensure you are understood. These skills include the ability to:

- create a clear thesis (or main argument)
- develop a logical organizational structure
- use effective and formal language
- vary your sentence structures
- write cleanly without grammatical errors to express yourself clearly and concisely

While learning to write effectively depends on your ability to master many of these skills, one skill can be taught quickly: how to understand a writing prompt. In fact, this should be the first skill you focus on as a developing writer. Why? Because if you cannot understand a piece of writing, responding to it will be very difficult. Put another way: to make an argument about something, you'll need to make sure you fully understand the arguments made by another writer–*in our case, the writer of the prompt*. This skill requires more than simple reading comprehension. More often than not, strong students receive a weak writing grade because they misunderstood the prompt. To respond successfully, you must learn to analyze the prompt before responding to it.

Questions to Ask

The first phase of composing a strong piece of writing occurs in the pre-writing phase, and in WRIT, you'll practice and learn how to plan your writing responses. Unlike a formal research essay assignment–where you'll often have weeks to research, plan, and compose a polished final essay–in WRIT, your responses will be shorter and designed to be completed within a set period of time. The ability to respond in writing quickly is a core skill you'll practice in WRIT; that skill is called *time-on-task* writing. While the pre-writing phase will be shorter, you should still learn to ask a few key questions about the prompt to help narrow down your overall writing goal.

When reading a writing prompt, the following are helpful questions to ask and answer:

- What is the topic of the prompt?
- What is the main argument (thesis) the author makes?
- What is the purpose of the prompt? Why does the author want to convince you of her argumentative position?
- What kind of details or supporting points does the author provide?
- Do I agree or disagree with the author's points? Why or why not?
- Can I provide reasons to oppose the author's argument?
- Do I understand WHY I support or oppose the author's argument?

By asking and answering these questions, you can jump-start your essay outline and formulate your own thesis. A good way to begin is to write a one-sentence response to each question. Whether you practice this skill in class or not, there are a number of ways that you can do so every day. You can:

- Read an opinion editorial on a news site
- Watch a film documentary
- Watch a television interview
- Listen to a documentary podcast
- Track a social media hashtag

Most of the media with which we engage daily come with thesis statements, points of view, arguments both well-supported and not-so-well supported: the more you bring critical thought–by applying the core questions from above–to these spaces, the more you'll develop into a critical thinker who is ready to become a critical writer.

IV. Tips for Writing Prompts

Writing Prompts: The Instructions

A writing prompt in WRIT will ask you to consider the same set of questions each week. The prompt instructions remind you that there are three very important components that should be included in your response for optimal success. Below are the standard prompt instructions that you'll see each week in WRIT:

Your Task: compose a critical response essay—including, ideally, an introduction, at least three body paragraphs, and a conclusion—to the text below

Goals: your essay should include the following:

1. A brief summary of the author's argument
2. Your own argument which should either:

   - mostly agree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions that *extend support for the author's position*
   - mostly disagree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions that *defend your counter-position*

3. Your refutation of **at least one** objection a reader might have to **your** argument (or any point therein)

Failing to address each of these goals will significantly reduce your ability to respond appropriately and completely to the prompt. Don't worry, though! In WRIT, you'll learn how to respond to each of the requirements listed in the instructions above; it will just take a bit of time and practice.

Prompt Writing Guide

When you study a writing prompt closely and use it as the basis for your outline, you will be better equipped to address the goals of your own response. It's important to do the following when reading and responding to a prompt:

1. **Identify the purpose of the prompt.** Every piece of writing has purpose. In a prompt, the writer will attempt to inform or explain an idea to the reader. In addition, they will always present an argument about the issues they raise, and, in most cases, they will use details, facts, scenarios, or examples to persuade you that their point of view is correct and valuable. It is your job to prove that your point of view is MORE valuable than theirs.

> **WRITING TIP:** Your essay response should use specific ideas, concepts, and information found in the prompt. We call this "mobilizing" evidence. In referencing prompt details, you directly address the argument and supporting points the author raises rather than using details and examples from your personal experience. You will discover that in so doing, you will present a more formal essay conversing with the prompt. ARGUMENTATION at the post-secondary level is all about DISCOURSE, the conversation you have with things said and written about by others.

2. **Read the writing prompt carefully.** First, read the prompt once over to get a general sense of the prompt's topic and the position it takes. Then, read it again; this time, focus on the author's thesis and the key point of each paragraph.

> **WRITING TIP:** Identify the part of the prompt that tells you exactly what you should write about. In most cases, you'll find the author's thesis within the first paragraph of the prompt; most often, the thesis is the FINAL SENTENCE of the first paragraph. Look for interesting punctuation, like a full colon or a set of dashes, as these advanced punctuation techniques draw attention to information, which is something a strong writer wants to do in presenting a thesis.

3. **Read the writing prompt one last time**. This time, identify any keywords or ideas that give you more information about what to write and how to respond.

> **WRITING TIP:** Words such as "should," "must," "may," "mandatory," or "required," when used in the context of an argument, will often signal to a reader the author is making a claim or providing a reason to justify their position. Review any keywords in the subsequent paragraphs of the prompt to help you gauge what the author's supporting points may be. Paragraphs in a prompt will often be used to provide additional reasons to support the author's thesis (these are sometimes called points and proofs)

4. **Provide reasons and use details from the prompt.** Always use material in the prompt to help you explain your position and persuade your reader that *your point of view is more valuable than that of the prompt writer*, regardless of whether you agree, disagree, or partially agree with the premise of the prompt itself.

WRITING TIP: Use direct quotes, summaries, and paraphrased material from the prompt to support your opinion and ideas. Remember, you *must* show your readers that you are engaging directly with the author and the ideas they present in the prompt. For example, if you disagree with a suggestion in the prompt, citing a direct passage and explaining why you disagree will help persuade others to see your viewpoint.

V. Sample Writing Prompt A

The following article, **Learn to Use That Laptop: The Case for Mandatory Computers** by **Enrico Turing** appears in the January 2023 issue of *College Technology* magazine**.**

Jump to Prompt Instructions

Contrary to popular belief, not all young people are great with technology. Although almost everyone makes this claim, where is the actual evidence? **Some** young people are tech-savvy[1], yes; however, in my experience, many are not. Those who automatically assume that young people are natural tech-experts are guilty of ageism, which *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defines as "prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of age." Think about it, though: the people who invented all of this technology are now in their 40s and 50s—or older. Bill Gates, who founded Microsoft, is 57. Steve Wozniak, who helped found Apple, is 62.

The most tech-savvy person I know personally, indeed, is a 60-year-old woman. If you compare older people with younger people, the biggest difference is this: young people **think** they know what they are doing. Because computer skills are crucial for both college and the workplace, **all** incoming college students— regardless of age—should be required to buy a laptop and pass a computer course in their first semester of college. This computer course would start off simply, but it would quickly become much more advanced.

Although young people generally know how to download music and movies, rapidly thumb-text on their cell phones, and navigate the world of online gaming, many young people aren't actually very good with technology—and they don't even know it. They don't really know how to use library databases (which are **much** better than Google) for research, for example, and their word-processing skills are often hopelessly inadequate for college work. In fact, my years of teaching experience suggest that some student writing problems result from a lack of knowledge about Microsoft Word. Sure, students know how to do very basic things, but Word is a powerful package, and most students don't have a clue about a lot of features that can make their lives much easier.

To be "tech-savvy" is to be very knowledgeable about technology. The course could also address more general issues about technology—issues like online etiquette (or 'netiquette'), copyright, viruses, privacy, and security, all of which come up whenever anyone uses a computer. For example, students need to know that they shouldn't use the nickname-based Hotmail addresses they got in Grade 11 when they write resumes and cover letters because employers view such email addresses as unprofessional. Students need to know that the funny Instagram pictures of them lying on the grass surrounded by beer bottles might not be so funny in 2028 when a potential employer sees those pictures during a background check.

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1. To be "tech-savvy" is to be very knowledgeable about technology.

For all of these reasons, we should require that students buy new laptops when they register—the cost would be part of their tuition. We should also require that they take a course on how to use their computers efficiently and sensibly so that they learn more than just how to download songs and message their friends. Instead of worrying about students misusing their laptops and the software they come with, let's teach them to use these tools properly.

Instructions

Your Task: compose a critical response essay—including, ideally, an introduction, at least three body paragraphs, and a conclusion—to the text below

Goals: your essay should include the following:

1. A brief summary of the author's argument
2. Your own argument which should either:

    ◦ mostly agree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions that _extend support for the author's position_
    ◦ mostly disagree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions that _defend your counter-position_

3. Your refutation of **at least one** objection a reader might have to **your** argument (or any point therein)

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VI. Sample Writing Prompt B

The following article, **"Volunteering is the Best Business Training,"** by **Loretta Young** appears in the August 2024 issue of *Business Spotlight* magazine.

Jump to Prompt Instructions

Most if not all students have chosen college because they hope their courses of study will lead to employment after graduation. Unfortunately, however, many students do not know what they want to do, and even if they do, they usually are not sure whether their chosen programs —and the professions that follow them—are what they want. This uncertainty can result in students switching programs at college, thus wasting their time and the time of the teachers who taught courses that they can no longer use. Also, if students complete their original programs and then find related employment, there is no guarantee that they will be happy with their choices. This scenario is particularly true in "real" world of business; for example, students in business often see their program choice as a way to make a profitable and practical living after graduation, yet they have no authentic experience in the business world. For all of these reasons, we should help students with this problem by requiring that they volunteer in their chosen fields before beginning college programs related to those fields.

Here is another example: suppose a student decides to study nursing. The student knows there are jobs in nursing, as health care keeps expanding. The student may even have family members who work in nursing, so he or she might know something about it from them. What the student cannot possibly know, though, is whether he or she will like nursing or be good at it. The student chooses a college nursing program, and, at the end of a long course of study, his or her professors and course marks will measure skills but not whether he or she will actually like being a nurse.

Unfortunately, it might take several years of work experience to answer this last question, and by then, if the answer is no, the student will have spent years learning to dislike a profession that took years to join. Our current system, in other words, has the potential to waste enormous amounts of students' time and money; it might even strand them in careers that they do not enjoy but cannot leave. The current solution does not make good practical and business sense.

There is an obvious solution to this enormous potential for wasted time and effort—colleges should require that students acquire more information about their chosen careers before they begin their studies. As part of the admissions process, colleges should require documentation that students have completed at least six months of work in their chosen fields. Paid work might not be possible, of course, so volunteer work would be acceptable. Students could complete this volunteer work any time in the years leading up to the beginning of their studies. This work would give them a better idea about whether they have chosen the right career, before they invest years of time and money to find out—possibly the hard way—the answer to the same question.

In light of these facts, then, colleges should immediately change their admissions procedures to require prior knowledge, either through paid work or volunteering, of students' proposed fields of

study. It is, after all, better to gain knowledge sooner rather than later. All students will ultimately end of working for some form of business organization upon graduation and experience in the field is, ultimately, the best business training possible.

Instructions

Your Task: compose a critical response essay—including, ideally, an introduction, at least three body paragraphs, and a conclusion—to the text below

Goals: your essay should include the following:

1. A brief summary of the author's argument
2. Your own argument which should either:

   ◦ mostly agree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions that _extend support for the author's position_
   ◦ mostly disagree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions that _defend your counter-position_

3. Your refutation of **at least one** objection a reader might have to **your** argument (or any point therein)

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UNIT 1: WRITING CONTENT

Unit 1: Writing Content

WRIT Course Learning Outcomes (LO) Addressed

- **Identify** the author, source title, audience, and thesis in written prompts (LO 1).
- **Interpret** audience, purpose, and tone in written prompts (LO 2).
- **Develop** reliable critical thinking and critical reading strategies (LO 3).
- **Summarize** the arguments of written prompts (LO 4).
- **Evaluate** supporting evidence for arguments (LO 5).
- **Express** a clear written argument (LO 7).
- **Provided** evidence in support of arguments (LO 8).

Rubric Spotlight

Writing ***EXEMPLARY CONTENT*** Includes:

- Concession-style thesis providing relevancy and/or reasoning
- Unique, novel assertions
- Original, irrefutable proofs
- Exemplary, objective summary

Chapter 1: Introduction to Writing

1.1 Reading and Writing in College

As you begin this chapter, you may wonder why you need an introduction. After all, you have been writing and reading since elementary school. You completed numerous assessments of your reading and writing skills in high school and as part of your application process for college. You may write on the job, too. Why is a college writing course even necessary?

When you are eager to get started on the coursework in your major that will prepare you for your career, getting excited about an introductory college writing course can be difficult. However, regardless of your field of study, honing your writing, reading, and critical-thinking skills gives you a more solid academic foundation.

In college, academic expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. The quantity of work you are expected to do is increased. When instructors expect you to read pages upon pages or study hours and hours for one particular course, managing your workload can be challenging. This chapter includes strategies for studying efficiently and managing your time.

The quality of the work you do also changes. Understanding course material and summarizing it on an exam is not enough. You will also be expected to seriously engage with new ideas by reflecting on, analyzing, critiquing, making connections, drawing conclusions, or finding new ways of thinking about a given subject. Educationally, you are moving into deeper waters. A good introductory writing course will help you swim.

Table 1.1, "High School versus College Assignments," summarizes some of the other major differences between high school and college assignments.

Table 1.1 High School versus College Assignments

High School	College
Reading assignments are moderately long. Teachers may set aside some class time for reading and reviewing the material in depth.	Some reading assignments may be very long. You will be expected to come to class with a basic understanding of the material.
Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams.	Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.
Your grade is determined by your performance on a wide variety of assessments, including minor and major assignments. Not all assessments are writing-based.	Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most assessments are writing-based.
Writing assignments include personal writing and creative writing in addition to expository writing.	Outside of creative writing courses, most writing assignments are expository.
The structure and format of writing assignments is generally stable over a four-year period.	Depending on the course, you may be asked to master new forms of writing and follow standards within a particular professional field.
Teachers often go out of their way to identify and try to help students who are performing poorly on exams, missing classes, not turning in assignments, or just struggling with the course. Often, teachers will give students many "second chances."	Although teachers want their students to succeed, they may not always realize when students are struggling. They also expect you to be proactive and take steps to help yourself. "Second chances" are less common.

This chapter covers the types of reading and writing assignments you will encounter as a college student. You will also learn various strategies for mastering these new challenges—and becoming a more confident student and writer.

Throughout this chapter, you will follow a first-year student named Crystal. After several years of working as a saleswoman in a department store, Crystal has decided to pursue a degree in elementary education and become a teacher. She continues to work part-time, and occasionally, she finds it challenging to balance the demands of work, school, and caring for her four-year-old son. As you read about Crystal, think about how to use her experience to get the most out of your college experience.

Exercise 1

Review Table 1.1 "High School versus College Assignments" and think about how you have found your college experience to be different from high school so far. Respond to the following questions:

1. In what ways do you think college will be more rewarding for you as a learner?
2. What aspects of college do you expect to find most challenging?
3. What changes do you think you might have to make in your life to ensure your success in college?

Reading Strategies

Your college 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. And it is difficult, if not impossible, to write effectively about a text 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 college reading assignments. These strategies fall into three broad categories:

1. **Planning strategies.** To help you manage your reading assignments.
2. **Comprehension strategies.** To help you understand the material.
3. **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 have you found yourself skimming a detailed memo from your boss five minutes before a crucial meeting? The first step in handling college reading successfully is planning. This involves managing your time and setting a clear purpose for your reading.

Managing Your Reading Time

You will learn more detailed strategies for time management in [Section 1.2 "Developing Study Skills"](#), but for now, focus on setting aside enough time for reading and breaking your assignments into manageable chunks. If you are assigned a seventy-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 five or ten pages in one sitting to truly understand and process the information. With more user-friendly texts, you can handle longer sections—twenty to forty 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 better understand 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.

Tip

College instructors often set aside reserve readings for a particular course. These consist of articles, book chapters, or other texts that are not part of the primary course textbook. Copies of reserve readings are available through the university library, in print, or, more often, online. When you are assigned a reserve reading, download it ahead of time (and let your instructor know if you have trouble accessing it). Skim through it to get a rough idea of how much time you will need to read the assignment in full.

Setting a Purpose

The other key component of planning is 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 and you are tired, and 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, formulate a personal response to a text, or gather ideas for future research. Here are some questions to ask to help determine your purpose:

- **How did my instructor frame the assignment?** Often, your instructors will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading:
  - Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current teaching practices in elementary math.
  - Read these two articles and compare Smith's and Jones's perspectives on the 2010 healthcare reform bill.
  - Read Chapter 5 and think about how you could apply these guidelines to running your own business.
- **How deeply do I need to understand the reading?** If you are majoring in computer science and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, "Introduction to Computer Science," 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. Again, pay attention to how your instructor presents the assignment.
- **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

You have blocked out time for your reading assignments and set a purpose for reading. Now comes the challenge: making sure you actually understand all the information you are expected to process. Some of your reading assignments will be fairly straightforward. Others, however, will be longer or more complex, so you will need a plan for how to handle them.

For any expository writing—that is, nonfiction or informational writing—your first comprehension goal is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. Because college-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 college, you will read 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 magazine, newspaper, 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 and often states early on. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and relate the reading to concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, you will find the **supporting points**, the 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. These features include the following:

- **Trade books.** 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.
- **Popular articles.** Reading the headings and introductory paragraphs carefully is crucial. 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. Because these texts are written for 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. The introduction usually presents the writer's thesis and the idea or hypothesis the writer is trying to prove. Headings and subheadings can help you understand how the writer has organized support for his or her 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. However, it is just as important to figure out what you do not know and develop 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:

1. **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.
2. **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?
3. **Do not read in a vacuum.** 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 that of 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 a breeze for everyone but you, you may need to see your instructor for help.

As a working mother, Crystal found that the best time to get her reading done was in the evening after she had put her four-year-old to bed. However, she occasionally had trouble concentrating at the end of a long day. She found that by actively working to summarize the reading and asking and answering questions, she focused better and retained more of what she read. She also found that evenings were a good time to check the class discussion forums that a few of her instructors had created.

Exercise 2

Choose any text that you have been assigned to read for one of your college courses. In your notes, complete the following tasks:

1. Summarize the main points of the text in two to three sentences.
2. Write down two to three questions about the text that you can bring up during class discussion.

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 out help. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your university learning center 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, college 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 college are not only competent readers but active, engaged readers.

Using the SQ3R Strategy

One strategy you can use to become a more active, engaged reader is the SQ3R strategy, a step-by-step process to follow before, during, and after reading. You may already use some variation of it. In essence, the process works like this:

1. **Survey** the text in advance.
2. Form **questions** before you start reading.
3. **Read** the text.
4. **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after reading.
5. **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

Before you read, you survey, or preview, 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. However, surveying does not stop there. Look over sidebars, photographs, and any other text or graphic features that catch your eye. Skim a few paragraphs. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. This will help you form a first impression of the material.

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 reads "Medicare and Medicaid," you might ask yourself these questions:

- When was Medicare and Medicaid legislation enacted? Why?
- What are the major differences between these two programs?

Although some of your questions may be simple factual questions, try to come up with a few that are more open-ended. Asking in-depth questions will help you stay more engaged as you 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 questions. Continue to revise your impressions and questions as you read.

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 there is an obvious shift in the writer's train of thought. 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 completed the reading, take some time to review the material more thoroughly. 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. (Instructors sometimes require students to write brief response papers or maintain a reading journal. Use these assignments to help you reflect on what you read.)

Exercise 3

Choose another text 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.)

Be sure to complete all the steps involved. Then, reflect on how helpful you found this process. On a scale of one to ten, how useful did you find it? 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.

As Crystal began her first semester of elementary education courses, she occasionally felt lost in a sea of new terms and theories about teaching and child development. She found that it helped to relate the reading to her personal observations of her son and other kids she knew.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Many college courses require students to participate in interactive online components, such as a discussion forum, a page on a social networking site, or a class blog. These tools are a great way to reinforce learning. Do not be afraid to be the student who starts the discussion.

Remember that when you interact with other students and teachers online, you need to project a mature, professional image. You may be able to use an informal, conversational tone, but complaining about the workload, using off-colour language, or "flaming" other participants is inappropriate.
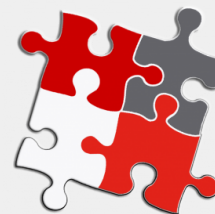
Active reading can benefit you in ways that go beyond just earning good grades. By practicing these strategies, you will find yourself more interested in your courses and better able to relate your academic work to the rest of your life. Being an interested, engaged student also helps you form lasting connections with your instructors and with other students that can be personally and professionally valuable. In short, it helps you get the most out of your education.

Common Writing Assignments

College writing assignments serve a different purpose than the typical writing assignments you completed in high school. In high school, teachers generally focus on teaching you to write in a variety of modes and formats, including personal writing, expository writing, research papers, creative writing, and writing short answers and essays for exams. Over time, these assignments help you build a foundation of writing skills.

In college, many instructors will expect you to already have that foundation.

Your college composition courses will focus on writing for its own sake, helping you make the transition to college-level writing assignments. However, in most other college courses, writing assignments serve a different purpose. In those courses, you may use writing as one tool, among many, to learn how to think about a particular academic discipline.

Additionally, certain assignments teach you how to meet the expectations for professional writing in a given field. Depending on the class, you might be asked to write a lab report, a case study, a literary analysis, a business plan, or an account of a personal interview. You will need to learn and follow the standard conventions for those types of written products.

Finally, personal and creative writing assignments are less common in college than in high school. 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. College instructors will hold you to a higher standard when it comes to supporting your ideas with reasons and evidence.

Table 1.2 "Common Types of College Writing Assignments" lists some of the most common types of college writing assignments. It includes minor, less formal assignments as well as major ones. Which specific assignments you encounter will depend on the courses you take and the learning objectives developed by your instructors.

Table 1.2 Common Types of College Writing Assignments

Assignment Type	Description	Example
Personal Response Paper	Expresses and explains your response to a reading assignment, a provocative quote, or a specific issue; may be very brief (sometimes a page or less) or more in-depth	For an environmental science course, students watch and write about President Obama's June 15, 2010, speech about the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
Summary	Restates the main points of a longer passage objectively and in your own words	For a psychology course, students write a one-page summary of an article about a man suffering from short-term memory loss.
Position Paper	States and defends your position on an issue (often a controversial issue)	For a medical ethics course, students state and support their position on using stem cell research in medicine.
Problem-Solution Paper	Presents a problem, explains its causes, and proposes and explains a solution	For a business administration course, a student presents a plan for implementing an office recycling program without increasing operating costs.
Literary Analysis	States a thesis about a particular literary work (or works) and develops the thesis with evidence from the work and, sometimes, from additional sources	For a literature course, a student compares two novels by the twentieth-century African American writer Richard Wright.
Research Review or Survey	Sums up available research findings on a particular topic	For a course in media studies, a student reviews the past twenty years of research on whether violence in television and movies is correlated with violent behavior.
Case Study or Case Analysis	Investigates a particular person, group, or event in depth for the purpose of drawing a larger conclusion from the analysis	For an education course, a student writes a case study of a developmentally disabled child whose academic performance improved because of a behavioral-modification program.
Laboratory Report	Presents a laboratory experiment, including the hypothesis, methods of data collection, results, and conclusions	For a psychology course, a group of students presents the results of an experiment in which they explored whether sleep deprivation produced memory deficits in lab rats.
Research Journal	Records a student's ideas and findings during the course of a long-term research project	For an education course, a student maintains a journal throughout a semester-long research project at a local elementary school.
Research Paper	Presents a thesis and supports it with original research and/or other researchers' findings on the topic; can take several different formats depending on the subject area	For examples of typical research projects, see Chapter 12 "Writing a Research Paper".

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Part of managing your education is communicating well with others at your university. For instance, you might need to e-mail your instructor to request an office appointment or explain why you will need to miss a class. You might need to contact administrators with questions about your tuition or financial aid. Later, you might ask instructors to write recommendations on your behalf.

Treat these documents as professional communications. Address the recipient politely; state your question, problem, or request clearly; and use a formal, respectful tone. Doing so helps you make a positive impression and get a quicker response.

Key Takeaways

- College-level reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments not only in quantity but also in quality.
- Managing college reading assignments successfully requires you to plan and manage your time, set a purpose for reading, practice effective comprehension strategies, and use active reading strategies to deepen your understanding of the text.
- College writing assignments place greater emphasis on learning to think critically about a particular discipline and less emphasis on personal and creative writing.

1.2 Developing Study Skills

Learning Objectives

1. Use strategies for managing time effectively as a college student.
2. Understand and apply strategies for taking notes efficiently.
3. Determine the specific time-management, study, and note-taking strategies that work best for you individually.

By now, you have a general idea of what to expect from your college courses. You have probably received course syllabi, started on your first few assignments, and begun applying the strategies you learned about in [Section 1.1 "Reading and Writing in College"](#).

At the beginning of the semester, your work load 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 tried and true techniques that work well for many people. However, you may need to adapt them slightly to develop a system that works well for you personally. If your friend swears by her smartphone, but you hate having to carry extra electronic gadgets around, then using a smartphone will not be the best organizational strategy for you.

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 in college? Which habits might get in your way? What changes might you need to make?

Understanding Yourself as a Learner

To succeed in college—or any situation where you must master new concepts and skills—it helps to know what makes you tick. 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, listening, or through some other channel. For more information, see the section on learning styles.

- **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 are a night owl, 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 juggle potential distractions in your environment?** If you can study at home without being tempted to turn on the television, check your e-mail, fix yourself a snack, and so on, you may make home your work space. However, if you need a less distracting environment to stay focused, you may be able to find one on your college's 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?

1. You would carefully look over the diagrams in the assembly manual first so you could picture each step in the process.
2. You would silently read the directions through, step by step, and then look at the diagrams afterward.
3. You would read the directions aloud under your breath. Having someone explain the steps to you would also help.
4. 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. Again, think about whether each description sounds like you.

- If you chose (a), you may be a visual learner. You understand ideas best when they are presented in a visual format, such as a flowchart, a diagram, or text with clear headings and many photos or

illustrations.
- If you chose (b), you may be a <u>verbal learner</u>. You understand ideas best through reading and writing about them and taking detailed notes.
- If you chose (c), you may be an <u>auditory learner</u>. You understand ideas best through listening. You learn well from spoken lectures or books on tape.
- If you chose (d), you may be a <u>kinesthetic learner</u>. 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. Table 1.3, "Learning Style Strategies," lists some tips for maximizing your learning style.

Table 1.3 Learning Style Strategies

Learning Style	Strategies
Visual	• When possible, represent concepts visually—in charts, diagrams, or sketches. • Use a visual format for taking notes on reading assignments or lectures. • Use different-coloured highlighters or pens to colour-code information as you read. • Use visual organizers, such as maps, flowcharts, and so forth, to help you plan writing assignments. • Use coloured pens, highlighters, or the review feature of your word-processing program to revise and edit writing.
Verbal	• Use the instructional features in course texts—summaries, chapter review questions, glossaries, and so on—to aid your studying. • Take notes on your reading assignments. • Rewrite or condense reading notes and lecture notes to study. • Summarize important ideas in your own words. • Use informal writing techniques, such as brainstorming, freewriting, blogging, or posting on a class discussion forum to generate ideas for writing assignments. • Reread and take notes on your writing to help you revise and edit.
Auditory	• Ask your instructor's permission to tape-record lectures to supplement your notes. • Read parts of your textbook or notes aloud when you study. • If possible, obtain an audiobook version of important course texts. Make use of supplemental audio materials, such as CDs or DVDs. • Talk through your ideas with other students when studying or when preparing for a writing assignment. • Read your writing aloud to help you draft, revise, and edit.
Kinesthetic	• When you read or study, use techniques that will keep your hands in motion, such as highlighting or taking notes. • Use tactile study aids like flashcards or study guides you design yourself. • Use self-stick notes to record ideas for writing. These notes can be physically reorganized easily to help you determine how to shape your paper. • Use physical activity like running or swimming to help you break through writing blocks. • Take breaks during studying to stand, stretch, or move around.

> **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 act on information immediately, 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. For more information about how you learn, visit your school's academic resource center.

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. College instructors, however, expect you to take full responsibility for managing yourself and completing your work 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, students 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 multiple classes, but if you plan your time carefully, it is manageable. A typical full-time schedule of fifteen credit hours translates into thirty to forty-five 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 e-mail. (In [Section 1.3 "Becoming a Successful College Writer"](#) you will learn strategies for planning out major writing assignments so you can complete them on time.)

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 ebb and flow throughout the semester. You may have trouble-free weeks and stressful weeks. When you schedule your classes, try to balance introductory-level classes with more advanced classes so that your workload stays manageable.

Crystal knew that to balance a job, college classes, and a family, it was crucial for her to get organized. For the month of September, she drew up a week-by-week calendar that listed not only her own class and work schedules but also the days her son attended preschool and the days her husband had off from work. She and her husband discussed how to share their day-to-day household responsibilities so she would be able to get her schoolwork done. Crystal also made a note to talk to her supervisor at work about reducing her hours during finals week in December.

Exercise 1

Now that you have learned some time-management basics, it is time to apply those skills. For this exercise, you will develop a weekly schedule and a semester calendar.

1. Working with your class schedule, map out a week-long schedule of study time. Try to apply the "two- to three-hour" rule. Be sure to include any other nonnegotiable responsibilities, such as a job or childcare duties.
2. Use your course syllabi to record exam dates and due dates for major assignments in a calendar (paper or electronic). Use a star, highlighting, or other special marking to set off any days or weeks that look especially demanding.

Staying Consistent: Time Management Dos and Don'ts

Setting up a schedule is easy. Sticking with it, however, may create challenges. A schedule that looks 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, however, 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., if 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 maybe try using something else.

With that in mind, read the list of time-management dos 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.

Dos

1. Set aside time to review your schedule or calendar regularly and update or adjust them as needed.
2. 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.
3. Be honest with yourself about where your time goes. Do not fritter away your study time on distractions like e-mail and social networking sites.
4. Accept that occasionally, your work may get a little off track. No one is perfect.
5. Accept that sometimes you may not have time for all the fun things you would like to do.
6. 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.
7. Have 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.

Don'ts

1. Do not procrastinate on challenging assignments. Instead, break them into smaller, manageable tasks that can be accomplished one at a time.
2. Do not fall into the trap of "all-or-nothing" thinking: "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.
3. Do not fall into the trap of letting things slide and promising 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.
4. 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.

The key to managing your time effectively is consistency. Completing the following tasks will help you stay on track throughout the semester.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Review the preceding 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.
   ◦ 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?

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

If you are part of the workforce, you have probably established strategies for accomplishing job-related tasks efficiently. How could you adapt these strategies to help you be a successful student? For instance, you might sync up your school and work schedules on an electronic calendar. Instead of checking in with your boss about upcoming work deadlines, establish a buddy system where you check in with a friend about school projects. Give school the same priority you give to work.

Note-Taking Methods

One final valuable tool to have in your arsenal as a student is a good note-taking system. The act of converting a spoken lecture into 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 enter college without having received much guidance about note-taking.

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

General Note-Taking Guidelines

1. 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.
2. Come prepared with paper, pens, highlighters, textbooks, and any important handouts.
3. 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.
4. During class, capture important ideas as concisely as you can. Use words or phrases instead of full sentences and abbreviate when possible.
5. 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.
6. 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 the main points
   ◦ Definitions of key terms

7. 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 elaborate notes.

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 world through motion & 5 senses
        -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
        -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
        -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

Image Text Description

Idea Mapping

If you discovered in this section that you learn best with visual presentations, you may prefer to use a more graphic format for notes, such as an idea 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.

Child Development—20th Century Theorists

Jean Piaget

- Swiss psychologist, influential in education
- 4 major stages of cognitive dev.
- first developed theories in 1920s–30s

From "4 major stages of cognitive dev.":

- sensorimotor (0–2)—infants explore world through motion & 5 senses
- preoperational (2–7)—kids use "magical" thinking, often not logical
- concrete operations (7–12)—kids begin to think logically
- formal operations (12–adulthood)—logical thinking develops further

sensorimotor:
- 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:
- less self-centered
- poor sense of time
- can think about people/objects that are not physically present

concrete operations:
- thinking is very concrete
- improved understanding of physical world

formal operations:
- can understand and test abstract ideas
- more concerned about the future, hypothetical possibilities

Image Text Description

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.

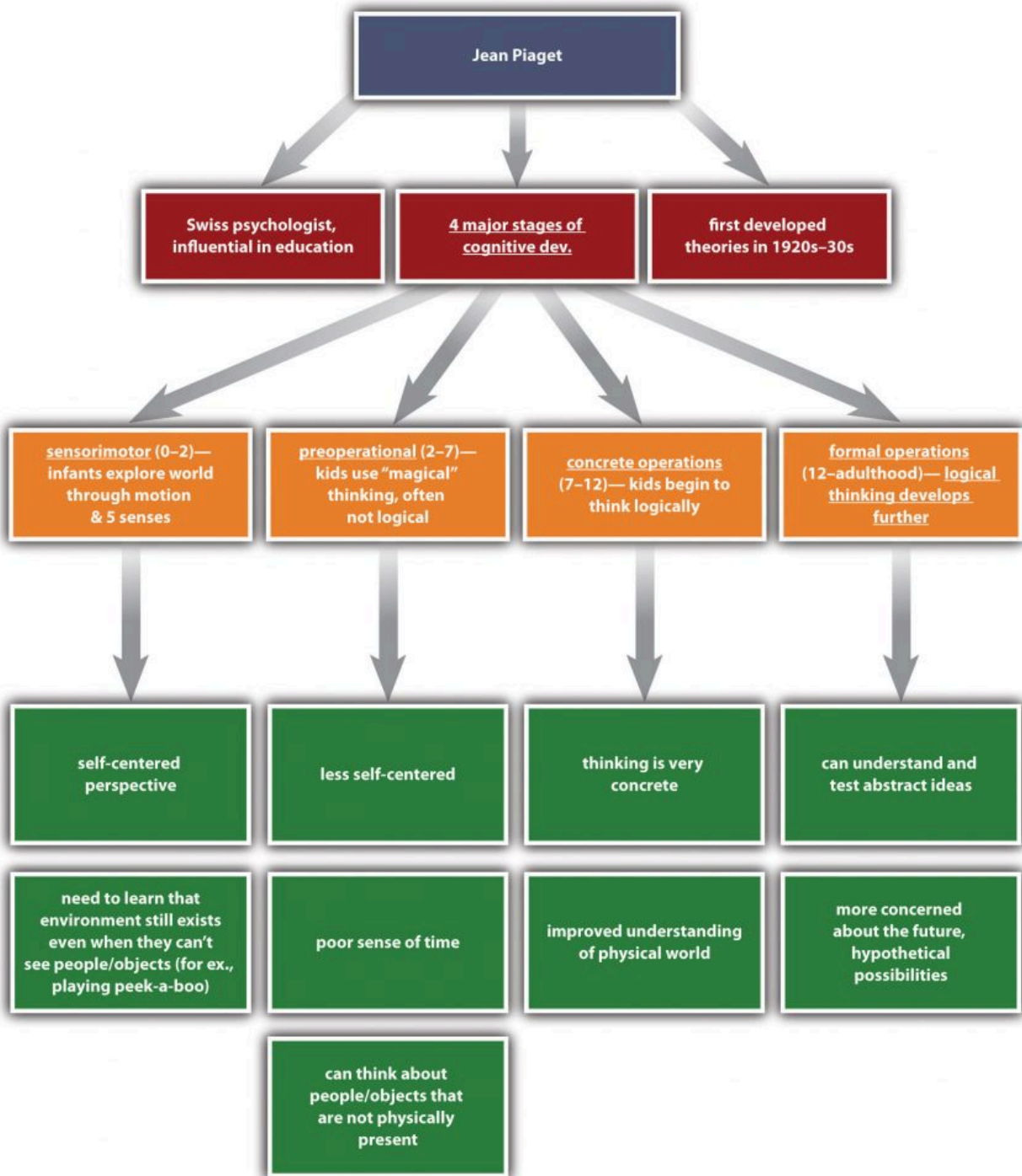| Theorist	Country of Origin	Years Active	Stages of Child Development
Jean Piaget	Switzerland	1920s through 1970s	1. sensorimotor (0-2) 2. preoperational (2-7) 3. concrete operational (7-12) 4. formal operational (12-adulthood)
Erik Erikson	Denmark (studied in Austria, emigrated to US in 1930s)	1930s through 1980s	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 practice 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 are 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.

Using the Cornell system, Crystal's notes would look like the following:

Child Development	September 13, 2011

Piaget
 	
cognitive development
 	
sensorimotor
 	
preoperational
 	
concrete operations
 	
formal operations
 	
concrete thinking
 	
abstract thinking
	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 world through motion & 5 senses
	                    –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
	                    –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
	                    – 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

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).	

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Often, at school or in the workplace, a speaker will provide you with pregenerated notes summarizing electronic presentation slides. You may be tempted not to take notes at all because much of the content is already summarized for you. However, it is a good idea to jot down at least a few notes. Doing so keeps you focused during the presentation, allows you to record details you might otherwise forget, and gives you the opportunity to jot down questions or reflections to personalize the content.
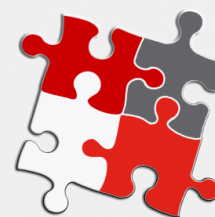
Exercise 3

Over the next few weeks, establish a note-taking system that works for you.

1. If you are not already doing so, try using one of the aforementioned techniques. (Remember that the Cornell system can be combined with other note-taking formats.)
2. It can take some trial and error to find a note-taking system that works for you. If you find that you are struggling to keep up with lectures, consider whether you need to switch to a different format or be more careful about distinguishing key concepts from unimportant details.
3. If you find that you are having trouble taking notes effectively, set up an appointment with your school's academic resource center.

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 at the short-term (daily and weekly schedules) and the long-term (major semester deadlines).
-   To manage your time effectively, be consistent about maintaining your schedule. If your schedule is not working for you, make adjustments.
-   A good note-taking system must differentiate among major points, related subtopics, and supporting details, and it must allow you to record and organize information fairly quickly. Choose the format that is most effective for you.

1.3 Becoming a Successful College Writer

<table>
<tr><td style="background-color:red;color:white">Learning Objectives</td></tr>
</table>

1. Identify strategies for successful writing.
2. Demonstrate comprehensive writing skills.
3. Identify writing strategies for use in future classes.

In the preceding sections, you learned what you can expect from college and identified strategies you can use to manage your work. These strategies will help you succeed in any college course. This section covers more about how to handle the demands college places upon you as a writer. The general techniques you will learn will help ensure your success on any writing task, whether you complete a bluebook exam in an hour or an in-depth research project over several weeks.

Putting It All Together: Strategies for Success

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 do 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. And of course, you cannot get through college without having to write—sometimes a lot, and often at a higher level than you are used to.

No magic formula will make writing quick and easy. However, you can use strategies and resources to manage writing assignments more easily. This section presents a broad overview of these strategies and resources. The remaining chapters of this book provide more detailed, comprehensive instruction to help you succeed at a variety of assignments. College will challenge you as a writer, but it is also a unique opportunity to grow.

Using the Writing Process

To complete a writing project successfully, good writers use some variation of the following process.

The Writing Process

- **Prewriting.** In this step, the writer generates ideas to write about and begins developing these ideas.
- **Outlining a structure of ideas.** In this step, the writer determines the overall organizational structure of the writing and creates an outline to organize ideas. Usually, this step involves fleshing out some of the ideas generated in the first step.
- **Writing a rough draft.** In this step, 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.
- **Revising.** In this step, 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.
- **Editing.** In this step, 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.

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 that you 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 into 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.

For a more thorough explanation of the steps of the writing process as well as for specific techniques you can use for each step, see Chapter 3, ["The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?."](#)

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.

Managing Your Time

In ["Section 1.2 "Developing Study Skills,"](#) you learned general time-management skills. By combining those skills with what you have learned about the writing process, you can make any writing assignment easier to manage.

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 for when you will work on the assignment. Always plan at least two writing sessions per assignment so that you do not have to move from step 1 to step 5 in one evening. Trying to work that fast is stressful and 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 the five steps over multiple sessions. Long-term projects like 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 they have 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-one-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 the article, prewrite, and outline the response paper.		Draft response		Revise and edit the response.

Setting Goals

One key to succeeding as a student and as a writer is setting both short- and long-term goals for yourself. You have already glimpsed the kind of short-term goals a student might set. Crystal wanted to do well in her Foundations of Education course, and she realized that she could control how she handled her weekly writing assignments. At 20 percent of her course grade, she reasoned, those assignments might mean the difference between a C and a B or between a B and an A.

By planning carefully and following through on her daily and weekly goals, Crystal was able to fulfill one of her goals for the semester. Although her exam scores were not as high as she had hoped, her consistently strong performance on writing assignments tipped her grade from a B+ to an A−. She was pleased to have earned a high grade in one of the required courses for her major. She was also glad to have gotten the most out of an introductory course that would help her become an effective teacher.

How does Crystal's experience relate to your own college experience?

To do well in college, it is important to stay focused on how your day-to-day actions determine your long-term success. You may not have defined your career goals or chosen a major yet. Even so, you surely have some overarching goals for what you want out of college: to expand your career options, to increase your earning power, or just to learn something new. In time, you will define your long-term goals more explicitly. Doing solid, steady work, day by day and week by week will help you meet those goals.

Exercise 1

In this exercise, make connections between short- and long-term goals.

1. For this step, identify one long-term goal you would like to have achieved by the time you complete your degree. For instance, you might want a particular job in your field or hope to graduate with honours.
2. Next, identify a one-semester goal that will help you fulfill the goal you set in step one. For instance, you may want to do well in a particular course or establish a connection with a professional in your field.
3. Review the goal you determined in step two. 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.
4. Review your list. Choose two to three items, and for each item identify at least one concrete action you can take to accomplish it. These actions may be recurring (meeting with a study group each week) or one-time only (calling the professor in charge of internships).
5. Identify one action from step four that you can do today. Then do it.

Using College Resources

One reason students sometimes find college overwhelming is that they do not know about, or are reluctant to use, the resources available to them. Some aspects of college will be challenging. However, if you try to handle every challenge alone, you may become frustrated and overwhelmed.

Colleges have resources in place to help students cope with challenges. Your student fees help pay for resources such as a health center or tutoring, so use these resources if you need them. The following are some of the resources you might use if you find you need help:

- **Your instructor.** If you are making an honest effort but still struggling with a particular course, set up 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.
- **Your academic counsellor.** Many colleges assign students an academic counsellor who can help them choose courses and ensure that they fulfill their degree and major requirements.

- **The academic resource center.** These centers offer a variety of services, which may range from general coaching in study skills to tutoring for specific courses. Find out what is offered at your school and use the services that you need.
- **The writing center.** These centers employ tutors to help you manage college-level 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 center is part of the academic resource center.)
- **The career resource center.** Visit the career resource center for guidance in choosing a career path, developing a résumé, and finding and applying for jobs.
- **Counselling services.** Many colleges 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. Waiting until the end of the semester may also mean fewer resources are available, since many other students are also seeking last-minute help.

Exercise 2

Identify at least one college resource that you think could be helpful to you and 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.

Overview: College Writing Skills

You now have a solid foundation of skills and strategies you can use to succeed in college. The remainder of this book will provide you with guidance on specific aspects of writing, ranging from grammar and style conventions to how to write a research paper.

For any college 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, and if necessary, clarify them 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 colleges have specific services to help students with their writing.

For help with specific writing assignments and guidance on different aspects of writing, you may refer to the other chapters in this book. The table of contents lists topics in detail.

The WRIT Curriculum

A Note About Order: Since this textbook is organized based on the sections of the WRIT rubric, it is common in WRIT for your instructor to assign chapter readings in a non-sequential order, depending on what you're studying each week.

Because writing is an organic process, your section of WRIT may spend more time on certain elements of writing than other sections. This will depend on your class and its progress.

Remember, there are often over 100 sections of WRIT offered in any given semester.

As a general overview, the following paragraphs discuss what you will learn in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter 2, "Close Reading and Textual Analysis," explores the importance of understanding the components of a text and how to read it to craft an argument. Chapters 3 through Chapter 5 are geared to help you apply those basics to college-level writing assignments. Chapter 3, "The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?" shows the writing process in action with explanations and examples of techniques you can use during each step of the process. Chapter 4, "Writing Essays From Start to Finish," further discusses the components of college essays—how to create and support a thesis and how to organize an essay effectively. Chapter 5, "Rhetorical Modes," discusses specific modes of writing you will encounter as a college student and explains how to approach these different assignments.

Chapter 6, "Writing Paragraphs: Separating Ideas and Shaping Content," guides you through the process of developing a paragraph, while Chapter 7, "Writing Basics" reviews the parts of speech and the components of a sentence. Chapter 8, "Working with Words, "reviews concepts that will help you use words correctly, including everything from commonly confused words to using context clues. Chapter 9, "Refining Your Writing," will ground you in writing basics: the "nuts and bolts" of grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph development that you need to master to produce competent college-level writing. Chapter 10, "Punctuation," explains how to use punctuation correctly.

The appendices in this book include additional support for college-level writing. Appendix A, "Help for English Language Learners," provides guidance for students who have learned English as a second language." Appendix B, "Examples of Essays," provides additional examples of different essay types, while Appendix C, "Documentation Resources," provides external support for documenting sources.

Key Takeaways

- Following the steps of the writing process helps students complete any writing assignment more successfully.

- To manage writing assignments, it is best to work backward from the due date, allotting appropriate time to complete each step of the writing process.
- Setting concrete long- and short-term goals helps students stay focused and motivated.
- A variety of post-secondary resources are available to help students with writing and other aspects of college life.

1.4 Introduction to Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Exercises

1. Find out more about your learning style by visiting your academic resource center or doing Internet research. Take note of strategies that are recommended for different types of learners. Which strategies do you already use? Which strategies could you incorporate into your routine

2. Apply the following comprehension and active reading strategies to an assigned reading:

   ◦ Locate the writer's main idea and major supporting points. (Use text features to gather clues.)
   ◦ Apply the SQ3R strategy: Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Record, and Review and Reflect.
   ◦ Apply at least one other active reading strategy appropriate for the text, such as visualizing or connecting the text to personal experiences.

3. After reviewing your syllabus, map out a timeline of major assignments in the course. Describe the steps you anticipate needing to follow in order to complete these assignments.

4. Take a few minutes to skim through the remaining chapters of this book, whose contents are described in [Section 1.3 "Becoming a Successful College Writer"](). Use self-stick notes or flags to mark any sections that you expect to consult frequently when you write, such as a grammar guide or guidelines for a particular essay format. You may wish to similarly make notes in other writing handbooks you own and any other reference books you will need to use frequently.

Chapter 2: Close Reading and Textual Analysis

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2.1 Introduction to Close Reading

Writing an essay at the university level means entering an **ongoing scholarly conversation**. Before you select an essay subject, you should know that throughout history, scholars have addressed and articulated similar concerns and ideas; many have dedicated their lives to these problems and arguments. So, rather than worrying about generating a new idea, it would be wise to aim for active and informed participation in that conversation. This is done via the process of analysis.

Key Term: Analysis

Analysis is when you read a text, find specific details from that text and use those details as evidence to examine that text's argument and purpose.

In order to analyze and contribute meaningfully, you must first understand all parts of this scholarly conversation. Therefore, the ability to **closely read** and understand others' writing is vital.

Gathering Evidence

Every close reading relies on evidence. Without evidence, a writer is simply stating their opinion. As such, writing an essay begins well before you start writing with the process of gathering evidence. In fact, very little essay writing is actually "writing." Rather, most of the essay writing process is:

Every text has an argument. You have to look for it. Pixabay. CC0 1.0

- **Gathering evidence** (reading the text and taking notes)
- **Pre-planning** and **pre-writing** (outlining and brainstorming)
- **Research** (of definitions, other scholars' concepts, statistics)
- **Drafting** (early attempts at thesis paragraphs and body paragraphs that will be revised as the process continues).

The rest of the writing process will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, but for now, let's focus on how to perform a close reading of a piece of writing by focusing on gathering evidence.

We will outline how to gather evidence by modelling the task of slowing down and recording all the observations that are to be had within a text.

2.2 Learning to Read with a Purpose

In these early stages of close reading, it is unnecessary to immediately find an analytical angle or identify the author's overall purpose. At the beginning of your close reading, your greatest asset is time; therefore, you should slow down. Analyzing a text is a multi-stage process; finding evidence from a text is the very beginning of that process. The tools we introduce in this chapter will not help you if you do not give yourself the time needed to apply them properly.

By the end of the chapter, you will be asked to write a brief paragraph wherein you reconstruct what you've identified as the author's complex argument, but at this early stage of the chapter, we need to gather evidence with which we can begin that reconstruction.

> You should not jump immediately to your thesis; instead, you need to gather complex evidence by reading slowly with a pen in hand. You should take this time to annotate the text you are reading with your observations and initial interpretations.

For now, annotating what you are reading is enough—note interesting, confusing, or repeated things. When your task is to analyze a text, resist the need to jump in and begin drafting your thesis right away. Instead, to ensure you will eventually make an argument of adequate complexity, you should devote the time necessary to examine the text thoroughly.

To examine a text closely, you should:

1. Annotate your experience
2. Take notice
3. Be granular

1. Annotate your experience

You will always begin by reading with a pen in hand, writing in the margins, underlining, highlighting, and otherwise marking the text if you own the text or by taking notes on a separate piece of paper if you are borrowing the text.

You can draw arrows in the margins to link different parts of the text to follow the author's logic and argument. If you are reading online, you should habitually annotate your reading experience in some way.

You can do this on paper or with a digital text editor or PDF

Mark down what you notice. Pixabay. CC0 1.0

editor, which allows you to highlight and make notes or comments. Hypothes.is is a free general purpose web and PDF annotator that you can use for that purpose.

2. Take notice

During your first reading of a text, you should look for elements that jump out at you that you think are interesting or puzzling or may need more attention in a second reading. Underline or highlight words you do not understand, then seek out definitions for those words. If you encounter a new word, it is likely that the word is significant to the central message or theme of the text.

3. Be granular

Reading critically requires being granular. It is not enough to flag whole sentences or even whole paragraphs. You must get down to the level of the word. Begin by looking for some straightforward clues:

a. What's interesting? What's strange?
What words and phrases catch your attention in your first reading? This may take the form of repetitions; if a word or phrase is repeated, it is likely central to the author's purpose.

b. What words or phrases are new to you?
You will probably encounter words or phrases you have never read or heard. You may also encounter facts or concepts you are learning for the first time. That's great! Make a note of them and then look them up, or seek out additional information.

The use of contrasting language in a scholarly text is deliberate and noteworthy. Pixabay. CC0 1.0

c. What patterns are present?
What elements of the argument repeat? A common pattern is the use of synonyms or words that are similar thematically. If there are several synonyms or thematic terms, the author is likely focusing on a specific idea or argument that can be conveyed using these words. You might also consider larger sets of words. For example, if an author is using verbs like "flow" and "poured," nouns like "ocean" and "river," and adjectives like "wet" or "fluid," you might note that there are a lot of water-related words. Three or more words in a list of synonyms or thematically related words or phrases probably indicate a pattern.

d. What contrasts or opposites are present?
Are there words that are opposites or words understood to be contrasts of one another? The author may use these to establish the main argument by comparing points or establishing a counterargument. It may also be that the author is offering a more nuanced approach to a subject, so it's important to look for subtle or implied contrasts that are not as stark as good/bad or black/white. For example, an author might use the words "infantilize" and then later "adult"—while

the author does not juxtapose the words side by side, the two words are opposites and may be clues about the author's larger argument.

As you mark up your text and make notes, remember there is no such thing as too much data at this phase. The more information you have, the more nuanced your reading will be and the deeper your understanding of the text. You should try to compile exhaustive lists of at least 7-10 interesting words, 7-10 definitions of new words, 7-10 lists of synonyms, and 7-10 contrasts.

> **Reminder:** Do not jump into an argument; you do not need to explain what anything means. Just gather as many observations and potential pieces of evidence as you can.

2.3 A Close Reading Example

Let's Look at a Close Reading Example

Watch the video below to see the key steps in gathering evidence from the essay *"The Plot to Privatize Common Knowledge"* by David Bollier. It may be useful for you to review the essay before watching the video.

Read: The Plot to Privatize Common Knowledge

Over the past three decades, modern culture has become infatuated with the idea that knowledge should be owned like real estate or stock shares. The original idea, of course, is that copyrights, trademarks and patents reward people for their creative labors and thereby boosts the common good.

But this line of thinking has come to resemble a kind of Market Fundamentalism: copyrights, trademarks and patents are the only morally legitimate and practical method for managing creations of the mind. There is no middle ground. You either believe in intellectual property rights, or you support "theft" and "piracy.

This fundamentalist approach shuts down a broader discussion about how knowledge ought to circulate in our culture. To avoid any confusion, let me just say straight-up that I believe in copyrights and patents. In some cases, they provide significant and necessary incentives to invest in new works. But today, copyrights and patents are going far beyond their intended goals—such as the U.S. Constitution provision to "promote progress in science and the useful arts"—to become ends in themselves. Instead of carefully balancing private interests and public needs, copyrights and patents are becoming crude, anti-social instruments of control and avarice.

This is the conclusion that I came to in my book *Brand Name Bullies*, which is filled with dozens of stories of copyright and trademark owners bullying citizens, artists, scholars and others with ridiculous legal threats.

Silent Campfires

One of my favorite stories about the alarming expansion of copyright law involves ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, the organization that collects performance licensing fees from public establishments where recorded music is played.

ASCAP decided that their domain should be extended to summer camps. Why shouldn't boys and girls singing around the campfire be considered a "public performance" that should pay royalties? A while back ASCAP approached the American Camping Association and said it wanted blanket

performance licenses from hundreds of summer camps— something on the order of $300 to $1,400 per season per camp.

This caused quite a ruckus. When it was discovered that ASCAP wanted money for the Girl Scouts to sing "This Land Is Your Land" and "Puff, the Magic Dragon", the press went nuts. There were stories about camps resorting to non-copyrighted songs like "The Bow-Legged Chicken." An ASCAP official heartlessly told a reporter: "They [camps] buy paper, twine and glue for their crafts – they can pay for the music too." Eventually, after a huge public outcry, ASCAP backed down. But its claim to legal authority in charging summer camps for their "public performances" of copyrighted songs remains intact.

Lawsuit Barbie

The issue in so many of these battles is: Who shall control the "public meaning" of familiar images? Mattel is legendary in trying to protect the cultural "meaning" of Barbie. It has gone after any unauthorized uses of Barbie. It went after a series of photographs by Mark Napier called Distorted Barbie, which dared to depict Barbie as fat or as having Down's Syndrome. Even highly distorted images of Barbie that were essentially unrecognizable were deemed unacceptable by Mattel.

Mattel went after a magazine that caters to adult collectors of Barbie dolls. Mattel even pressured the Seattle publisher of a book, *Adios, Barbie: Young Women Write About Body Image and Identity*, to change the title. The book was reprinted as *Body Outlaws*. This extreme clampdown on free expression spurred culture-jammers, such as the self-styled Barbie Liberation Organization, which substituted voice boxes of GI Joe with those in Barbie, so that GI Joe would say, "Let's plan our dream wedding," and Barbie would yell, "Vengeance is mine!"

I am happy to report, a federal circuit court in the United States put a damper on Mattel's bullying litigation. The case involved Utah photographer Tom Forsythe, who made a series of 78 photos of Barbie for his *Food Chain Barbie* exhibit. It featured Barbie in enchiladas, stuffed into a blender and in other kitchen poses. Only a few of Forsythe's photos sold. He spent about $5,000 to mount the exhibit, and lost money. No matter; Mattel wanted to send a message that you can't mess with Barbie. It spent years litigating the case, requiring Forsythe to find pro bono legal counsel, which spent nearly $2 million defending him. Forsythe prevailed in the circuit court, which delivered a stinging rebuke to Mattel for bringing a "groundless and unreasonable" trademark dilution claim.

Watch Your Words

The privatization of words—language is one of the most basic form of commons— is another disturbing trend. The Japanese corporation that owns the "Godzilla" trademark has a habit of threatening all sorts of people who use the phoneme "zilla," including a website called "Davezilla" that featured a lizard-like cartoon character.

The corporate obsession with owning words is really quite extensive. McDonald's claims to own 131 words and phrases. The San Diego-based McDonald's actually claims to own the Irish prefix "Mc." It has successfully prevented restaurant from naming their businesses McVegan, McSushi and McMunchies.

Ralph Lauren, the clothing line, went after Polo magazine, run by an equestrian organization, claiming it was a trademark infringement for the U.S. Polo Association to use the word "polo" on its line of clothing! MasterCard went after Ralph Nader for using "priceless" in his campaign ads when running for President in 2000. (Nader's free speech rights ultimately prevailed.) But the gay athletes who wanted to host a series of athletic competitions in San Francisco could not use the phrase "Gay Olympics" because that phrase is owned by the U.S. Olympic Committee, who gets to decide who can use it. "Special Olympics" for disabled kids is OK, but not "Gay Olympics."

The TV demagogue Bill O'Reilly reportedly went ballistic when he learned that the comedian (and now senator) Al Franken was using the words "fair and balanced" as a subtitle in his book that mocked various right-wing pundit, including him. The federal court laughed Fox News' case out of court, and Franken won. But pity the people who can't afford to hire Floyd Abrams, a prominent First Amendment attorney, to represent them. A woman from Los Angeles dared to name her neighborhood newspaper the *Beechwood Voice*. She was threatened with legal action by the *Village Voice*, which claimed that use of the word "voice" as a newspaper name diluted its trademark.

These stories illustrate just how far Market Fundamentalism is willing to go in order to enforce its vision of the world. It wants to commodify all of culture as private property, and require people to obtain permission (and to make royalties) before embarking on any modestly derivative new creativity. This approach, not coincidentally, favors the Disneys, Time Warners and Rupert Murdochs because it protects the market value of large inventories of copyrighted and trademarked works. It directly stifles expression that is local, amateur, small-scale or non-commercial in nature—the kind of expression that almost anyone outside a powerful corporation would engage in. This amounts to a wholesale privatization of our cultural commons.

Patents Privatize Taxpayer-Funded Research

The Market Fundamentalist worldview is even more infuriating, if that is possible, when applied to patents arising out of publicly funded research. Until 35 years ago, there had been a broad consensus that the intellectual property rights of federal research should stay in the public domain, or at least be licensed on a nonexclusive basis. That way, taxpayers could reap the full measure of value from their collective investments. In the late 1970s, however, large pharmaceutical, electronics and chemical companies mounted a bold lobbying campaign to reverse the public ownership of federal research. Since enactment of Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, authorizing universities to patent the fruits of federally funded research, we have seen a land rush to sell academic research that was once freely available to all.

Between 1980 and 2000, the number of patents secured by universities grew ten-fold, bringing in more than $1 billion in royalties and licensing fees—a windfall enjoyed mostly by a dozen top research universities. This, in reality, is a privatization of the public's investments. Even though the public pays for the lion's share of risky basic research for new drugs, the long-term equity returns tend to go to drug companies and a handful of top research universities. In the United States, we have seen this with the cancer drug Taxol; the anti-depressant Prozac; the hypertension drug Capoten; and a number of HIV and AIDS therapies.

The upshot is that citizens often have to pay twice for pharmaceuticals and other medical treatments—first, as taxpayers who finance the research, and second, as consumers who pay monopoly prices for drugs. This is a pure giveaway because it's not even clear that companies need exclusive patent rights as an incentive to commercialize new drug research.

Corporations Loot Indigenous People's Knowledge

Multinational corporations are no longer content to simply claim ownership of commons knowledge at home. Now they scour the developing world—in a practice known as biopiracy—to claim patents on the botanical and ecological knowledge acquired by indigenous people through the centuries. They move into Madagascar, Brazil, Guatemala and other poor countries to find plants and microorganisms that might be used in making new medicines and genetically engineered crops. But as Seth Shulman writes in his book *Owning the Future*, "Who, if anyone, should be able to claim ownership rights to the globe's genetic and cultural inheritance?"

Sir John Sulston answers this question eloquently in his book, *The Common Thread*, which chronicles the race to de-code the human genome. A private startup company, Celera, was aggressively trying to put genomic sequences in one big privatized database. That way, it would have a monopoly over future use of the genomic data by licensing access to its database. Fortunately, a coalition of public-sector scientists published the data first, which is why the human genome is now in the public domain. Sulston answers, quite rightly, that the human genome must be treated as the "common heritage of humankind."

Life Itself Can Now Be Owned

We dodged a bullet there when the publicly funded scientists won the race to decode human genome. Yet the threat of private ownership of essential knowledge for the sake of profits is not by any means over. Further attempts will by the logical culmination of a path first opened by the U.S. Supreme Court's *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* ruling in 1980, which authorized the patenting of live, genetically altered microorganisms. The patenting of living organisms opened the way for an ecologically and ethically dubious future in which the life forms that are part of the sacred web of life can be owned and treated as commodities. Knowledge is treated as private property, not as a public good.

One inevitable result of all these new ownership claims is the rise of new barriers to open sharing, collaboration and discovery among researchers and scholars. Patents are increasingly being granted for "upstream" research, which means that basic knowledge that everyone else must use for the field to advance, is becoming proprietary. Harvard, MIT and the Whitehead Institute, for example, have a patent on all drugs that inhibit something known as NF-kB cell signaling. Since this physiological process is believed to have something to do with many diseases such as cancer and osteoporosis, the patent deters anyone else from pursuing their own scientific investigations in this area.

Things were not always this way concerning valuable knowledge. Contrast these stories with Jonas Salk, the inventor of the polio vaccine. When journalist Edward R. Murrow asked him, "Who owns the patent on this vaccine?" Salk replied, "Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?" This story helps us remember that current notions about ownership of knowledge are not inevitable and universal; they are the result of mounting market pressures to make our scientific and cultural commons into private property.

The privatization of knowledge has only intensified as the courts—in the United States, at least—have lowered the standards for obtaining patents while broadening the scope of what is patentable. It is now possible to own mathematical algorithms embedded in software programs. The very tools needed to conduct scientific research are now private property, available only for a steep fee.

Imagine what might have happened to biotechnology and computer science if contemporary patent rules had been in place in the 1950s and 1960s. Neither the biotech nor the computer revolution would have occurred in the first place. Too much fundamental knowledge would have been off limits due to patents.

Problem of the Anti-Commons

The over-patenting of knowledge sometimes results in what is called an "anti-commons" problem, in which property rights for a given field of research are so numerous and fragmented that it becomes very difficult to conduct research. The transaction costs for obtaining rights are simply too numerous and costly. For example, there are thirty-four "patent families" for a single malarial antigen, and those rights, applying to different pieces of the research agenda, are owned by different parties in many different countries. One reason that a malaria vaccine has been so elusive is because the patent rights are so complicated and expensive to secure.

It is worth noting that openness, sharing and the public domain do not harm the market. Quite the contrary. They invigorate it. In 2005, I co-hosted a conference called *Ready to Share: Fashion and the Ownership of Creativity*. It explored the power of openness in apparel design. Precisely because no one can own the creative design of clothes—they can only own the company name and logo, as trademarks—everyone can participate in the design commons. The result is a more robust, innovative and competitive marketplace. This is exactly the effect that Linux, the open-

source computer operating system, had on the software sector. It has opened up new opportunities for value-added innovation and competition in a marketplace until then dominated by the Microsoft monopoly.

Yale Professor Yochai Benkler argues in his magisterial book, *The Wealth of Networks*, that a great deal of knowledge production is more effectively pursued through a commons than through markets. Questions of ethics aside, why doesn't money succeed at simply "buying" the knowledge it needs? Because money tends to subvert the social dynamics that make the knowledge commons work. It can sabotage self-directed inquiry. It undermines the social trust, candor and ethics that are essential to creativity and good research.

Examples

Though he quickly clarifies that he "straight-up" believes in copyrights and patents, Bollier is equally quick to establish his claim that contemporary corporations have converted these property rights and claims into "crude, anti-social instruments of control and avarice." He clearly establishes a binary between these greedy corporations rushing to privatize, manage, and outright own songs, words and even prefixes and the public seeking to share "fundamental knowledge" for the sake of the "common good." Through continued use of this contrast, Bollier makes certain his readers cannot miss what is really at stake in this quest to manage "creations of the mind": an "over-patenting" of thought to the point where the average person can no longer access the accumulated wisdom of humanity freely.

> 📑 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/reasonandwriting/?p=1003#oembed-1*

Video: "Chapter 1 Video 2" by Toronto Metropolitan University [1:24] is licensed under the Standard Youtube License. Captions and transcripts are available on YouTube.

Identifying Key Words

Interesting words	New words or Phrases
common good, managing creations of the mind, useful arts, public meaning, cultural meaning, corporate obsession, ecologically and ethically dubious, fundamental knowledge, over-patenting	market fundamentalism, ruckus, avarice, clampdown, culture-jammers, trademark dilution, privatization of words, cultural commons, land rush, biopiracy, anti-commons
Synonyms/synonyms	**Contrasts**
Corporate control: crude, anti-social instruments of control and avarice; bullying; alarming expansion of copyright lawCreepy control: managing creations of the mind; useful arts; privatization of word Theft: land rush; biopiracy; anti-commons What's at stake: modern culture; common good; fundamental knowledge Money: robust, innovative and competitive marketplace; monopoly; markets Market jargon: Market Fundamentalism; trademark dilution; market value Be nice!: sharing; collaboration; public good	intellectual property rights v. "theft" and "piracy", useful v. useless, big business v. new voices, commercial v. non-commercial, claim v. inheritance, barriers v. sharing, patent v. collaboration, private property v. public good, deter v. encourage, elusive v. secure, New opportunities v. monopoly, Commons v. markets

2.4 Close Reading Activity 1

Read the following essay. On a separate piece of paper, identify 7-10 **interesting words**, 7-10 **definitions of new words**, 7-10 **lists of synonyms**, and 7-10 **contrasts**.

The Ultimate Communications App
The most amazing invention of all-time, and it belongs to all of us

Author: Charles Justice

I've just invented a new communication app. It can be used by almost everyone; it works anywhere and anytime, night or day; it doesn't need batteries, it doesn't need to be plugged in, and it doesn't even need the internet. Once people start using it, it is so easy that it is almost impossible to stop using it; it becomes indispensable, and you are hooked; you cannot be without it. It can be tailored to suit any occasion. Its use facilitates an expanding network of people and opens up incredible possibilities for creativity and cooperation.

There are only two things that may be problematic with it: my new app takes about four years to download. Yes, you heard correctly, not four minutes but four years. And usually, only ridiculously young kids know how to download it, but, like I said, it takes about four years. During that time, the system needs constant maintenance and TLC. The other snag is that once someone starts using it, it becomes common property, available to everyone free, and so I personally, can't get rich off of it.

Are you ready to try my new free app? It's called language. OK, I lied. It's not a new app, and I didn't invent it. But everything else I said about it is true, and it was invented by the first humans sometime within the last five hundred thousand years.

What is language? A method of communication that is available to virtually all humans to use. A common way for us to share information and create enduring knowledge. One of the first, but not the first, commons created by human collective agreement.

Take a proto-language "Me Tarzan, you Jane." Start with naming, then add verbs to describe actions and emotions. Once you begin to share information, you create a common space of understanding among you and your fellow speakers. This common space can be called a commons.

What is a commons? A commons is a level-playing field. Everybody gets to breathe air, and

we have that in common with most other species. Here in the rain forests of the Pacific Northwest, fresh water is a common resource.

We parcel up the land into properties, but much land is held in common in the form of parks, trackless wilderness, public rights of way and public spaces. The sunlight that falls to earth is common to all plants and animals on land, fish and whales in the sea.

Before the human development of agriculture and domestication humans lived for millions of years in hunter-gatherer bands of approximately thirty to a hundred people. If the band survived and prospered, eventually, as population grew over generations, a new band would split off. As this process continued, a larger and larger area of land would need to be occupied.

Eventually, groups that originally were connected would become separated permanently by mountains or water barriers. Originally, we had everything in common. Then, because of our success in outgrowing our original environment, we ceased to have a common place and identity.

This is probably the basis for the evolution of different languages (see "Tower of Babel") If we go back far enough in time, all of us living today have a common history, but over thousands of years different peoples occupying different places have come to conflict and cooperation with each other.

Each of us has our humanity and human origins in common with everyone else alive today. Since then, we may have got here in different ways, but we all share the present time in common. We, in fact, share this age in common with the Earth's biosphere and all its manifest diversity.

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2.5 Pause and Reflect: The Observational Paragraph

Now that you've identified 7-10 interesting words, 7-10 definitions of new words, 7-10 lists of synonyms and/or patterns, 7-10 contrasts, watch the video below entitled "**The Analysis of "The Ultimate Communications App" by Charles Justice** and compare your list of evidence to the ones gathered in the video.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/reasonandwriting/?p=929#oembed-1*

Video: "Chapter 1 Video 2" by Toronto Metropolitan University [2:44] is licensed under the Standard Youtube License. Captions and transcripts are available on YouTube.

Identifying Key Words

Interesting words	New words
Indispensable, Creativity, Cooperation, Property, Process, Human development, Occupied	Proto-language, Commons, Domestication, Tower of Babel, Biosphere, Manifest Destiny
Synonyms/repetitions	**Contrasts**
Battery, Plugged in, Download, Internet, Network, App, Commons, Cooperation, Download, Language, New, Invented, Sunlight, Fish, Whales, Plants, Animals, Evolution, Growth, Cooperation, Humanity, Everyone	Property v. free, New v. original, Information v. language, Private v. public spaces, Human v. nature, Present v. past, Common v. private space, Collective v. individual

Pause and Reflect

Have a long look over your list of observations and narrow it down to the best two. Review the information you have collected.

- What's connected?

- What are your two best pieces of evidence?

The Observational Paragraph

The next step is to carefully consider your observations list and narrow it down to the best two. Review the information you have collected. What's connected? Group similar observations together and consider which observations are the strongest and most interesting and which are the most complex. Your small and focused pieces of evidence or observations should be something you can literally put your finger on. Your observations must be one to three-word phrases (ex. "Age of citizen"). Also, consider whether your *two best key observations support different elements of the author's complex argument*. Evidence that is too similar will build a repetitive argument that likely will not develop the level of complexity required to write at a university level.

Your goal is to look at the long list of evidence you just gathered and choose the best two pieces. Look at your entire list of evidence and ask yourself:

- Which of these pieces of evidence points most clearly to the author's argument?
- Which of these pieces of evidence has the most interesting or complex language?
- Which of these pieces of evidence would I be interested in discussing?
- Which pieces of evidence overlap? Can I make groups out of certain pieces of evidence?

Look at your entire list of potential evidence, and, using these basic questions as your guide, focus on two key pieces of evidence. Going back to *"The Plot to Privatize Common Knowledge"* by David Bollier from Section 2.3 of this text and the evidence we gathered in Video 1.2, we went through the list and, with the above questions in mind, decided that the two pieces of evidence we wanted to focus on were:

1. The binary between corporations and the public is because Bollier wants to establish that the corporations are greedy in their rush to privatize knowledge of many forms, whereas the public, he argues, has a fundamental right to the "common good" of that knowledge.
2. The description of the copyrights and patterns as "anti-social instruments of control" because the author wants to ensure that the readers understand that copyrights and patents, when abused, are negative capitalist systems built around restricting, controlling and owning ideas and knowledge and treating those ideas and that knowledge as property.

2.6 Close Reading Activity 2: The Observational Paragraph

Write down what you've chosen as your two best pieces of evidence that you feel most clearly support the author's complex argument. For each of those pieces of evidence, write one sentence explaining why you chose that piece of evidence, and what portion of the author's argument that specific piece of evidence is supporting.

Now that you have two pieces of evidence and justification for why you are using those specific pieces of evidence, you are ready to move to the next stage of pre-writing and draft an observational paragraph. The goal of an observational paragraph is to

- Explain why you've chosen each piece of evidence
- Link your two pieces of evidence together
- Explain how that evidence supports a specific complex argument that the author is making within the text.

This is not your thesis but, rather, a pre-writing activity that is meant to be an initial gathering of ideas that you will begin to shape into a more concrete close reading in the coming chapters. Do not worry about getting it all "correct" or "perfect." Just get your ideas out and be willing to edit! While this paragraph will not be your exact thesis, it will contain elements that you can use later to write a strong thesis statement that proposes your analysis of the author's complex argument.

When linking evidence to the author's complex argument, you should consider the following:

- How does the author's specific language in the evidence I've chosen speak to the argumentative position the author is taking? In a basic way, consider whether the words the author chooses point towards a negative or positive attitude towards their general subject.
- Why has the author made the deliberate choice to use the words that you have chosen as specific evidence? What do those words mean? Why would the author choose those words and not an alternative?
- In what ways is the evidence that I have chosen a small compact example of the larger argument the author is making? In other words, how does the small specific piece of evidence chosen to expand out to the author's larger complex argument?

Let's begin with an example, and after you read it, you can use it as a model to write your own observational paragraph. Here is an observational paragraph using 2 key pieces of evidence found in an

analysis of an essay by David Bollier entitled, "The Plot to Privatize Common Knowledge." You can read the article below, if you wish, for context.

Read: The Plot to Privatize Common Knowledge

Read David Bollier's "The Plot to Privatize Common Knowledge," and once you have completed reading it, analyze the author's argument.

Over the past three decades, modern culture has become infatuated with the idea that knowledge should be owned like real estate or stock shares. The original idea, of course, is that copyrights, trademarks and patents reward people for their creative labors and thereby boosts the common good.

But this line of thinking has come to resemble a kind of Market Fundamentalism: copyrights, trademarks and patents are the only morally legitimate and practical method for managing creations of the mind. There is no middle ground. You either believe in intellectual property rights, or you support "theft" and "piracy.

This fundamentalist approach shuts down a broader discussion about how knowledge ought to circulate in our culture. To avoid any confusion, let me just say straight-up that I believe in copyrights and patents. In some cases, they provide significant and necessary incentives to invest in new works. But today, copyrights and patents are going far beyond their intended goals—such as the U.S. Constitution provision to "promote progress in science and the useful arts"—to become ends in themselves. Instead of carefully balancing private interests and public needs, copyrights and patents are becoming crude, anti-social instruments of control and avarice.

This is the conclusion that I came to in my book *Brand Name Bullies*, which is filled with dozens of stories of copyright and trademark owners bullying citizens, artists, scholars and others with ridiculous legal threats.

Silent Campfires

One of my favorite stories about the alarming expansion of copyright law involves ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, the organization that collects performance licensing fees from public establishments where recorded music is played.

ASCAP decided that their domain should be extended to summer camps. Why shouldn't boys and girls singing around the campfire be considered a "public performance" that should pay royalties? A while back ASCAP approached the American Camping Association and said it wanted blanket performance licenses from hundreds of summer camps— something on the order of $300 to $1,400 per season per camp.

This caused quite a ruckus. When it was discovered that ASCAP wanted money for the Girl

Scouts to sing "This Land Is Your Land" and "Puff, the Magic Dragon", the press went nuts. There were stories about camps resorting to non-copyrighted songs like "The Bow-Legged Chicken." An ASCAP official heartlessly told a reporter: "They [camps] buy paper, twine and glue for their crafts – they can pay for the music too." Eventually, after a huge public outcry, ASCAP backed down. But its claim to legal authority in charging summer camps for their "public performances" of copyrighted songs remains intact.

Lawsuit Barbie

The issue in so many of these battles is: Who shall control the "public meaning" of familiar images? Mattel is legendary in trying to protect the cultural "meaning" of Barbie. It has gone after any unauthorized uses of Barbie. It went after a series of photographs by Mark Napier called Distorted Barbie, which dared to depict Barbie as fat or as having Down's Syndrome. Even highly distorted images of Barbie that were essentially unrecognizable were deemed unacceptable by Mattel.

Mattel went after a magazine that caters to adult collectors of Barbie dolls. Mattel even pressured the Seattle publisher of a book, *Adios, Barbie: Young Women Write About Body Image and Identity*, to change the title. The book was reprinted as *Body Outlaws*. This extreme clampdown on free expression spurred culture-jammers, such as the self-styled Barbie Liberation Organization, which substituted voice boxes of GI Joe with those in Barbie, so that GI Joe would say, "Let's plan our dream wedding," and Barbie would yell, "Vengeance is mine!"

I am happy to report, a federal circuit court in the United States put a damper on Mattel's bullying litigation. The case involved Utah photographer Tom Forsythe, who made a series of 78 photos of Barbie for his *Food Chain Barbie* exhibit. It featured Barbie in enchiladas, stuffed into a blender and in other kitchen poses. Only a few of Forsythe's photos sold. He spent about $5,000 to mount the exhibit, and lost money. No matter; Mattel wanted to send a message that you can't mess with Barbie. It spent years litigating the case, requiring Forsythe to find pro bono legal counsel, which spent nearly $2 million defending him. Forsythe prevailed in the circuit court, which delivered a stinging rebuke to Mattel for bringing a "groundless and unreasonable" trademark dilution claim.

Watch Your Words

The privatization of words—language is one of the most basic form of commons— is another disturbing trend. The Japanese corporation that owns the "Godzilla" trademark has a habit of threatening all sorts of people who use the phoneme "zilla," including a website called "Davezilla" that featured a lizard-like cartoon character.

The corporate obsession with owning words is really quite extensive. McDonald's claims to own 131 words and phrases. The San Diego-based McDonald's actually claims to own the Irish prefix

"Mc." It has successfully prevented restaurant from naming their businesses McVegan, McSushi and McMunchies.

Ralph Lauren, the clothing line, went after Polo magazine, run by an equestrian organization, claiming it was a trademark infringement for the U.S. Polo Association to use the word "polo" on its line of clothing! MasterCard went after Ralph Nader for using "priceless" in his campaign ads when running for President in 2000. (Nader's free speech rights ultimately prevailed.) But the gay athletes who wanted to host a series of athletic competitions in San Francisco could not use the phrase "Gay Olympics" because that phrase is owned by the U.S. Olympic Committee, who gets to decide who can use it. "Special Olympics" for disabled kids is OK, but not "Gay Olympics."

The TV demagogue Bill O'Reilly reportedly went ballistic when he learned that the comedian (and now senator) Al Franken was using the words "fair and balanced" as a subtitle in his book that mocked various right-wing pundit, including him. The federal court laughed Fox News' case out of court, and Franken won. But pity the people who can't afford to hire Floyd Abrams, a prominent First Amendment attorney, to represent them. A woman from Los Angeles dared to name her neighborhood newspaper the *Beechwood Voice*. She was threatened with legal action by the *Village Voice*, which claimed that use of the word "voice" as a newspaper name diluted its trademark.

These stories illustrate just how far Market Fundamentalism is willing to go in order to enforce its vision of the world. It wants to commodify all of culture as private property, and require people to obtain permission (and to make royalties) before embarking on any modestly derivative new creativity. This approach, not coincidentally, favors the Disneys, Time Warners and Rupert Murdochs because it protects the market value of large inventories of copyrighted and trademarked works. It directly stifles expression that is local, amateur, small-scale or non-commercial in nature—the kind of expression that almost anyone outside a powerful corporation would engage in. This amounts to a wholesale privatization of our cultural commons.

Patents Privatize Taxpayer-Funded Research

The Market Fundamentalist worldview is even more infuriating, if that is possible, when applied to patents arising out of publicly funded research. Until 35 years ago, there had been a broad consensus that the intellectual property rights of federal research should stay in the public domain, or at least be licensed on a nonexclusive basis. That way, taxpayers could reap the full measure of value from their collective investments. In the late 1970s, however, large pharmaceutical, electronics and chemical companies mounted a bold lobbying campaign to reverse the public ownership of federal research. Since enactment of Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, authorizing universities to patent the fruits of federally funded research, we have seen a land rush to sell academic research that was once freely available to all.

Between 1980 and 2000, the number of patents secured by universities grew ten-fold, bringing in more than $1 billion in royalties and licensing fees—a windfall enjoyed mostly by a dozen top

research universities. This, in reality, is a privatization of the public's investments. Even though the public pays for the lion's share of risky basic research for new drugs, the long-term equity returns tend to go to drug companies and a handful of top research universities. In the United States, we have seen this with the cancer drug Taxol; the anti-depressant Prozac; the hypertension drug Capoten; and a number of HIV and AIDS therapies.

The upshot is that citizens often have to pay twice for pharmaceuticals and other medical treatments—first, as taxpayers who finance the research, and second, as consumers who pay monopoly prices for drugs. This is a pure giveaway because it's not even clear that companies need exclusive patent rights as an incentive to commercialize new drug research.

Corporations Loot Indigenous People's Knowledge

Multinational corporations are no longer content to simply claim ownership of commons knowledge at home. Now they scour the developing world—in a practice known as biopiracy—to claim patents on the botanical and ecological knowledge acquired by indigenous people through the centuries. They move into Madagascar, Brazil, Guatemala and other poor countries to find plants and microorganisms that might be used in making new medicines and genetically engineered crops. But as Seth Shulman writes in his book *Owning the Future*, "Who, if anyone, should be able to claim ownership rights to the globe's genetic and cultural inheritance?"

Sir John Sulston answers this question eloquently in his book, *The Common Thread*, which chronicles the race to de-code the human genome. A private startup company, Celera, was aggressively trying to put genomic sequences in one big privatized database. That way, it would have a monopoly over future use of the genomic data by licensing access to its database. Fortunately, a coalition of public-sector scientists published the data first, which is why the human genome is now in the public domain. Sulston answers, quite rightly, that the human genome must be treated as the "common heritage of humankind."

Life Itself Can Now Be Owned

We dodged a bullet there when the publicly funded scientists won the race to decode human genome. Yet the threat of private ownership of essential knowledge for the sake of profits is not by any means over. Further attempts will by the logical culmination of a path first opened by the U.S. Supreme Court's *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* ruling in 1980, which authorized the patenting of live, genetically altered microorganisms. The patenting of living organisms opened the way for an ecologically and ethically dubious future in which the life forms that are part of the sacred web of life can be owned and treated as commodities. Knowledge is treated as private property, not as a public good.

One inevitable result of all these new ownership claims is the rise of new barriers to open sharing,

collaboration and discovery among researchers and scholars. Patents are increasingly being granted for "upstream" research, which means that basic knowledge that everyone else must use for the field to advance, is becoming proprietary. Harvard, MIT and the Whitehead Institute, for example, have a patent on all drugs that inhibit something known as NF-kB cell signaling. Since this physiological process is believed to have something to do with many diseases such as cancer and osteoporosis, the patent deters anyone else from pursuing their own scientific investigations in this area.

Things were not always this way concerning valuable knowledge. Contrast these stories with Jonas Salk, the inventor of the polio vaccine. When journalist Edward R. Murrow asked him, "Who owns the patent on this vaccine?" Salk replied, "Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?" This story helps us remember that current notions about ownership of knowledge are not inevitable and universal; they are the result of mounting market pressures to make our scientific and cultural commons into private property.

The privatization of knowledge has only intensified as the courts—in the United States, at least—have lowered the standards for obtaining patents while broadening the scope of what is patentable. It is now possible to own mathematical algorithms embedded in software programs. The very tools needed to conduct scientific research are now private property, available only for a steep fee.

Imagine what might have happened to biotechnology and computer science if contemporary patent rules had been in place in the 1950s and 1960s. Neither the biotech nor the computer revolution would have occurred in the first place. Too much fundamental knowledge would have been off limits due to patents.

Problem of the Anti-Commons

The over-patenting of knowledge sometimes results in what is called an "anti-commons" problem, in which property rights for a given field of research are so numerous and fragmented that it becomes very difficult to conduct research. The transaction costs for obtaining rights are simply too numerous and costly. For example, there are thirty-four "patent families" for a single malarial antigen, and those rights, applying to different pieces of the research agenda, are owned by different parties in many different countries. One reason that a malaria vaccine has been so elusive is because the patent rights are so complicated and expensive to secure.

It is worth noting that openness, sharing and the public domain do not harm the market. Quite the contrary. They invigorate it. In 2005, I co-hosted a conference called *Ready to Share: Fashion and the Ownership of Creativity*. It explored the power of openness in apparel design. Precisely because no one can own the creative design of clothes—they can only own the company name and logo, as trademarks—everyone can participate in the design commons. The result is a more robust, innovative and competitive marketplace. This is exactly the effect that Linux, the open-source computer operating system, had on the software sector. It has opened up new

opportunities for value-added innovation and competition in a marketplace until then dominated by the Microsoft monopoly.

Yale Professor Yochai Benkler argues in his magisterial book, *The Wealth of Networks*, that a great deal of knowledge production is more effectively pursued through a commons than through markets. Questions of ethics aside, why doesn't money succeed at simply "buying" the knowledge it needs? Because money tends to subvert the social dynamics that make the knowledge commons work. It can sabotage self-directed inquiry. It undermines the social trust, candor and ethics that are essential to creativity and good research.

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Examples

Though he quickly clarifies that he "straight-up" believes in copyrights and patents, Bollier is equally quick to establish his claim that contemporary corporations have converted these property rights and claims into "crude, anti-social instruments of control and avarice." He clearly establishes a binary between these greedy corporations rushing to privatize, manage, and outright own songs, words and even prefixes and the public seeking to share "fundamental knowledge" for the sake of the "common good." Through continued use of this contrast, Bollier makes certain his readers cannot miss what is really at stake in this quest to manage "creations of the mind": an "over-patenting" of thought to the point where the average person can no longer access the accumulated wisdom of humanity freely.

Looking back over the list of data we gathered when examining Bollier's essay in Video 1.2, you will probably notice that this paragraph is based on the observations of the **binary between corporations and the public** and the abusive use of patents by corporations being characterized as **"anti-social instruments of control."** Using this information and the brief sentence description as to why we chose the evidence that we did, we were able to draft an observational paragraph in which we begin to propose what Bollier is really doing here.

Give it a Try

Go back to the list of evidence you gathered as you were reading <u>Charles Justice's "The Ultimate</u>

Communication App"; it may also be useful to rewatch Video 1.3. After this, write an observational paragraph of your own based on your annotation and observations of Charles Justice's "The Ultimate Communication App." Select the two pieces of evidence you believe best point to the author's complex argument and explain what makes those two pieces of evidence the strongest. From there, construct one to two sentences linking those two pieces of evidence to what you have identified as Justice's complex argument.

Again, you are still in the pre-writing phase, and you do not need to worry about your observational paragraph being completely polished. It is important at this stage to sift through all the evidence you've collected, choose what you think are the strongest two pieces and begin to analyze the author's complex argument. You can revise this observational paragraph later, but for now, it is important to write a first draft.
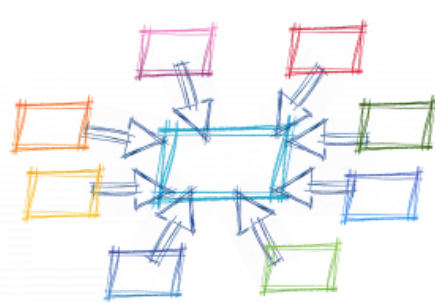
2.7 Final Thoughts on Close Reading

Compare the paragraph you just wrote to your earlier essay on Charles Justice's "The Ultimate Communications App." You will likely see the improvement that gathering focused pieces of evidence brings to analyzing the author's complex argument. Now that you are comfortable gathering information and crafting an observational paragraph, we will take the next step toward focusing that information into a purposeful thesis.

Get ready to organize your thoughts on the text. From Pixabay. [CC0 1.0](#)

When you revise an observational paragraph into your unique and controversial text reading, you must capture the original text's main argument and highlight the article's main points (including any key concepts or theories) while eliminating all extraneous or minor details. Review your observational paragraph and consider how you might revise it into a purposeful thesis that analyzes the author's complex argument.

In the next chapters, we will review the writing process, including composing thesis statements and constructing supporting paragraphs. This means that you want to do a little more than summarize or simply restate what is in the text. You want your readers to understand right away that *this is your reading* of the text that follows from *the evidence within the text that you have chosen*.

You are not summarizing, rather you are persuading your readers to see what they can learn about a text by reading it **your way**.

Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?

3.1 Apply Prewriting Models

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

Just as you need a recipe, ingredients, and proper tools to cook a delicious meal, you also need a plan, resources, and adequate time to create a good written composition. In other words, writing is a process that requires following steps and using strategies to accomplish your goals.

These are the five steps in the writing process:

1. Prewriting
2. Outlining the structure of ideas
3. Writing a rough draft
4. Revising
5. Editing

Effective writing can be described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order. This chapter will allow you to work on all these important aspects of writing. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, this chapter covers six: using experience and observations, freewriting, asking questions, brainstorming, mapping, and searching the Internet. Using the strategies in this chapter can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

Prewriting

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:

1. Using experience and observations
2. Reading
3. Freewriting
4. Asking questions

At this stage in the writing process, choosing a general topic is OK. 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 its **purpose** and **audience**.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Mariah as she prepares a piece of writing. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or for some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

Using Experience and Observations

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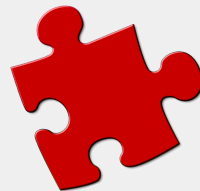
Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose 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. This 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 his main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own. If this step already seems daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading prewriting 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 your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, copy the same word or phrase repeatedly until you develop a new thought.

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

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

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

Tip

Some prewriting strategies can be used together. For example, you could use experience and observations to develop a topic related to your course studies. Then, you could use freewriting to describe your topic in more detail and figure out what you have to say about it.

Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. Newspapers I don't read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my 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 on from the 1930s and '40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use color on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of color. Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me—or my husband. I'm handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about <u>us</u>!

Image Text Description

Exercise 1

Freewrite about one event you have recently experienced. With this event in mind, write without stopping for five minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you as a good general topic to write about?

Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? You pose these kinds of questions in everyday situations to

get more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise? Even the title of this chapter begins with the question, "How do I begin?"

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit your ideas 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 disjointed her thoughts. 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. She aimed to refine media into a topic she felt comfortable writing about. To see how asking questions can help you choose a topic, take a look at the following chart that Mariah completed to record her questions and answers. She asked herself the questions that reporters and journalists use to gather information for their stories. The questions are often called the **5WH questions** after their initial letters.

Figure 3.1 Asking Questions

Questions	Answers
Who?	I use media. Students, teachers, parents, employers, and employees use 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?	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. People who live far away from their families have to stay in touch.
How?	Media is possible because of 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 find and explore a topic. The key to effective prewriting is using the best techniques 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. In your own prewriting, use the 5WH questions in any way that benefits your planning.

Exercise 2

Choose a general topic idea from the prewriting you completed in 3.1 "Exercise 1". Then read each question and use your own paper to answer the 5WH questions. As with Mariah, when she explored her writing topic in more detail, it is OK if you do not know all the answers. If you do not know an answer, use your own opinion to speculate or guess. You may also use factual information from books or articles you previously read on your topic. Later in the chapter, you will read about additional ways (like searching the Internet) to answer your questions and explore your guesses.

5WH Questions

1. Who? _____

2. What? _____

3. Where? _____

4. When? _____

5. Why? _____

6. How? _____

Now that you have completed some of the prewriting exercises, you may feel less anxious about starting a paper from scratch. With some ideas down on paper (or saved on a computer), writers are often more comfortable continuing the writing process. After identifying a good general topic, you, too, are ready to continue the process.

Exercise 3

Write your general topic on your own sheet of paper, under where you recorded your purpose and audience. Choose it from among the topics you listed or explored during the prewriting you have done so far. Make sure it is one you feel comfortable with and feel capable of writing about.

My general topic: _____

> ### 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

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

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping
- Searching the Internet

Narrowing the Focus

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

After rereading her syllabus, Mariah realized that her general topic, mass media, was too broad for her class's short paper requirement. Three pages are insufficient 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 alone 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 in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic.

The following is Mariah's brainstorming list:

- Mass Media: magazines, newspapers, broadcasting, radio, television, DVD, gaming/video games,

internet, cell phones, smartphones, text messages, tiny cameras, GPS

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

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Imagine you have to write an e-mail to your current boss explaining your prior work experience, but you do not know where to start. Before you begin the e-mail, you can use the brainstorming technique to generate a list of employers, duties, and responsibilities that fall under the general topic "work experience."

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 center 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.

In addition to brainstorming, Mariah tried idea mapping. Review the following idea map that Mariah created:
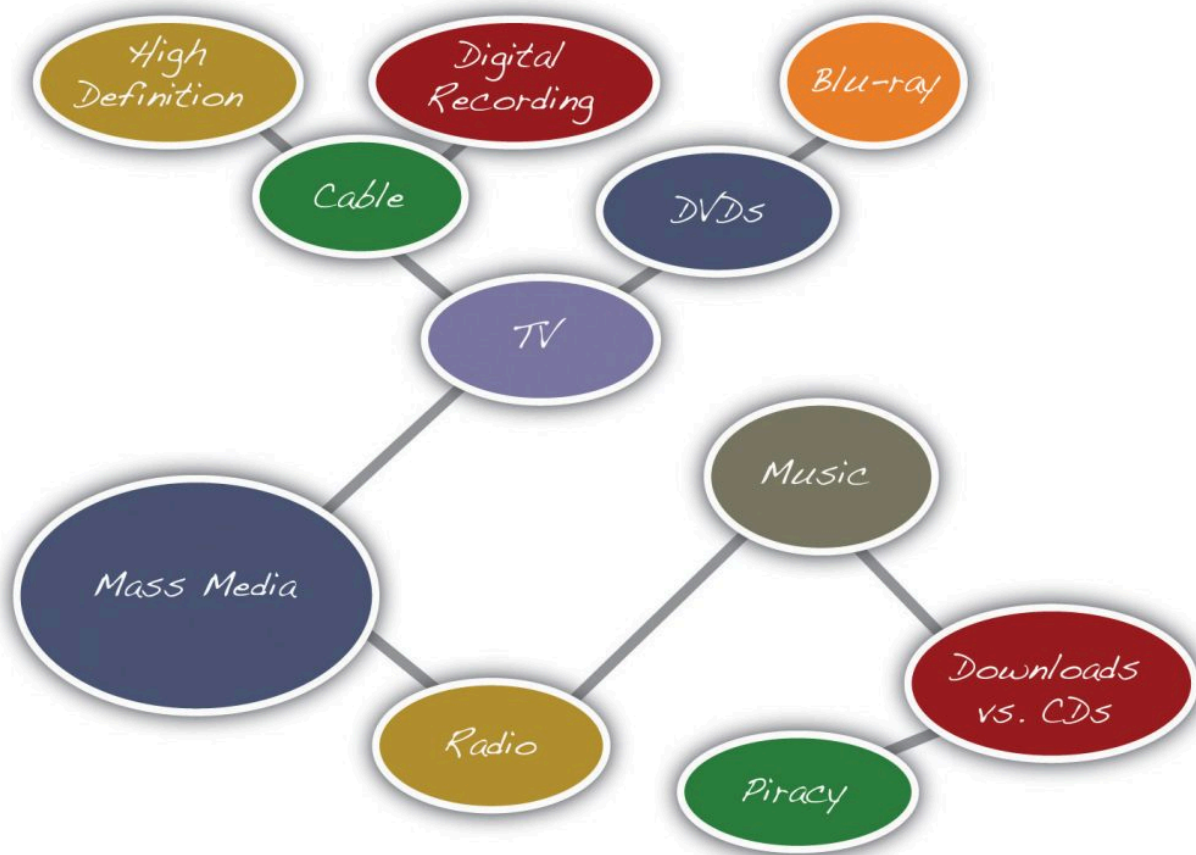
Figure 3.2 Idea Map

Image Text Description

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 made Mariah 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.

Look back at the chart you completed in 3.1 "Exercise 2". Did you guess at any of the answers?

Searching the Internet may help you find answers to your questions and confirm your guesses. Be choosy about the websites you use. Make sure they are reliable sources for the kind of information you seek.

When you search the Internet, type keywords 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

If the search engine results are not what you are looking for, revise your keywords 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.

Figure 3.3 Useful Search Engine Results

Google (2024) *Music Piracy Search Results*.

Not all the results online search engines return will be useful or reliable. Carefully consider an online source's reliability 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 lots 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 on media technology and the sometimes confusing array of expensive products that fill electronics stores. Now, Mariah considers a paper topic on the products that have fed the mass media boom in everyday lives.

Exercise 4

In 3.1 "Exercise 2" you chose a possible topic and explored it by answering questions about it using the 5WH questions. However, this topic may still be too broad. Here, in "Exercise 4", choose and complete one of the prewriting strategies to narrow the focus. Use either brainstorming, idea mapping, or searching the Internet.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Share what you found and what interests you about the possible topic(s).

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you choose a broad topic, and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step.

Topic Checklist

Developing a Good Topic

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is good for your assignment.

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

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. 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.

My narrowed topic: _____

Key Takeaways

- All writers rely on steps and strategies to begin the writing process.
- The steps in the writing process are prewriting, outlining, writing a rough draft, revising, and editing.
- Prewriting is the transfer of ideas from abstract thoughts into words, phrases, and sentences on paper.
- A good topic interests the writer, appeals to the audience, and fits the purpose of the assignment.
- Writers often choose a general topic first and then narrow the focus to a more specific topic.

3.2 Outlining

1. Identify the steps in constructing an outline.
2. Construct a topic outline and a sentence outline.

Your prewriting activities and readings have helped you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you find, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. However, only when you start to organize your ideas will you be able to translate your raw insights into a form that will communicate meaning to your audience.

Tip

Longer papers require more reading and planning than shorter papers do.

Most writers discover that the more they know about a topic, the more they can write about it with intelligence and interest.
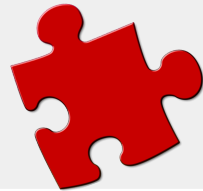
Organizing Ideas

>When you write, you need to organize your ideas in an order that makes sense. The writing you complete in all your courses exposes how analytically and critically your mind works. In some courses, the only direct contact you may have with your instructor is through the assignments you write for the course. You can make a good impression by spending time ordering your ideas.

Order refers to your choice of what to present first, second, third, and so on in your writing. The order you pick closely relates to your purpose for writing that particular assignment. For example, when telling a story, it may be important to first describe the background for the action. Or you may need to first describe a 3-D movie projector or a television studio to help readers visualize the setting and scene. You may want to group your support effectively to convince readers that your point of view on an issue is well-reasoned and worthy of belief.

In longer pieces of writing, you may organize different parts in different ways so that your purpose stands out clearly, and all parts of the paperwork work together to develop your main point consistently.

Methods of Organizing Writing

The three common methods of organizing writing are **chronological, spatial**, and **order of importance**. You will learn more about these in [Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish](#); however, you need to keep these organization methods in mind as you plan to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan serving as a skeleton for your paragraphs. 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, explain, persuade, or for 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 3.2..1 "Order versus Purpose" shows the connection between order and purpose.

Table 3.2.1 Order versus Purpose

Order	Purpose
Chronological Order	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	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	To persuade or convince
	To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance

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 ten-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a big idea or a controlling idea as the spine for the work. The controlling idea is the main idea you want to present and develop.

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 will it take me to explain and explore this main idea in detail?" Be reasonable with your estimate. Then, expand or trim it to fit the required length.
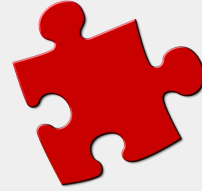
The big idea, or controlling idea, you want to present in an essay is expressed in a **thesis statement**. A thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view. The thesis statement is not the topic of the piece of writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to tell readers. Table 3.2.2 "Topics and Thesis Statements" compares topics and thesis statements.

Table 3.2.2 Topics and Thesis Statements

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 are 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 preliminary or **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.

Exercise 1

Using the topic you selected in 3.1 Apply Prewriting Models, develop a working thesis statement that states your controlling idea for the piece of writing you are doing. On a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement.

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 college instructors require students to submit a **formal outline** before writing a major paper to ensure you are on the right track and are working in an organized manner. 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. You build your paper based on the framework created by the outline.
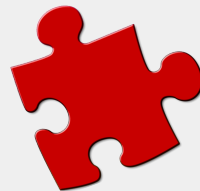
There are two types of formal outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline. You format both types of formal outlines in the same way.

- Place your introduction and thesis statement at the beginning, under the Roman numeral I.
- Use Roman numerals (II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify the 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.

I. Introduction

- Thesis statement

II. Main point 1 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*

A. Supporting detail → becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1

B. Supporting detail

C. Supporting detail

III. Main point 2 → becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2

A. Supporting detail

B. Supporting detail

C. Supporting detail

IV. Main point 3 → becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3

A. Supporting detail

B. Supporting detail

C. Supporting detail

V. Conclusion

TIP

In an outline, any supporting detail can be developed with subpoints. For simplicity, the model shows them only under the first main point.

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 must be an A. For every A, there must be a B. For every Arabic numeral 1, there must be a 2. See the sample outlines that follow for yourself.
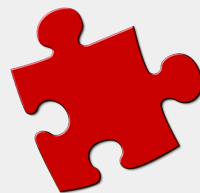
Constructing Topic Outlines

A 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. (For more information on parallel structure, see Chapter 9: Refining Your Writing.)

Here is the topic outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing. Her purpose is to inform, and her audience is a general audience of her fellow college students. Notice how Mariah begins with her thesis statement. She then arranges her main points and supporting details in outline form using short phrases in parallel grammatical structure.

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

Image Text Description

Checklist

Writing an Effective Topic Outline

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.

- Do I have a controlling idea that guides the development of the entire piece of writing?
- Do I have three or more main points I want to make in this writing? Does each main point connect to my controlling idea?
- 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?
- Do I have supporting details that will help me inform, explain, or prove my main points?
- Do I need to add more support? If so, where?
- Do I need to make any adjustments in my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Word processing programs generally have an automatic numbering feature that can be used to prepare outlines. This feature automatically sets indents and lets you use the tab key to arrange information just as you would in an outline. Although in business, this style might be acceptable, in college, your instructor might have different requirements. Teach yourself how to customize the levels of outline numbering in your word-processing program to fit your instructor's preferences.

Exercise 2

Using the working thesis statement you wrote in 3.2 "Exercise 1" and the reading you did in Section 3.1 "Apply Prewriting Models", construct a topic outline for your essay. Be sure to observe the correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman numerals and capital letters.

Constructing 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 sentence outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing.

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 are changing the way 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 film cameras.
  A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.
    1. Compact digital cameras are light but have fewer megapixels.
    2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large and heavy but can be used for many functions.
    3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and 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 wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
  C. Does every home really need a media center?
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.

Image Text Description

The information compiled under each Roman numeral will become a paragraph in your final paper. In the previous example, the outline follows the standard five-paragraph essay arrangement, but longer essays require more paragraphs and, thus, more Roman numerals. If you think a paragraph might become too long or stringy, add an additional paragraph to your outline, renumbering the main points appropriately.
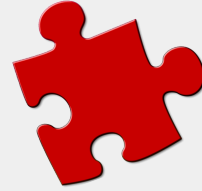
Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

PowerPoint presentations used both in schools and in the workplace, are organized in a way very similar to formal outlines.

PowerPoint presentations often contain information in the form of talking points that the presenter develops with more details and examples than are contained on the PowerPoint slide.

Exercise 3

Expand the topic outline you prepared in 3.2 "Exercise 2" to make it a sentence outline. In this outline, be sure to include multiple supporting points for your main topic, even if your topic outline does not contain them. Be sure to observe the correct outline form, including correct indentions, and use Roman and Arabic numerals and capital letters.

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 or preliminary thesis statement.

- The working thesis statement expresses the main idea that you want to develop in the entire piece of writing. It can be modified as you continue the writing process.
- Effective writers prepare a formal outline to organize their main ideas and supporting details in the order they will be presented.
- A topic outline uses words and phrases to express ideas.
- A sentence outline uses complete sentences to express ideas.
- The writer's thesis statement begins the outline, and the outline ends with suggestions for the concluding paragraph.

3.3 Drafting

1. Identify drafting strategies that improve writing.
2. Use drafting strategies to prepare the first draft of an essay.

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing.

Even professional writers admit that an empty page scares them because they feel they need to come up with something fresh and original whenever they open a blank document on their computers. You have already recovered from empty page syndrome because you have completed the first two steps in the writing process. 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 of the chapter 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 start on paper and type it before revising. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking. In this lesson, Mariah does all her work on the computer, but you may use pen and paper or the computer to write a rough draft.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

The writing process is so beneficial to writers because it encourages alternatives to standard practices while motivating you to develop your best ideas. For instance, the following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in the writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.** You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader's interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs longer than one

sentence but shorter than the length of an entire double-spaced page.

- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.** As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful for writing a multipage report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write.
- **Be reasonable with your goals.** If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, for example, you will present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can.

Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

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.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Many of the documents you produce at work target a particular audience for a particular purpose. You may find that it is highly advantageous to know as much as you can about your target audience and to prepare your message to reach that audience, even if the audience is a coworker or your boss.

Menu language is a common example. Descriptions like "organic romaine" and "free-range chicken" are intended to appeal to a certain type of customer, though perhaps not to the same customer who craves a thick steak. Similarly, mail-order companies research the demographics of the people who buy their merchandise. Successful vendors customize product descriptions in catalogues to appeal to buyers' tastes. For example, the product descriptions in a skateboarder catalogue will differ from those in a clothing catalogue for mature adults.

Exercise 1

Using the topic for the essay that you outlined in Section 3.2 "Outlining", describe your purpose and your audience as specifically as you can. Use your own sheet of paper to record your responses. Then, keep these responses near you during future stages of the writing process.

- **My purpose:** _____
- **My audience:** _____

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 can make changes to your first draft before you put the finishing touches on it during the editing and proofreading stage. A first draft gives you a working version that you can later improve.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Workplace writing in certain environments is done by teams of writers who collaborate on the planning, writing, and revising of documents, such as long reports, technical manuals, and the results of scientific research. Collaborators do not need to be in the same room, the same building, or even the same city. Many collaborations are conducted over the Internet.

In a perfect collaboration, each contributor has the right to add, edit, and delete text. Strong communication skills, in addition to strong writing skills, are important in this kind of writing situation because disagreements over style, content, process, emphasis, and other issues may arise.

The collaborative software, or document management systems, that groups use to work on common projects is sometimes called groupware or workgroup support systems.

The reviewing tool on some word-processing programs also gives you access to a collaborative tool that many smaller workgroups use when they exchange documents. You can also use it to leave comments to yourself.

Tip

If you invest some time now to investigate how the reviewing tool in your word processor works, you can use it confidently during the revision stage of the writing process.

Then, when you start to revise, set your reviewing tool to track any changes you make so you can tinker with the text and commit only those final changes you want to keep.

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 creatively leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- An *introduction* that piques the audience's interest tells what the essay is about and motivates readers to keep reading.
- A *thesis statement* that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.

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

These elements follow the standard five-paragraph essay format you probably first encountered in high school. This basic format is valid for most essays you will write in college, even much longer ones. For now, however, Mariah focuses on writing the three body paragraphs from her outline. Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish covers writing introductions and conclusions, and you will also read Mariah's introduction and conclusion in Chapter 4.

Topic sentences make the structure of a text and the writer's basic arguments easy to locate and comprehend. Using a topic sentence in each essay paragraph is the standard rule in college writing. However, the topic sentence does not always have to be the first sentence in your paragraph, even if it is 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. By its nature, writing a draft is a good time for experimentation.
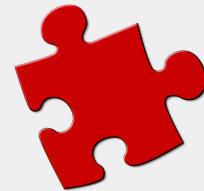
The topic sentence can be a paragraph's first, middle, or final sentence. The assignment's audience and purpose will often determine where a topic sentence belongs. When the purpose of the assignment is to persuade, for example, the topic sentence should be the first sentence in a paragraph. In a persuasive 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 an 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 his or her 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.

Developing topic sentences and thinking about their placement in a paragraph will prepare you to write the rest of the paragraph.

Paragraphs

The paragraph is the main structural component of an essay as well as other forms of writing. Each paragraph of an essay adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related main idea is supported and developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one main idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis.

Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph be?

One answer to this important question may be "long enough"—long enough for you to address your points and explain your main idea. To grab attention or to present succinct supporting ideas, a paragraph can be fairly short and consist of two to three sentences. A paragraph in a complex essay about some abstract point in philosophy or archaeology can be three-quarters of a page or more in length. As long as the writer maintains close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable in college-level writing. In general, try to keep the paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than one full page of double-spaced text.

Journalistic style often calls for brief two- or three-sentence paragraphs because of how people read the news, both online and in print. Blogs and other online information sources often adopt this paragraphing style, too. Readers often skim the first paragraphs of a great many articles before settling on the handful of stories they want to read in detail.

You may find that a particular paragraph you write may be longer than one that will hold your audience's interest. In such cases, you should divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a topic statement or some kind of transitional word or phrase at the start of the new paragraph. Transition words or phrases show the connection between the two ideas.

In all cases, however, be guided by what your instructor wants and expects to find in your draft. Many instructors will expect you to develop a mature college-level style as you progress through the semester's assignments.

Exercise 2

Use the Internet to find examples of the following items to build your sense of appropriate paragraph length. Copy them into a file, identify your sources, and present them to your instructor with your annotations or notes.

- A news article written in short paragraphs. Take notes on or annotate your selection with your observations about the effect of combining paragraphs that develop the same topic idea. Explain how effective those paragraphs would be.
- A long paragraph from a scholarly work that you identify through an academic search engine. Annotate it with your observations about the author's paragraphing style.

Starting Your First Draft

Now, we are finally ready to look over Mariah's shoulder as she begins to write her essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. As she does, you should have in front of you your outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote earlier in this lesson on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and Mariah in the proper mindset to start.

The following is Mariah's thesis statement.

> Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

Image Text Description

Here are the notes that Mariah wrote to herself to characterize her 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 possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.

Image Text Description

Mariah chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised it. Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point. You will read her introduction again in Section 3.4 "Revising and Editing" when she revises it.

With her thesis statement, purpose, and audience notes in front of her, Mariah looked at her sentence outline. She chose to use that outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is her portion 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 are changing the way 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
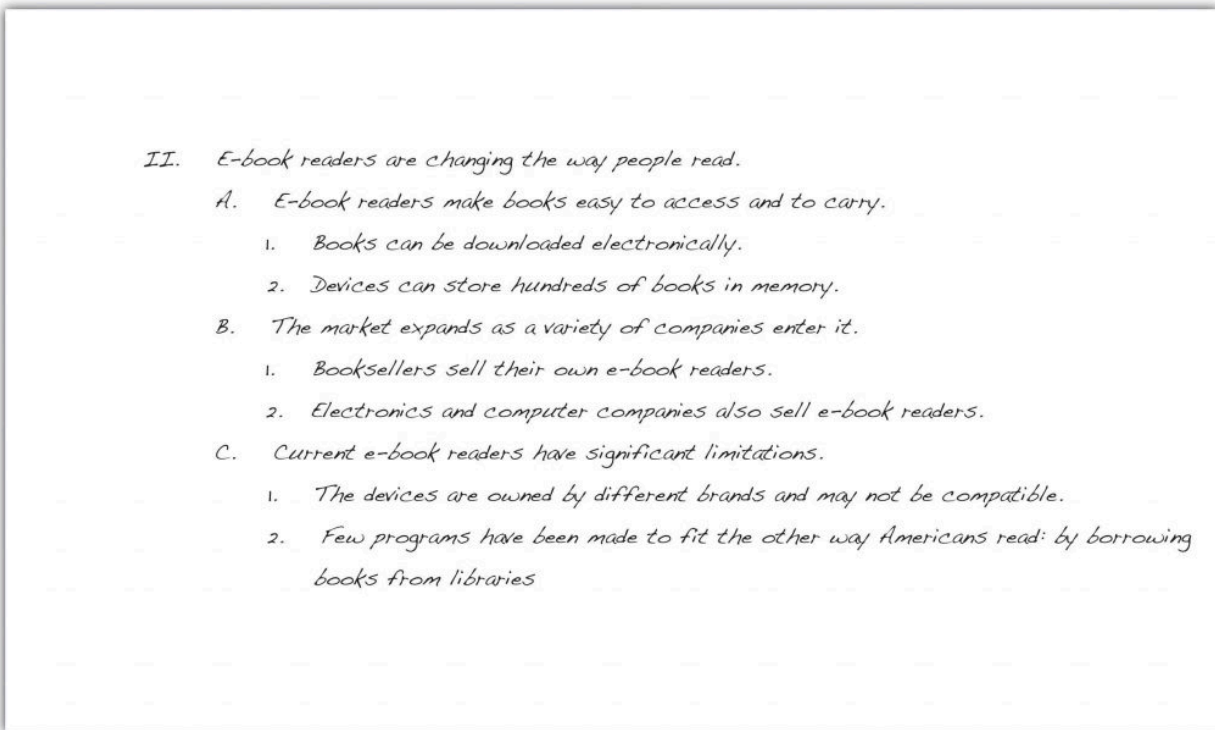
Image Text Description

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

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 keeps 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 restrict 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?

Image Text Description

Tip

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

In your documents, observe any formatting requirements—for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters—that your instructor requires.
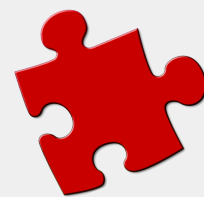
Continuing the First Draft

Mariah continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. She had supporting details but no numbered subpoints in her outline, so she had to consult her prewriting notes for specific information to include.
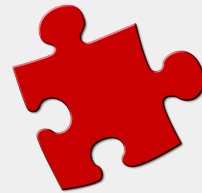
Preceding each body paragraph that Mariah wrote is the appropriate section of her sentence outline. Notice how she expanded the Roman numeral III from her outline into a first draft of the second body paragraph. As you read, ask yourself how closely she stayed on purpose and how well she paid attention to the needs of her audience.

III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.

    A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.

        1. Compact digital cameras are light but lack the megapixels.

        2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large but can be used for many functions.

        3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.

    B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing" megapixel wars."

    C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.

Image Text Description

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 x 10, the quality would be poor. When he investigated buying a single lens reflex camera, or SLR, he discovered that they were as 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 thought 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 3x was too small, but what about 25x? 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.

Image Text Description

Mariah then began her third and final body paragraph using the Roman numeral IV from her outline.

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 wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?

   C.   Does every home really need a media center?

Image Text Description

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 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

Image Text Description

Reread body paragraphs two and three of the essay that Mariah is writing. Then, answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. In body paragraph two, Mariah decided to develop her paragraph as a nonfiction narrative. Do you agree with her decision? Explain. How else could she have chosen to develop the paragraph? Why is that better?
2. Compare the writing styles of paragraphs two and three. What evidence do you have that Mariah was getting tired or running out of steam? What advice would you give her? Why?
3. Choose one of these two body paragraphs. Write a version of your own that you think better fits Mariah's audience and purpose.

Writing a Title

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

Following her outline carefully, Mariah crafted each paragraph of her essay. Moving step by step in the writing process, Mariah finished the draft and even included a brief concluding paragraph (you will read her conclusion in Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish). She then decided, as the final touch for her writing session, to add an engaging title.

Thesis Statement: *Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.*

Working Title: *Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?*
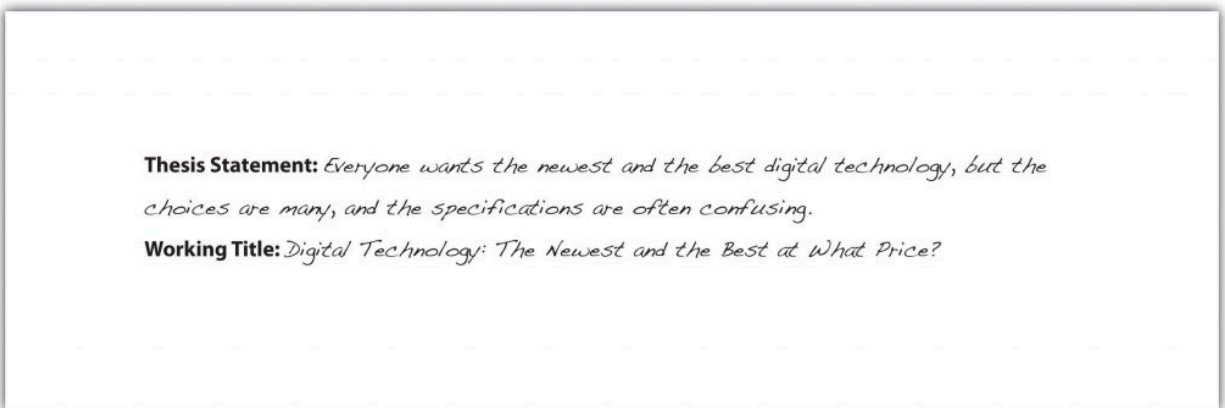
Image Text Description

Writing Your Own First Draft

Now, you may begin your own first draft if you have not already done so. Follow the suggestions and the guidelines presented in this section.

Key Takeaways

- Make the writing process work for you. Use any and all of the strategies that help you move forward in the writing process.
- Always be aware of your purpose for writing and the needs of your audience. Cater to those needs in every sensible way.
- Remember to include an essay's key structural parts: a thesis statement in your introductory paragraph, three or more body paragraphs as described in your outline, and a concluding paragraph. Then, add an engaging title to draw in readers.
- Write paragraphs of an appropriate length for your writing assignment. Paragraphs in college-level writing can be a page long as long as they cover the main topics in your outline.
- Use your topic outline or sentence outline to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas. Each main idea, indicated by a Roman numeral in your outline, becomes the topic of a new paragraph. Develop it with the supporting details and the subpoints of those details that you included in your outline.
- Generally speaking, write your introduction and conclusion after you have fleshed out the body paragraphs.

3.4 Revising and Editing

1. Identify major areas of concern in the draft essay during revising and editing.
2. Use peer reviews and editing checklists to assist in revising and editing.
3. Revise and edit the first draft of your essay and produce a final draft.

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

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

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

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

TIP

How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester, then keep using the ones that bring results.

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

Many people hear the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

Creating Unity and Coherence

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

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

Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence.

Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

Creating Unity

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

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay, which she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" However, a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah's changes and the second time with them.

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 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 screens show truer 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 ~~let someone make you~~ by more television than you need!**

Exercise 1

Answer the following two questions about Mariah's paragraph:

1. Do you agree with Mariah's decision to make the deletions she made? Did she cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.
2. Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience-friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

- Now, start to revise the first draft of the essay you wrote in 3.1 Apply Prewriting Models. Reread it to find any statements that affect the unity of your writing. Decide how best to revise.

TIP

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.
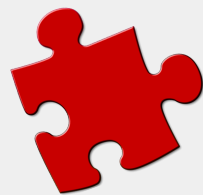
Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Many companies hire copyeditors and proofreaders to help them produce the cleanest possible final drafts of large writing projects. Copyeditors are responsible for suggesting revisions and style changes; proofreaders check documents for any errors in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation that have crept in. Many times, these tasks are done on a freelance basis, with one freelancer working for a variety of clients.

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. Table 3.4 "Common Transitional Words and Phrases" groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

Table 3.4 Common Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitions That Show Sequence or Time		
after	before	later
afterward	before long	meanwhile
as soon as	finally	next
at first	first, second, third	soon
at last	in the first place	then
Transitions That Show Position		
above	across	at the bottom
at the top	behind	below
beside	beyond	inside
near	next to	opposite
to the left, to the right, to the side	under	where
Transitions That Show a Conclusion		
indeed	hence	in conclusion
in the final analysis	therefore	thus
Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought		
consequently	furthermore	additionally
because	besides the fact	following this idea further
in addition	in the same way	moreover
looking further	considering…, it is clear that	
Transitions That Change a Line of Thought		
but	yet	however
nevertheless	on the contrary	on the other hand
Transitions That Show Importance		
above all	best	especially
in fact	more important	most important
most	worst	
Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay		
finally	last	in conclusion
most of all	least of all	last of all
All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs		
admittedly	at this point	certainly
granted	it is true	generally speaking
in general	in this situation	no doubt
no one denies	obviously	of course
to be sure	undoubtedly	unquestionably
Transitions that Introduce Examples		
for instance	for example	
Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps		

first, second, third   generally, furthermore, finally   in the first place, also, last

in the first place, furthermore, finally   in the first place, likewise, lastly

After revising for unity, Maria examined her paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. She looked for places where she needed to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the following version, she has already deleted the sentences that were off-topic.

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.

Finally,
^Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of

people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDtelevision) with a large
                There's good reason for this confusion:
screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ^You face decisions you never had to make with the
              The first big decision is the screen resolution you want.
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
                                                    second
won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The ^other important decision

you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD
Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size
and features.
screen. ^ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their

LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than
                However,
current LCD screens. ^ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than

flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need!

Image Text Description

1. Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph.

   ◦ Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which would you keep, and which were unnecessary? Explain.
   ◦ What transition words or phrases did Mariah add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?
   ◦ What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

2. Now, return to the first draft of the essay you wrote in [3.1 Apply Prewriting Models](#) and revise it for coherence. Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise.

If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

Identifying Wordiness

Sometimes, writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose. 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.
>
> A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

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-sixty 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-sixty uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

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

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.

Exercise 3

Now, return once more to the first draft of the essay you have been revising. Check it for unnecessary words. Try making your sentences as concise as they can be.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English that is suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate. For more information about word choice, see Chapter 8: Working with Words?

- **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 *allusion/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 the revisions Mariah made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. She has already incorporated the changes she made to improve unity and coherence.
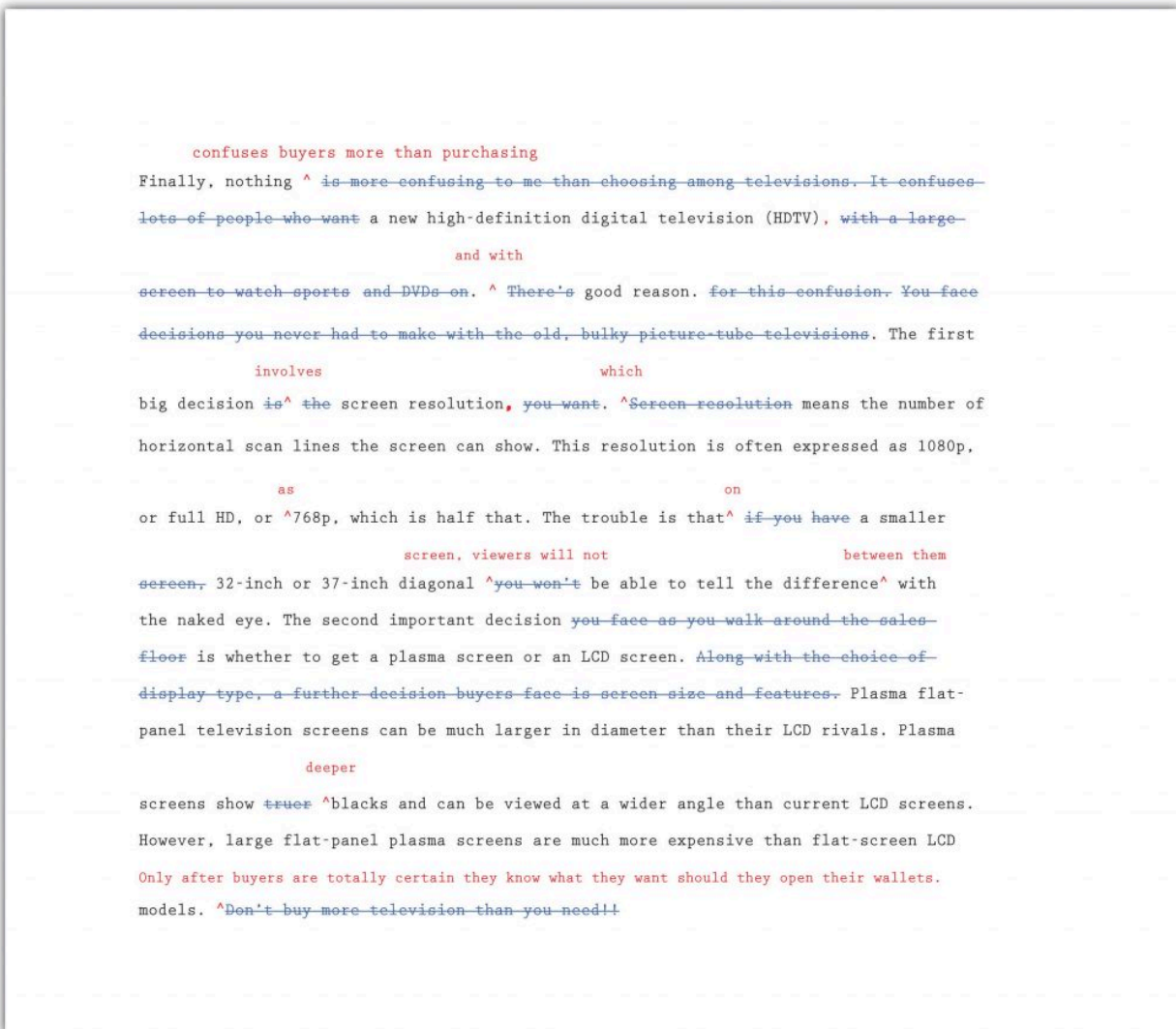
Image Text Description

Exercise 4

1. 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. Ensure your draft is written in formal language and your word choice is specific and appropriate.

Completing a Peer Review

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called **peer review**.

You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The box that follows provides a useful framework for the peer review session.

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay: _____

Date: _____

Writer's name: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

1. This essay is about_____.
2. Your main points in this essay
   are_____.
3. What I most liked about this essay
   is_____.

4. These three points struck me as your strongest:

   a. Point: _____

   Why: _____

   b. Point: _____

   Why: _____

   c. Point: _____

   Why: _____

5. These places in your essay are not clear to me:

   a. Where: _____

   Needs improvement because_____

   b. Where: _____

   Needs improvement because _____

   c. Where: _____

   Needs improvement because _____

6. The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly
   is _____.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

One of the reasons why word-processing programs build in a reviewing feature is that workgroups have become a common feature in many businesses. Writing is often collaborative, and the members of a workgroup and their supervisors often critique group members' work and offer feedback that will lead to a better final product.

Exercise 5

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.

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience).

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might get feedback from multiple readers 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 lack your involvement and enthusiasm for it.

You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

1. Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
2. Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

Exercise 6

Work with two partners. Go back to Exercise 4 in this lesson and compare your responses to

Activity A, about Mariah's paragraph, with your partners'. Recall Mariah's purpose for writing and her audience. Then, working individually, list where you agree and where you disagree about revision needs.

Editing Your Draft

If you have incorporated each set of revisions as Mariah has, you have produced multiple drafts of your writing. So far, all your changes have been content changes. Perhaps with the help of peer feedback, you have made sure that you sufficiently supported your ideas. You have checked for problems with unity and coherence. You have examined your essay for word choice, revising to cut unnecessary words and to replace weak wording with specific and appropriate wording.

The next step after revising the content is editing. When you edit, you examine the surface features of your text. You examine your spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment.

TIP

Editing often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising. Editing and proofreading your writing helps you create a finished work that represents your best efforts. Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they *do* notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas—unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use *there*, *their*, and *they're* correctly, but they notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document.

The first section of this book offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help you eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language.

Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college's writing lab. In the meantime, use the checklist to help you edit your writing.

Checklist

Editing Your Writing

Grammar

- Are some sentences actually sentence fragments?
- Are some sentences run-on sentences? How can I correct them?
- Do some sentences need conjunctions between independent clauses?
- Does every verb agree with its subject?
- Is every verb in the correct tense?
- Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
- Have I used subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns correctly?
- Have I used *who* and *whom* correctly?
- Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
- Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- Have I used the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs?
- Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies, or is it a dangling modifier?

Sentence Structure

- Are all my sentences simple sentences, or do I vary my sentence structure?
- Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
- Have I created long, over-packed sentences that should be shortened for clarity?
- Do I see any mistakes in parallel structure?

Punctuation

- Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
- Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
- Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?
- Have I used quotation marks correctly?

Mechanics and Usage

- Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
- Have I used capital letters where they are needed?
- Have I written abbreviations, where allowed, correctly?
- Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as *to/too/two*?

TIP

Be careful about relying too much on spelling checkers and grammar checkers. A spelling checker cannot recognize that you meant to write *principle* but wrote *principal* instead. A grammar checker often queries constructions that are perfectly correct. The program does not understand your meaning; it makes its check against a general set of formulas that might not apply in each instance. If you use a grammar checker, accept the suggestions that make sense, but consider why the suggestions came up.

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, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper and look for anything you missed.

Formatting

Remember to use the proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes, an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included.

To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Exercise 7

With the help of the checklist, edit and proofread your essay.

Key Takeaways

- Revising and editing are the stages of the writing process in which you improve your work before producing a final draft.
- During revising, you add, cut, move, or change information in order to improve content.
- During editing, you take a second look at the words and sentences you used to express your ideas and fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
- Unity in writing means that all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense.
- Coherence in writing means that the writer's wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and between paragraphs.
- Transitional words and phrases effectively make writing more coherent.
- Writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words.
- Effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, clichés, and overly general words.
- Peer reviews, Adone properly, can give writers objective feedback about their writing. It is the writer's responsibility to evaluate the results of peer reviews and incorporate only useful feedback.
- Remember to budget time for careful editing and proofreading. Use all available resources, including editing checklists, peer editing, and your institution's writing lab, to improve your editing skills.

3.5 The Writing Process: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Exercises

1. In this chapter, you have thought and read about the topic of mass media. Starting with the title "The Future of Information: How It Will Be Created, Transmitted, and Consumed," narrow the focus of the topic until it is suitable for a two- to three-page paper. Then, narrow your topic with the help of brainstorming, idea mapping, and searching the Internet until you select a final topic to explore. Keep a journal or diary in which you record and comment on everything you did to choose a final topic. Then, record what you will do next to explore the idea and create a thesis statement.

2. Write a thesis statement and a formal sentence outline for an essay about the writing process. Include separate paragraphs for prewriting, drafting, and revising and editing. Your audience will be a general audience of educated adults who are unfamiliar with how writing is taught at the college level. Your purpose is to explain the stages of the writing process so that readers will understand its benefits.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. Pieces of writing in various real-life and work-related situations would benefit from revising and editing. Consider the following list of real-life and work-related writing pieces: e-mails, greeting card messages, junk mail, late-night television commercials, social networking pages, local newspapers, bulletin-board postings, and public notices. Find and submit at least two examples of writing that needs revision. Explain what changes you would make. Replace any recognizable names with pseudonyms.

2. **Group activity.** At work, an employer might someday ask you to contribute to the research base for an essay such as the one Mariah wrote or the one you wrote while working through this chapter. Choosing either her topic or your own, compile a list of at least five sources. Then, working in a group of four students, bring in printouts or PDF files of Internet sources or paper copies of non-Internet sources for the other group members to examine. In a group report, rate the reliability of each other's sources.

3. **Group activity.** Working in a peer-review group of four, go to 3.3 Drafting and reread the draft of the first two body paragraphs of Mariah's essay, "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" Review those two paragraphs using the same level of inspection given to the essay's third paragraph in 3.4 Revising and Editing. Suggest and

agree on changes to improve unity and coherence, eliminate unneeded words, and refine word choice. Your purpose is to help Mariah produce two effective paragraphs for a formal college-level essay about her topic.

Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish

4.1 Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement

<div class="learning-objectives">

Learning Objectives

1. Develop a strong, clear thesis statement with the proper elements.
2. Revise your thesis statement.

</div>

Have you ever known someone who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following his train of thought as he jumped around from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe he told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. His ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be disorganized, 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.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, 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 on a 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 professor 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.

Ability to be argued. 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.

Ability to be demonstrated. 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. 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.

Tip

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of the first person, your thesis should not contain phrases such as in my opinion or I believe. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

Topics

- Texting while driving
- The legal drinking age in the United States
- Steroid use among professional athletes
- Abortion
- Racism

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the following requirements:

- Specificity
- Precision
- Ability to be argued
- Ability to be demonstrated
- Forcefulness
- Confidence

1. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxon in the play *Fences* symbolize the challenge of black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.
2. Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
3. Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.

4. 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.
5. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes of marital breakdown.
6. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
7. 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, coworkers 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
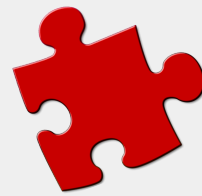
Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis:

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

  Weak thesis statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

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

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

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

> **Weak thesis statement:** Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

> **Weak thesis statement:** The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

Exercise 2

Read the following thesis statements. On a separate piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then, revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

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 nineteenth century.
4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. 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.
7. 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.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Often in your career, you will need to ask your boss for something through an e-mail. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your e-mail request. While your e-mail will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your boss know what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the

benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request.

Thesis Statement Revision

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 from Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin? that your thesis statement begins as a **working thesis statement**, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and 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.
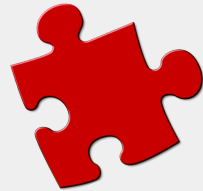
Ways to Revise Your Thesis

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 those 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.

A joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke*. The writer should ask himself or herself questions similar to the 5WH questions. (See Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin? for more information on 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 are forms of the verb *to be*, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

Working thesis: Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.

Revised thesis: The Kansas City legislature cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often weaken thesis statements because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, "Why are they not paid enough?" But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask himself 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:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered "enough"?
- What is the problem?
- 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?

Exercise 3

In the first section of Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?, you determined your purpose for writing and your audience. You then completed a freewriting exercise about an event you recently experienced and chose a general topic to write about. Using that general topic, you then narrowed it down by answering the 5WH questions. After you answered these questions, you chose one of the three methods of prewriting and gathered possible supporting points for your working thesis statement.

Now, on a separate sheet of paper, write down your working thesis statement. Identify any weaknesses in this sentence and revise the statement to reflect the elements of a strong thesis statement. Make sure it is specific, precise, arguable, demonstrable, forceful, and confident.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In your career, you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and tell the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revision to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. Using the techniques from this chapter would apply to revising that thesis.

Key Takeaways

- Proper essays require a thesis statement to provide a specific focus and suggest how the essay will be organized.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself.
- A strong thesis is specific, precise, forceful, confident, and is able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- A weak thesis is simply a declaration of your topic or contains an obvious fact that cannot be argued.
- Depending on your topic, it may or may not be appropriate to use a first-person point of view.
- Revise your thesis by ensuring all words are specific, all ideas are exact, and all verbs express action.

4.2 Writing Body Paragraphs

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then the body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement.

The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

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

Tip

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples.

In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it.
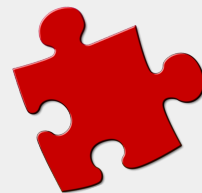
Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

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

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

Prewrite to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

Recall that when you rewrite, you essentially make a list of examples or reasons why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting, you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

Exercise 1

Choose one of the following working thesis statements. On a separate sheet of paper, write for at least five minutes using one of the prewriting techniques you learned in Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?.

1. Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.
2. Students cheat for many different reasons.
3. Drug use among teens and young adults is a problem.
4. The most important change that should occur at my college is:

Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

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

Exercise 2

Refer to the previous exercise and select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis statement. Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points, and you will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for the body paragraphs.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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

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

and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In any job where you devise a plan, you will need to support the steps that you lay out. This is an area in which you would incorporate primary support into your writing. Choosing only the most specific and relevant information to expand upon the steps will ensure that your plan appears well-thought-out and precise.

Tip

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field.

Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a **topic sentence** that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations.

Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements.

• Topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)

As you read in Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?, topic sentences indicate the location and main points of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body paragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement. Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.

Unless your teacher instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body paragraphs in your essay.

A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for exams and essay assignments.
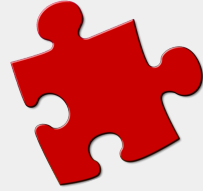
Consider the following thesis statement:

> Author J.D. Salinger relied primarily on his personal life and belief system as the foundation for the themes in the majority of his works.

The following topic sentence is a primary support point for the thesis. The topic sentence states exactly what the controlling idea of the paragraph is. Later, you will see the writer immediately provide support for the sentence.

> Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced themes in many of his works.

Exercise 3

In Exercise 2, you chose three of your most convincing points to support the thesis statement you selected from the list. Take each point and incorporate it into a topic sentence for each body paragraph.

Supporting point 1: _____

Topic sentence: _____

Supporting point 2: _____

Topic sentence: _____

Supporting point 3: _____

Topic sentence: _____

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences For Each Primary Support Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence.

The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement:

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

Supporting point 1: Dogs can scare cyclists and pedestrians.

Supporting details:

1. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the road.
2. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.
3. People who are walking at night freeze in fear.

Supporting point 2:

Loose dogs are traffic hazards.

Supporting details:

1. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.
2. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.
3. Children coaxing dogs across busy streets creates danger.

Supporting point 3: Unleashed dogs damage gardens.

Supporting details:

1. They step on flowers and vegetables.
2. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.

3. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

The following paragraph contains supporting detail sentences for the primary support sentence (the topic sentence), which is underlined.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live." His short story "A Perfect Day for a Bananafish" details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short story, "For Esmé – with Love and Squalor," is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger's only novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, he continues with the theme of post-traumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

Exercise 4

Using the three topic sentences you composed for the thesis statement in Exercise 1, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis statement: _____

Primary supporting point 1: _____

Supporting details: _____

Primary supporting point 2: _____

Supporting details: _____

Primary supporting point 3: _____

Supporting details: _____

Tip

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

For more information on the placement of thesis statements and implied topic statements, see Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?.
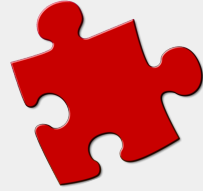
Tip

Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to match the rest of the paragraph more accurately.
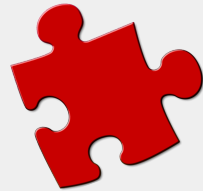
Key Takeaways

- Your body paragraphs should closely follow the path set forth by your thesis statement.
- Strong body paragraphs contain evidence that supports your thesis.
- Primary support comprises the most important points you use to support your thesis.
- Strong primary support is specific, detailed, and relevant to the thesis.
- Prewriting helps you determine your most compelling primary support.
- Evidence includes facts, judgments, testimony, and personal observation.
- Reliable sources may include newspapers, magazines, academic journals, books, encyclopedias, and firsthand testimony.
- A topic sentence presents one point of your thesis statement, while the information in the

rest of the paragraph supports that point.

- A body paragraph comprises a topic sentence plus supporting details.

4.3 Organizing Your Writing

The method of organization you choose for your essay is just as important as its content. Without a clear organizational pattern, your reader could become confused and lose interest. The way you structure your essay helps your readers draw connections between the body and the thesis, and the structure also keeps you focused as you plan and write the essay. Choosing your organizational pattern before you outline ensures that each body paragraph works to support and develop your thesis.

This section covers three ways to organize body paragraphs:

1. Chronological order
2. Order of importance
3. Spatial order

When you begin to draft your essay, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner. Your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas in order to help process and accept them.

A solid organizational pattern gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your draft. Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. Planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research.

Chronological Order

In [Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?](#), you learned that 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 transition 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 the present day. You would follow the chain of events using words such as *first*, *then*, *next*, and so on.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

At some point in your career, you may have to file a complaint with your human resources department. Using chronological order is a useful tool in describing the events that led up to your filing of the grievance. You would logically lay out the events in the order that they occurred using the key transition words. The more logical your complaint, the more likely you will be well received and helped.

Exercise 1

Choose an accomplishment you have achieved in your life. The important moment could be in sports, schooling, or extracurricular activities. On your own sheet of paper, list the steps you took to reach your goal. Try to be as specific as possible with the steps you took. Pay attention to using transition words to focus your writing.

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
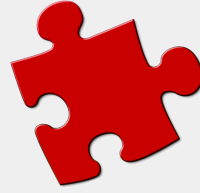
Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that describes a process you are familiar with and can do well. Assume that your reader is unfamiliar with the procedure. Remember to use chronological keywords, such as first, second, then, and finally.

Order of Importance

Recall from [Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?](#) that **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*.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that discusses a passion of yours. Your passion could be music, a particular sport, filmmaking, and so on. Your paragraph should be built upon the reasons why you feel so strongly. Briefly discuss your reasons in the order of least to greatest importance.

Spatial Order

As stated in Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin? , **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 explaining or describing objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example, in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your readers, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you.

The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then 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 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 transition words 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

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph using spatial order that describes your commute to work, school, or another location you visit often.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- The way you organize your body paragraphs ensures you and your readers stay focused on and draw connections to, your thesis statement.
- A strong organizational pattern allows you to articulate, analyze, and clarify your thoughts.
- Planning the organizational structure for your essay before you begin to search for supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and directed research.
- Chronological order is most commonly used in expository writing. It is useful for explaining the history of your subject, for telling a story, or for explaining a process.
- Order of importance is most appropriate in a persuasion paper as well as for essays in which you rank things, people, or events by their significance.
- Spatial order describes things as they are arranged in space and is best for helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it; it creates a dominant impression.

4.4 Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

1. Recognize the importance of strong introductory and concluding paragraphs.
2. Learn to engage the reader immediately with the introductory paragraph.
3. Practice concluding your essays in a more memorable way.

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 invites your readers to consider what you have to say and follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

An introduction serves the following purposes:

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

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects on 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 will probably not be interested in continuing the essay.

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. Introduce them to your topic in the next few sentences 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 the diagram in Figure 4.1 "Funnel Technique".

Figure 4.1 Funnel Technique
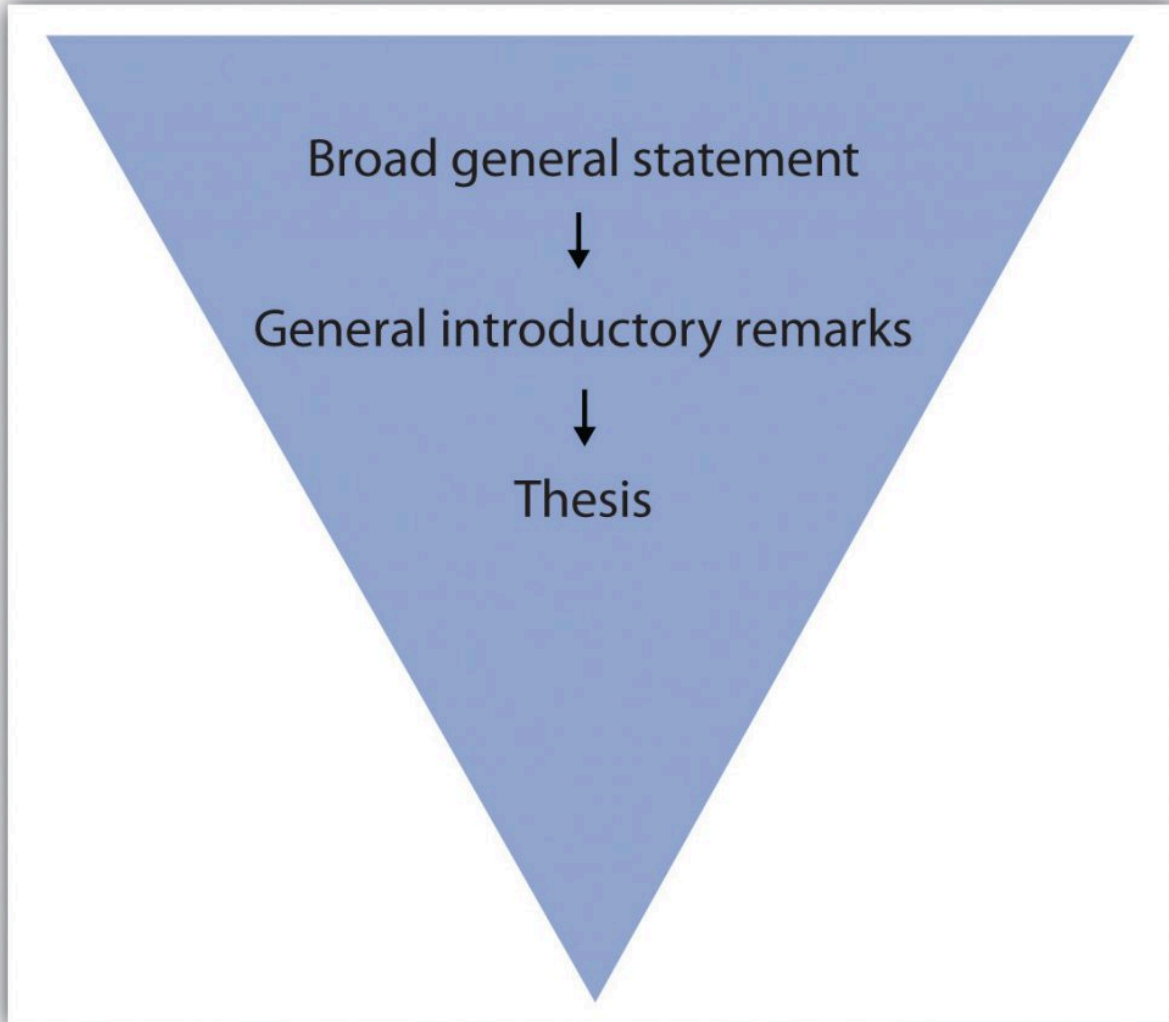
Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, jot down a few general remarks that you can make about the topic for which you formed a thesis in 4.1 Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement.

Immediately capturing your readers' interest increases the chances of having them read what you are

about to discuss. You can garner curiosity for your essay in a number of ways. Try to get your readers personally involved by doing any of the following:

- Appealing to their emotions
- Using logic
- Beginning with a provocative question or opinion
- Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
- Raising a question or series of questions
- Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
- Opening with a striking image
- Including a personal anecdote

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. For more information on diction, see Chapter 8: Working with Words.

In Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?, you followed Mariah as she moved through the writing process. In this chapter, Mariah writes her introduction and conclusion for the same essay. Mariah incorporates some of the introductory elements into her introductory paragraph, which she previously outlined in the chapter. Her thesis statement is underlined.

Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch Dynasty? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options for entertainment in the form of technology. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has digital technology; consumers are bombarded with endless options for doing almost everything, from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled. **Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing**.

If you have trouble coming up with a provocative statement for your opening, it is a good idea to use a relevant, attention-grabbing quote about your topic. Use a search engine to find statements made by historical or significant figures about your subject.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In your job field, you may be required to write a speech for an event, such as an awards banquet or a dedication ceremony. The introduction of a speech is similar to an essay because you have a limited amount of space to attract your audience's attention. Using the same techniques, such as a provocative quote or an interesting statistic, is an effective way to engage your listeners. Using the funnel approach also introduces your audience to your topic and then presents your main idea in a logical manner.

Exercise 2

Reread each sentence in Mariah's introductory paragraph. Indicate which techniques she used and comment on how each sentence is designed to attract her readers' interest.

Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade. However, good writers remember that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

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

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

Remember 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 your thesis in different words and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable. Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay.

Tip

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

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

- Introducing new material
- 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.

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

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

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.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

On the job, you will sometimes give oral presentations based on research you have conducted. A concluding statement to an oral report contains the same elements as a written conclusion. You should wrap up your presentation by restating the purpose of the presentation, reviewing its main points, and emphasizing the importance of the material you presented. A strong conclusion will leave a lasting impression on your audience.

Key Takeaways

- A strong opening captures your readers' interest and introduces them to your topic before you present your thesis statement.
- An introduction should restate your thesis, review your main points, and emphasize the importance of the topic.
- The funnel technique for writing the introduction begins with generalities and gradually narrows your focus until you present your thesis.
- A good introduction engages people's emotions or logic, questions or explains the subject, or provides a striking image or quotation.
- Carefully chosen diction in both the introduction and conclusion prevents any confusing or boring ideas.
- A conclusion that does not connect to the rest of the essay can diminish the effect of your paper.
- The conclusion should remain true to your thesis statement. It is best to avoid changing your tone or your main idea and avoid introducing any new material.
- Closing with a final emphatic statement provides closure for your readers and makes your essay more memorable.

4.5 Identifying Concessions and Counter Arguments

1. Identify the parts of a reasonable concession
2. Evaluate paragraphs for concessions
3. Apply concession format to a series of sentences

Let's take some time to learn how to concede logical points and then counter them appropriately. These skills are INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT. Oftentimes, only the strongest and most confident writers can write in a concession style. Your use of concession-style thesis statements and concessions throughout a response signals to your readers that you are a confident and capable writer and critical thinker. Concessions are invaluable to DISCOURSE and DIALOGUE, the two most important parts of responsible argumentation.

The purpose of this chapter and its activities is to teach you how to concede strong points and, more importantly, how to counter them effectively. Students new to writing arguments often think that including concessions will weaken their argument or that a reader will be more likely to agree with them if they pretend that no weaknesses exist in the argument. This assumption is untrue. In fact, your willingness to admit where the prompt writer's argument has value and either present an extension of that argument or move it in a different direction is really impressive.

What is more, you will be learning to grow comfortable in conceding that your own argument might have limitations. All arguments have limitations, whether they belong to a prompt writer or to you. Remember the final instruction given to you before all prompt responses (Goal #3)?

Your Task: compose a critical response essay—including, ideally, an introduction, at least three body paragraphs, and a conclusion—to the text below

Goals: your essay should include the following:

1. A brief summary of the author's argument
2. Your own argument which should either:

   ◦ mostly agree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions

that *extend support for the author's position*

- ◦ mostly disagree with the author *and* provide your own persuasive assertions that *defend your counter-position*

3. Your refutation of **at least one** objection a reader might have to **your** argument (or any point therein)

At a very basic level, the purpose behind learning counter-arguments is because the prompt instructions on each prompt ask you to do so. The goal of that instruction is to teach you how to strengthen your argument. Acknowledging weaker points (or strong points from your opposition) makes your writing more compelling because it demonstrates to your reader that 1) you have actually considered the topic without making snap judgments, and 2) you are not hiding the weaknesses of your argument from your reader, hoping that they will miss them.

More importantly, it creates an honest relationship between you and your reader, which is essential because some audiences will know something about the topic of your argument already, and they could have oppositions to offer. Ultimately, you need to learn how to concede and counter in writing because you cannot respond to a reader's objections verbally, as you might in a conversation. The greater challenge is to anticipate the objections and respond to them before they come up. This strategy is akin to an artist writing a diss track in which they not only identify faults in their rival but also in themselves. What ammunition is left for their rival in response? When you "anticipate and defend," there is little left for the opposition. It is a proven strategy.

To begin the process, we need to understand how to make reasonable concessions first. It's likely that you may have already learned how to make one of these two types of concessions early in your WRIT course, but let's look over them again.

Activities

First, read the following prompt below. You can also [Download a PDF version](68.7 KB) if you prefer.

Drink Your Way to Success by Randolph Hennepin

The following editorial appeared in the May/June 2024 issue of *Today's Student*

Success in just about any profession often depends on a person's ability to network, and to develop contacts. A prime way to network is over drinks. In fact, a person who does not drink is less likely to be successful than one who does**.** Students who spend time drinking rather than studying are ensuring their eventual success.

Facts are facts. A recent study "found drinkers earn between 10 and 14 percent more than non-drinkers." Further, according to the same study, men who go to a bar at least once a month earn an additional 7 percent. The reason for the success of drinkers, according to the author of the study, is that "Social drinking builds social capital. Social drinkers are networking, building relationships and adding contacts to their [phones] that result in bigger paycheques."

Perhaps this study is not good news for people who do not drink. Perhaps these people feel that there are other ways to develop contacts, such as getting involved in charitable organizations or meeting colleagues for breakfast instead of in a bar after work. While these strategies do have merit, neither is as effective as the social networking that occurs while drinking.

In fact, a reasonable conclusion from this study would be to encourage students to learn how to drink. Knowing how to drink without embarrassing oneself is a key skill in business, as the above study proves. Therefore, students should not feel guilty about spending evenings drinking instead of working or studying, since drinking will lead to their eventual success. Students should not focus on school other than to do well enough to pass; otherwise, they are doomed to earn less than their peers who put their study time to good use by hitting the bottle.

Now, look at these straightforward responses to the prompt and determine which one uses a **general concession** and which one uses a **specific concession**.

Introduction: Version 1

In "Drink Your Way to Success," Randolph Hennepin argues that students need to focus more on drinking than studying in order to be successful in their future professions and careers. Hennepin justifies this position by suggesting that social drinkers tend to be better at social networking and, because of this, tend to build better social capital with others in their professions, as well as earn more money over their careers. **Although Hennepin makes some good points, his argument is flawed.** If students focus more on drinking than studying, as Hennepin suggests, they will likely never do well enough in their courses to get into their profession in the first place. Focusing on drinking rather than studying will lead to students who are less likely to graduate and less likely to achieve success in the workplace.

Introduction: Version 2

In "Drink Your Way to Success," Randolph Hennepin argues that students need to focus more on drinking than studying in order to be successful in their future professions and careers. Hennepin justifies this position by suggesting that social drinkers tend to be better at social networking and, because of this, tend to build better social capital with others in their professions, as well as earn more money over their careers. **While it may be true that building up social capital is important for some professions, stating that students should focus on drinking instead of studying will not necessarily lead to eventual success**. If students focus more on drinking than studying, as Hennepin suggests, they will likely never do well enough in their courses to get into their profession in the first place. Focusing on drinking rather than studying will lead to students who are less likely to graduate and less likely to achieve success in the workplace.

Activity 1: Identifying Concessions

Which introduction in the above example uses *a more specific* concession? Vote on your choice below and then view the results. Click the accordion below to learn more.

- Introduction: Version 1
- Introduction: Version 2

Learn more about using specific concessions

The purpose behind the concession is two-fold:

1. It provides your reader with a clear indication that you are shifting from your summary of the author's position to your argument or response to the position.
2. **It is the first indication of a possible concession and counter-argument that you might make in your body paragraphs.**

Now, while the first paragraph offers a modicum of concession ("the author makes some good points"), it doesn't acknowledge what good points the author might have made, which makes it a weaker concession. Remember that the point here is to acknowledge that, even though you might not agree with the author, you clearly understand the reasonable elements of the argument. The second option offers a much clearer concession.

The next section includes practice activities for concessions and counterarguments.

4.6 Concessions and Counter Arguments: Practice

<div class="learning-objectives">

Learning Objectives

1. Identify concessions and counterarguments
2. Practice writing concessions and counterarguments

</div>

Concession Statement Practice

Read the following paragraphs, in order to determine when the author makes concessions to his own argument.

Which sentences offer clear concessions to the author's own argument? **There is one clear concession offered in each paragraph**.

Select the **highlighted** part of a sentence to try and identify the correct concession.

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

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/reasonandwriting/?p=866#h5p-3

Let's try another. Select the **highlighted** part of a sentence to try and identify the correct concession.

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

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/reasonandwriting/?p=866#h5p-4

In both cases, the authors offer the concession – what an opponent of his argument would state – and then the authors counter that concession with their own point, a first step towards counter-arguing.

Concession and **Counterargument Practice**

Look at the following statements. In the first example, you are given the objection. The goal is to be able to structure the objection into a concession, and once you've done that, your next step is to reasonably counter it. You've been given an example to start. Your goal, in terms of structure, is to follow this pattern:

· **[Some might argue/It seems logical to argue that]** *add your possible Objection and Rationale for that Objection.*
· **[However],** *add your Assertion offered as a counter-point.*

Example 1:

The first example is done for you.

Possible Objection: **Video games cause children to shoot people**

Your Assertion: **Violent media existed before video games**

Concession and Counter-Argument: **<u>Some might argue</u> that video games cause children to shoot people. After all, youth violence appears to be on the rise in today's world**. **<u>However,</u> violent media existed before video games, and in order to blame video games, we would have to ignore the historical outrage at things like movies, comic books, rock and roll, and Dungeons and Dragons.**

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

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/reasonandwriting/?p=866#h5p-5

Example 2:

In this second scenario, you are given your assertion. This is slightly more difficult, but the

goal here is to come up with a reasonable concession and then use the objection to structure a concession and the assertion to structure a reasonable counter. You've been given an example to start:

Your Assertion: Requiring students to dress professionally restricts personal freedom.

Possible Objection: A mandatory dress code would encourage post-secondary students to take their education more seriously.

Concession and Counter-Argument: Although it seems logical to argue that a mandatory dress code would encourage post-secondary students to take their education more seriously, requiring students to dress professionally restricts their personal freedom. Furthermore, post-secondary institutions like Fanshawe College are not professional workplaces, and many students learn more effectively when they dress comfortably.

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

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/reasonandwriting/?p=866#h5p-6

4.7 Writing Essays: End-of-Chapter Exercises

1. On a separate sheet of paper, choose one of the examples of a proper thesis statement from this chapter (one that interests you) and form three supporting points for that statement. After you have formed your three points, write a topic sentence for each body paragraph. Make sure that your topic sentences can be backed up with examples and details.

2. **Group activity.** Choose one of the topics from [Exercise 1](#) in [4.1 Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement](#) and form a yes-or-no question about that topic. Then, take a survey of the people in your class to find out how they feel about the subject. Using the majority vote, ask those people to write on slips of paper the reasons for their opinion. Using the data you collect, form a thesis statement based on your classmates' perspectives on the topic and their reasons.

3. On a separate sheet of paper, write an introduction for an essay based on the thesis statement from the group activity using the techniques for introductory paragraphs that you learned in this chapter.

4. Start a journal in which you record "spoken" thesis statements. Start listening closely to the opinions expressed by your teachers, classmates, friends, and family members. Ask them to provide at least three reasons for their opinion and record them in the journal. Use this as material for future essays.

5. Open a magazine and read a lengthy article. See if you can pinpoint the thesis statement as well as the topic sentence for each paragraph and its supporting details.

Chapter 5: Rhetorical Modes

5.1 Narration

Rhetorical modes simply mean the ways in which we can effectively communicate through language. This chapter covers nine common rhetorical modes. As you read about these nine modes, keep in mind that the rhetorical mode a writer chooses depends on his or her purpose for writing. Sometimes, writers incorporate a variety of modes in any one essay. In covering the nine modes, this chapter also emphasizes the rhetorical modes as a set of tools that will allow you greater flexibility and effectiveness in communicating with your audience and expressing your ideas.

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

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

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

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.
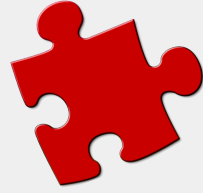
Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

Exercises 1

On a separate sheet of paper, start brainstorming ideas for a narrative. First, decide whether you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then, free write for five minutes. Be sure to use all five minutes and keep writing the entire time. Do not stop and think about what to write.

The following are some topics to consider as you get going:

1. Childhood
2. School
3. Adventure
4. Work
5. Love
6. Family
7. Friends
8. Vacation
9. Nature
10. Space

The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in **chronological order**, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are

typically organized by time. Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed in Table 5.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time". For more information about chronological order, see [Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?](#) and [Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish](#).

Table 5.1 Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

after/afterward	as soon as	at last	before
currently	during	eventually	meanwhile
next	now	since	soon
finally	later	still	then
until	when/whenever	while	first, second, third

The following are the other basic components of a narrative:

- **Plot.** The events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Characters.** The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character or the protagonist.
- **Conflict.** The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot is something 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.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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 structure. This will allow you to troubleshoot rough spots, as well as better understand your own personal history. Both processes will make your story better and your self-presentation better, too.

Take your freewriting exercise from the last section and start crafting it chronologically into a rough plot summary. To read more about a summary, see Chapter 6: Writing Paragraphs: Separating Ideas and Shaping Content. Be sure to use the time transition words and phrases listed in Table 5.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time" to sequence the events.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your rough plot summary.

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, ask yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then, freewrite about topics that are of general interest to you. For more information about freewriting, see Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?.

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should 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.
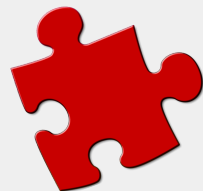
As always, starting with a strong introduction is important to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the story's central conflict and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece. See Appendix B: Examples of Essays to read a sample narrative essay.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, add two or three paragraphs to the plot summary you started in the last section. Describe in detail the main character and the setting of the first scene. Try to use all five senses in your descriptions.

Key Takeaways

- Narration is the art of storytelling.
- Narratives can be either factual or fictional. In either case, narratives should emotionally engage the reader.
- Most narratives are composed of major events sequenced in chronological order.
- Time transition words and phrases are used to orient the reader in the sequence of a narrative.
- The four basic components of all narratives are plot, character, conflict, and theme.
- The use of sensory details is crucial to emotionally engaging the reader.
- A strong introduction is important to hook the reader. A strong conclusion should add resolution to the conflict and evoke the narrative's theme.

5.2 Illustration

The Purpose of Illustration in Writing

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective **illustration essay** clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence.

As you learned in [Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish](#) , the controlling idea of an essay is called *a thesis*. A writer can use different types of evidence to support his or her thesis. Using scientific studies, experts in a particular field, statistics, historical events, current events, analogies, and personal anecdotes are all ways in which a writer can illustrate a thesis. 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 appropriate for your audience.
- Assess how much evidence you need to adequately explain your point depending on the complexity of the subject and the knowledge of your audience regarding that subject.

For example, if you were writing about a new 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 members were 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.

Exercise 1

On a separate piece of paper, form a thesis based on each of the following three topics. Then list the types of evidence that would best explain your point for each of the two audiences.

1. Topic: Combat and mental health

   Audience: family members of veterans, doctors

2. Topic: Video games and teen violence

   Audience: parents, children

3. Topic: Architecture and earthquakes

   Audience: engineers, local townspeople

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 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. This type of organization—order of importance—you learned about in [Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?](#) and [Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish](#).

The time transition words listed in [Table 5.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time](#)" are also helpful in ordering the presentation of evidence. Words like *first*, *second*, *third*, *currently*, *next*, and *finally* all help orient the reader and sequence evidence clearly. Because an illustration essay uses so many examples, it is also helpful to have a list of words and phrases to present each piece of evidence. Table 5.2 "Phrases of Illustration" provides a list of phrases for illustration.

Table 5.2 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.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In the workplace, it is often helpful to keep the phrases of illustration in mind as a way to incorporate them whenever you can. Whether you are writing out directives that colleagues will have to follow or requesting a new product or service from another company, making a conscious effort to incorporate a phrase of illustration will force you to provide examples of what you mean.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, form a thesis based on one of the following topics. Then, support that thesis with three pieces of evidence. Make sure to use a different phrase of illustration to introduce each piece of evidence you choose.

1. Cooking
2. Baseball
3. Work hours
4. Exercise
5. Traffic

Writing an Illustration Essay

First, decide on a topic that you feel interested in writing about. 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 of your examples using strong, clear supporting details. See Appendix B: Examples of Essays to read a sample illustration essay.

On a separate sheet of paper, write a five-paragraph illustration essay. You can choose one of the topics from Exercise 1 or Exercise 2 in this section, or you can choose your own.

Key Takeaways

- An illustration essay clearly explains a main point using evidence.
- When choosing evidence, always gauge whether the evidence is appropriate for the subject as well as the audience.
- Organize the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important.
- Use time transitions to order evidence.
- Use phrases of illustration to call out an exam.

5.3 Description

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the description essay.
2. Understand how to write a description essay.

The Purpose of Description in Writing

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

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, **sensory details** are descriptions that appeal to our senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Your descriptions should try to focus on the five senses because we all rely on these senses to experience the world. The use of sensory details, then, provides you with the greatest possibility of relating to your audience and thus engaging them in your writing, making descriptive writing important not only during your education but also during everyday situations.

Tip

Avoid empty descriptors if possible. Empty descriptors are adjectives that can mean different things to different people. Good, beautiful, terrific, and nice are examples. The use of such words in descriptions can lead to misreads and confusion. A good day, for instance, can mean far different things depending on one's age, personality, or tastes.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Whether you are presenting a new product or service to a client, training new employees, or brainstorming ideas with colleagues, the use of clear, evocative detail is crucial.

Make an effort to use details that express your thoughts in a way that will register with others. Sharp, concise details are always impressive.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, describe the following five items in a short paragraph. Use at least three of the five senses for each description.

1. Night
2. Beach
3. City
4. Dinner
5. Stranger

The Structure of a Description Essay

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

The organization of the essay may best follow **spatial orde**r, an arrangement of ideas according to physical characteristics or appearance. Depending on what the writer describes, the organization could move from top to bottom, left to right, near to far, warm to cold, frightening to inviting, and so on.

For example, if the subject were a client's kitchen in the midst of renovation, you might start at one side of the room and move slowly across to the other end, describing appliances, cabinetry, and so on. Or you might choose to start with older remnants of the kitchen and progress to the new installations. Maybe start with the floor and move up toward the ceiling.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, choose an organizing strategy and then execute it in a short paragraph for three of the following six items:

1. Train station
2. Your office
3. Your car
4. A coffee shop
5. Lobby of a movie theater
6. Mystery Option*****

**Choose an object to describe but do not indicate it. Describe it, but preserve the mystery.*

Writing a Description Essay

Choosing a subject is the first step in writing a description essay. Once you have chosen the person, place, or object you want to describe, your challenge is to write an effective thesis statement to guide your essay.

The remainder of your essay describes your subject in a way that best expresses your thesis. Remember, you should have a strong sense of how you will organize your essay. Choose a strategy and stick to it.

Every part of your essay should use vivid sensory details. The more you can appeal to your readers' senses, the more they will be engaged in your essay. See Appendix B: Examples of Essays to read a sample description essay.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, choose one of the topics that you started in Exercise 2 and expand it into a five-paragraph essay. Expanding on ideas in greater detail can be difficult. Sometimes, it is helpful to look closely at each of the sentences in a summary paragraph. Those sentences can often serve as topic sentences to larger paragraphs.

Mystery Option: Here is an opportunity to collaborate. Please share with a classmate and compare your thoughts on the mystery descriptions. Did your classmate correctly guess your mystery topic? If not, how could you provide more detail to describe it and lead them to the correct conclusion?

Key Takeaways

- Description essays should describe something vividly to the reader using strong sensory details.
- Sensory details appeal to the five human senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- A description essay should start with the writer's main impression of a person, a place, or an object.
- Use spatial order to organize your descriptive writing.

5.4 Classification

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of **classification** is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. 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.

Tip

Choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays.

The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.
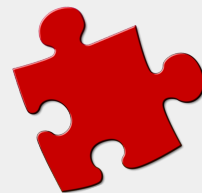
Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, break the following categories into smaller classifications.

1. Canada

2. Colleges and universities
3. Beverages
4. Fashion

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

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

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each region of New York would have its own paragraph.

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

Exercise 2

Using your classifications from Exercise 1, write a brief paragraph explaining why you chose to organize each main category in the way that you did.

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 at 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 the topic initially discussed in the introduction. See Appendix B: Examples of Essays to read a sample classification essay.

Exercise 3

Building on Exercise 1 and Exercise 2, write a five-paragraph classification essay about one of the four original topics. In your thesis, make sure to include the topic, subtopics, and rationale for your breakdown. Make sure that your essay is organized into paragraphs that each describe a subtopic.

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of classification is to break a subject into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts.
- Smaller subcategories help us make sense of the world, and the way in which these subcategories are created also helps us make sense of the world.
- A classification essay is organized by its subcategories.

5.5 Process Analysis

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the process analysis essay.
2. Understand how to write a process analysis essay.

The Purpose of Process Analysis in Writing

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 remains 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 needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are—and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps that you feel would be required to clearly illustrate three of the following four processes:

1. Tying a shoelace

2. Parallel parking
3. Planning a successful first date
4. Being an effective communicator

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 typically follows chronological order. 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 transition phrases covered in the Narration and Illustration sections are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays (see Table 5.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time" and Table 5.2 "Phrases of Illustration"). Words such as first, second, third, next, and finally are helpful cues to orient the reader and organize the content of the essay.

Tip

Always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a friend or coworker read it over will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.
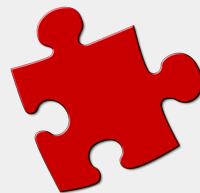
Exercise 2

Choose two of the lists you created in Exercise 1 and start writing out the processes in paragraph form. Try to construct paragraphs based on the complexity of each step. For complicated steps, dedicate an entire paragraph. If less complicated steps fall in succession, group them into a single paragraph.

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, choose a process that 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 transition 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 B: Examples of Essays to read an example of a process analysis essay.

Exercise 3

Choose one of the expanded lists from Exercise 2. Construct a full process analysis essay from the work you have already done. That means adding an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, time transition phrases, body paragraphs, and a solid conclusion.

Key Takeaways

- A process analysis essay explains how to do something, how something works, or both.
- The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the outcome of the process.
- The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows a chronological sequence.
- Time transition phrases are particularly helpful in process analysis essays to organize steps and orient reader.

5.6 Definition

The Purpose of Definition in Writing

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: the purpose of the definition essay is 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 collective groups.

Take, for example, a word like *alcoholism*. The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as *marriage* and *climate change*, has an enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. 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 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, avoid terms that are too simple and lack complexity.

Think in terms of concepts, such as hero, immigration, or loyalty, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay.
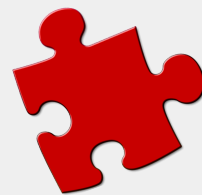
Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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 each company may have additional criteria that define it further. Knowing how your workplace defines and treats all sexual harassment allegations is important. Think, too, about how your company defines lateness, productivity, or contributions.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, 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. Or it could be something with higher stakes and wider impact, such as a political argument. Explain how the conversation began, how the argument hinged on the definition of the word, and how the incident was finally resolved.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your responses.

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 a 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 such a leader

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.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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 gray 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 résumé and even increase productivity in the workplace.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, define each of the following items in your own terms. If you can, establish a context for your definition.

1. Bravery
2. Adulthood
3. Consumer culture
4. Violence
5. Art

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 relevancy 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 B: Examples of Essays to read a sample definition essay.

Exercise 3

Create a full definition essay from one of the items you already defined in Exercise 2. Be sure to include an interesting introduction, a clear thesis, a well-explained context, distinct body paragraphs, and a conclusion that pulls everything together.

Key Takeaways

- Definitions establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse.
- Context affects the meaning and usage of words.
- The thesis of a definition essay should clearly state the writer's definition of the term in the specific context.
- Body paragraphs should explain the various facets of the definition stated in the thesis.
- The conclusion should pull all the elements of the definition together at the end and reinforce the thesis.

5.7 Comparison and Contrast

The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

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 both.

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

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

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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.

Exercise 1

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward contrast. Choose one of the following three categories. Pick two examples from each. Then come up with one similarity and three differences between the examples.

1. Romantic comedies
2. Internet search engines
3. Cell phones

Exercise 2

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward comparison. Choose one of the following three items. Then, come up with one difference and three similarities.

1. Department stores and discount retail stores
2. Fast-food chains and fine-dining restaurants
3. Dogs and cats

The Structure of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

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

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

Here, the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), and it makes a claim about the results that might prove useful to the reader.

You may organize compare-and-contrast essays in one of the following two ways:

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

See Figure 5.7 "Comparison and Contrast Diagram", which diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

Figure 5.7 Comparison and Contrast Diagram

Organize by Subject:

(1) Thesis (Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the 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 the 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

Image Text 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 an analysis. See Table 5.7 "Phrases of Comparison and Contrast" below for examples.

Table 5.7 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

Exercise 3

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in Exercise 1 and Exercise 2. Use the point-by-point organizing strategy for one of them and use the subject-organizing strategy for the other.

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. Make 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 B: Examples of Essays to read a sample compare-and-contrast essay.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Many business presentations are conducted using comparison and contrast. The organizing strategies—by subject or individual points—could also be used for organizing a presentation. Keep this in mind as a way of organizing your content the next time you or a colleague have to present something at work.

Exercise 4

Choose one of the outlines you created in Exercise 3, and write a full compare-and-contrast essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, well-defined and detailed paragraphs, and a fitting conclusion that ties everything together.

Key Takeaways

- A compare-and-contrast essay analyzes two subjects by either comparing them, contrasting them, or both.
- The purpose of writing a comparison or contrast essay is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities between two subjects.
- The thesis should clearly state the subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both, and it should state what is to be learned from doing so.

- There are two main organizing strategies for compare-and-contrast essays.

1. Organize by the subjects themselves, one then the other.
2. Organize by individual points, in which you discuss each subject in relation to each point.

- Use phrases of comparison or phrases of contrast to signal to readers how exactly the two subjects are being analyzed.

5.8 Cause and Effect

1. Determine the purpose and structure of cause and effect in writing.
2. Understand how to write a cause-and-effect essay.

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

It is often considered human nature to ask, "Why?" and "How?" We want to know how our child got sick so we can better prevent it from happening or why our colleague got a pay raise because we also want one. 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. However, 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.

Exercise 1

Consider the causes and effects in the following thesis statements. List a cause and effect for each one on your own sheet of paper.

1. The growing childhood obesity epidemic is a result of technology.
2. Much of the wildlife is dying because of the oil spill.
3. The town continued programs that it could no longer afford, so it went bankrupt.
4. More young people became politically active as use of the Internet spread throughout society.
5. While many experts believed the rise in violence was due to the poor economy, it was really due to the summer-long heat wave.

Exercise 2

Write three cause-and-effect thesis statements of your own for each of the following five broad topics.

1. Health and nutrition
2. Sports
3. Media
4. Politics
5. History

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

The cause-and-effect essay opens with a general introduction to the topic, which then leads to a thesis that states the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.

The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of the following two primary ways:

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

For example, if your essay were on childhood obesity, you could start by talking about the effect of

childhood obesity and then discuss the cause, or you could start the same essay by talking about the cause of childhood obesity and then move to the effect.

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage. See Table 5.8 "Phrases of Causation" below for examples of such terms.

Table 5.8 Phrases of Causation

as a result	consequently
because	due to
hence	since
thus	therefore

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 such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

Exercise 3

Look at some of the cause-and-effect relationships from Exercise 2. Outline the links you listed. Outline one using a cause-then-effect structure. Outline the other using the effect-then-cause structure.

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 them in terms of 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 B: Examples of Essays to read a sample cause-and-effect essay.

Exercise 4

Choose one of the ideas you outlined in Exercise 2 and write a full cause-and-effect essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, strong evidence and examples, and a thoughtful conclusion.

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena are related.
- The thesis states what the writer sees as 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 these two primary ways:

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

- Strong evidence is particularly important in the cause-and-effect essay due to the complexity of determining connections between phenomena.
- Phrases of causation are helpful in signalling links between various elements in the essay.

5.9 Persuasion

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

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. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

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 often than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.
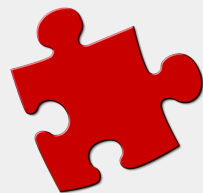
The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

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

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of the claim
4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

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

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.
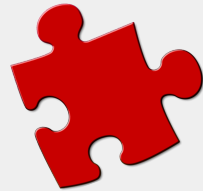
Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

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. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.

It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience. Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and audience members will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

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

Such a concession will be welcomed 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 their ideas. See Table 5.9 "Phrases of Concession" below for some useful phrases of concession.

Table 5.9 Phrases of Concession

although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

See [section 4.6 Concessions and Counter Arguments](#) for additional examples and practice on concessions.

Exercise 1

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember, the more specific your thesis is, the better.

1. Foreign policy
2. Television and advertising
3. Stereotypes and prejudice
4. Gender roles and the workplace
5. Driving and cell phones

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 be biased toward working at night rather than in the morning or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

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

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth, and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using *I* too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

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 of all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing.

Be mindful of using *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

1. Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention—and usually not in a good way. The use of *I* is no different.
2. The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is

supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

<u>Smoking</u> is bad.

<u>I think</u> 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.

Checklist

Developing Sound Arguments

Does my essay contain the following elements?

- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that can be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

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. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinions 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. However, the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

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.
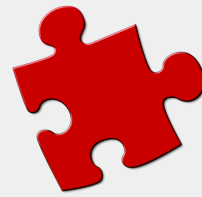
Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, take three of the theses you formed in Exercise 1 and list the types of evidence you might use in support of that thesis.

Exercise 3

Using the evidence you provided in support of the three theses in Exercise 2, come up with at least one counterargument to each. Then, write a concession statement expressing the limits to each of your three arguments.

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

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

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

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

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

When making a business presentation, you typically have limited time to get across your idea. Providing visual elements for your audience can be an effective timesaving tool. Quantitative visuals in business presentations serve the same purpose as they do in persuasive writing. They should make logical appeals by showing numerical data in a spatial design. Quantitative visuals should be pictures that might appeal to your audience's emotions. You will find that many of the rhetorical devices used in writing are the same ones used in the workplace.

Writing a Persuasive Essay

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

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

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

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis. See Appendix B: Examples of Essays to read a sample persuasive essay.

Exercise 4

Choose one of the topics you have been working on throughout this section. Use the thesis, evidence, opposing argument, and concessionary statement as the basis for writing a full persuasive essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, clear explanations of all the evidence you present, and a strong conclusion.

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion.
- 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.
- A thesis that expresses the opinion of the writer in more specific terms is better than one that is vague.
- It is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.
- It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish through a concession statement.
- To persuade a skeptical audience, you will need to use a wide range of evidence. Scientific studies, opinions from experts, historical precedent, statistics, personal anecdotes, and current events are all types of evidence that you might use in explaining your point.
- Make sure that your word choice and writing style is appropriate for both your subject and your audience.
- You should let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and respectfully and reasonably addressing opposing ideas.
- You should be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound more biased than it needs to be.
- Facts are statements that can be proven using objective data.
- Opinions are personal views or judgments that cannot be proven.
- In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions.
- Quantitative visuals present data graphically. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience.
- Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions.

5.10 Rhetorical Modes: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Exercises

1. The thesis statement is a fundamental element of writing regardless of what rhetorical mode you are writing in. Formulate one more thesis for each of the modes discussed in this chapter.
2. Which rhetorical mode seems most aligned with who you are as a person? That is, which mode seems most useful to you? Explain why in a paragraph.
3. Over the next week, look closely at the texts and articles you read. Document in a journal exactly what type of rhetorical mode is being used. Sometimes it might be for an entire article, but sometimes you might see different modes within one article. The more you can detect various ways of communicating ideas, the easier it will be to do yourself.

UNIT 2: WRITING ORGANIZATION

Chapter 6: Writing Paragraphs, Separating Ideas, and Shaping Content

WRIT Course Learning Outcomes (LO) Addressed

- **Compose** complete sentences and paragraphs using effective vocabulary (LO 6).
- **Express** a clear written argument (LO 7).
- **Provide** evidence in support of arguments (LO 8).
- **Apply** basic principles of quotation integration (LO 9).

Rubric Spotlight

An ***EXPERTLY ORGANIZED*** essay includes:

- Purposeful variety of faultless signal phrasing and citation
- Inevitable paragraph sequence
- Exemplary paragraph structure
- Responsible, rational dialogic relationship with prompt
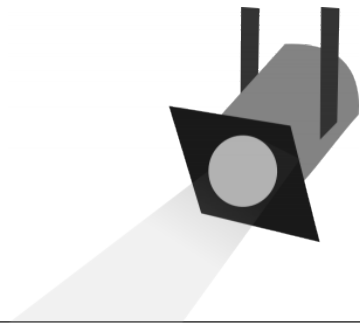
Chapter 6: Writing Paragraphs, Separating Ideas, and Shaping Content

6.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. One technique that effective writers use is to begin a fresh paragraph for each new idea they introduce.

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.

Three elements shape the content of each paragraph:

1. **Purpose**. The reason the writer composes the paragraph.
2. **Tone**. The attitude the writer conveys about the paragraph's subject.
3. **Audience**. The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.

Figure 6.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content Triangle
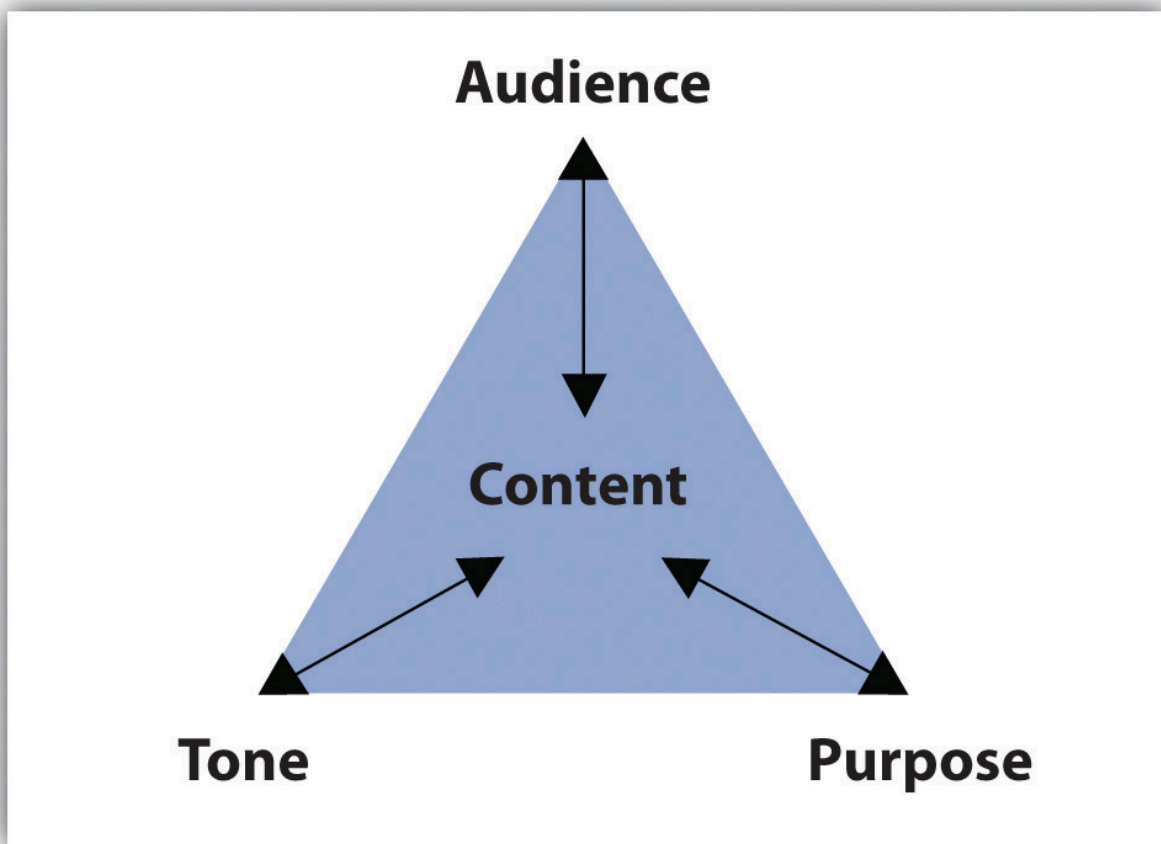
The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what the paragraph covers and how it will support one main point. This section covers how purpose, audience, and tone affect reading and writing paragraphs.

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose of a piece of writing identifies the reason you write a particular document. Basically, the purpose of a piece of writing is to answer the question, "Why?" 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 congressman? To persuade him 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. You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but also as you read for work or pleasure. Because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as you read. To learn more about reading in the writing process, see Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?.

Eventually, your instructors will ask you to complete assignments specifically designed to meet one of the four purposes. As you will see, the purpose of 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** shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials. You probably summarize events, books, and movies daily. Think about the last blockbuster movie you saw or the last novel you read. Chances are, at some point in a casual conversation with a friend, coworker, or classmate, you compressed all the action in a two-hour film or in a two-hundred-page book into a brief description of the major plot movements. While in conversation, you probably described the major highlights, or 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 purpose of a summary in daily conversation, the purpose of an academic summary paragraph is to maintain all the essential information in a longer document. Although shorter than the original writing, a summary should still communicate all the key points and support. In other words, summary paragraphs should be succinct and to the point.

According to the Monitoring the Future Study, almost two-thirds of 10th-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 12th graders reported having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days; 17.6 percent and 30.2 percent, respectively, reported having been drunk in the past 30 days; 21.0 percent and 28.1 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 continues 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 drank 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 in high school tends to be higher in 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 educational level of parents) is associated with more alcohol use during the early high school years; by the end of high school, and during the transition to adulthood, this relationship changes, and youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds consume greater amounts of alcohol.

Image Text Description

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 and 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 adulthood. 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.

Image Text Description

Notice how the summary retains the key points made by the writers of the original report but omits most of the statistical data. Summaries need not contain all the specific facts and figures in the original document; they provide only an overview of the essential information.

Analysis Paragraphs

An *analysis* separates complex materials in their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. The analysis of simple table salt, for example, would require a deconstruction of its parts—the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride, which is also called simple table salt.

Analysis is not limited to the sciences, of course. An analysis paragraph in academic writing fulfills the same purpose. Instead of deconstructing compounds, academic analysis paragraphs typically deconstruct documents. An analysis takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

Take a look at a student's analysis of the 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-aged 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 far 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.

Image Text Description

Notice how the analysis does not simply repeat information from the original report 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

A *synthesis* combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Consider the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar—or any other combination of instruments—to create a new sound. The purpose of the synthesizer is to blend together the notes from individual instruments to form new, unique notes.

The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document. 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 underage drinking:

In their 2009 report, Brown et al. consider the rates of alcohol consumption among high school and college-aged students and various sociodemographic factors that affect these rates. However, this report is limited to assessing the rates of underage drinking, rather than considering methods of decreasing these rates. Several other studies, as well as original research among college students, provide insight into how these rates may be reduced.

One study, by Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrisi (2009) considers the impact of various types of interventions as a method for reducing alcohol consumption among minors. They conclude that although family-focused interventions for adolescents aged ten to fifteen have shown promise, there is a serious lack of interventions available for college-aged students who do not attend college. These students are among the highest risk level for alcohol abuse, a fact supported by Brown et al.

I did my own research and interviewed eight college students, four men and four women. I asked them when they first tried alcohol and what factors encouraged them to drink. All four men had tried alcohol by the age of thirteen. Three of the women had also tried alcohol by thirteen and the fourth had tried alcohol by fifteen. All eight students said that peer pressure, boredom, and the thrill of trying something illegal were motivating factors. These results support the research of Brown et al. However, they also raise an interesting point. If boredom is a motivating factor for underage drinking, maybe additional after school programs or other community measures could be introduced to dissuade teenagers from underage drinking. Based on my sources, further research is needed to show true preventative measures for teenage alcohol consumption.

Image Text Description

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. Evaluations in everyday experiences are often not only dictated by set standards but also influenced by opinion and prior

knowledge. For example, at work, a supervisor may complete an employee evaluation by judging his subordinate's performance based on the company's goals. If the company focuses on improving communication, the supervisor will rate the employee's customer service according to a standard scale. However, the evaluation still depends on the supervisor's opinion and prior experience with the employee. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine how well the employee performs at his or her job.

An academic evaluation communicates your opinion and its justifications about a document or a topic of discussion. Evaluations are influenced by your reading of the document, your prior knowledge, and your prior experience with the topic or issue. Because an evaluation incorporates your point of view and reasons for your point of view, it typically requires more critical thinking and a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills. Thus, evaluation paragraphs often follow summary, analysis, and synthesis paragraphs. Read a student's evaluation paragraph.

At the beginning of their report, Brown et al. use specific data regarding the use of alcohol by high school students and college-aged 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 far 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.

Image Text Description

Notice how the paragraph incorporates the student's personal judgment within the evaluation. Evaluating a document requires prior knowledge that is often based on additional research.

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.

Exercise 1

Read the following paragraphs about four films and then identify the purpose of each paragraph.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vice, 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 theater at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.

4. 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 will 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.

Collaboration

Share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Thinking about the purpose of writing a report in the workplace can help focus and structure the document. A summary should provide colleagues with a factual overview of your findings without going into too much specific detail. In contrast, an evaluation should include your personal opinion, along with supporting evidence, research, or examples to back it up. Listen for words such as summarize, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate when your boss asks you to complete a report to help determine a purpose for writing.

Exercise 2

Consider the essay most recently assigned to you. Identify the most effective academic purpose for the assignment.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

Identifying the Audience

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

help you develop an appropriate relationship with your audience, making them more receptive to your message.

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

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

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about the audience has become so common that you may not even detect audience-driven decisions.

For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write a 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 e-mails 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 people. And some kid sneezed on me and got me sick! I was so bored and sniffling all weekend; I hope I don't have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

Most likely, you matched each paragraph to its intended audience with little hesitation. Because each

paragraph reveals the author's relationship with 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. Ultimately, the people you visualize will affect what and how you write.

> **Tip**
>
> While giving a speech, you may articulate an inspiring or critical message, but if you left your hair a mess and laced up mismatched shoes, your audience would not take you seriously. They may be too distracted by your appearance to listen to your words. Similarly, grammar and sentence structure serve as the appearance of a piece of writing. Polishing your work using correct grammar will impress your readers and allow them to focus on what you have to say.
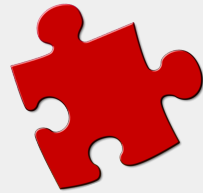
Because focusing on the audience will enhance your writing, your process, and your finished product, you must consider the specific traits of your audience members. Use your imagination to anticipate the readers' demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations.

- **Demographics.** These measure important data about a group of people, such as their age range, their ethnicity, their religious beliefs, or their gender. Certain topics and assignments will require these kinds of considerations about your audience. For other topics and assignments, these measurements may not influence your writing in the end. Regardless, it is important to consider demographics when you begin to think about your purpose for writing.
- **Education.** Education considers the audience's level of schooling. If audience members have earned a doctorate degree, for example, you may need to elevate your style and use more formal language. Or, if audience members are still in college, you could write in a more relaxed style. An audience member's major or emphasis may also dictate your writing.
- **Prior knowledge.** This refers to what the audience already knows about your topic. If your readers have studied certain topics, they may already know some terms and concepts related to the topic. You may decide whether to define terms and explain concepts based on your audience's prior knowledge. Although you cannot peer inside the brains of your readers to discover their knowledge, you can make reasonable assumptions. For instance, a nursing major would presumably know more about

health-related topics than a business major would.

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

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, generate a list of characteristics under each category for each audience. This list will help you later when you read about tone and content.

1. Your classmates

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

2. Your instructor

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

3. The head of your academic department

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

4. Now, think about your next writing assignment. Identify the purpose (you may use the same purpose listed in Exercise 2, and then identify the audience. Create a list of characteristics under each category.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Keep in mind that as your topic shifts in the writing process, your audience may also shift. For more information about the writing process, see [Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?](#).

Also, remember that decisions about style depend on audience, purpose, and content. Identifying your audience's demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will affect how you write, but purpose and content play an equally important role. The next subsection covers how to select an appropriate tone to match the audience and purpose.

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

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

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

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

Many species of plants and animals are disappearing right before our eyes. If we don't act fast,

it might be too late to save them. Human activities, including pollution, deforestation, hunting, and overpopulation, are devastating the natural environment. Without our help, many species will not survive long enough for our children to see them in the wild. Take the tiger, for example. Today, tigers occupy just 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 one hundred thousand in 1920 to just a few thousand. Contact your local wildlife conservation society today to find out how you can stop this terrible destruction.

Exercise 4

Think about the assignment and purpose you selected in Exercise 2, and the audience you selected in Exercise 3. Now, identify the tone you would use in the assignment.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

My tone: _____

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. For example, an essay written for third graders that summarizes the legislative process 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 third graders. 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.

Exercise 5

Match the content in the box to the appropriate audience and purpose. On your own sheet of paper, write the correct letter next to the number.

1. Whereas economist Holmes contends that the financial crisis is far from over, presidential advisor Jones points out that it is vital to catch the first wave of opportunity to increase market share. We can use elements of both experts' visions. Let me explain how.
2. In 2000, foreign money flowed into the United States, contributing to easy credit conditions. People bought larger houses than they could afford, eventually defaulting on their loans as interest rates rose.
3. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, known by most of us as the humungous government bailout, caused mixed reactions. Although supported by many political leaders, the statute provoked outrage among grassroots groups. In their opinion, the government was actually rewarding banks for their appalling behavior.

1. **Audience:** An instructor

   Purpose: To analyze the reasons behind the 2007 financial crisis

   Content: _____

2. **Audience:** Classmates

   Purpose: To summarize the effects of the $700 billion government bailout

   Content: _____

3. **Audience:** An employer

   Purpose: To synthesize two articles on preparing businesses for economic recovery

   Content: _____

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 6

Using the assignment, purpose, audience, and tone from Exercise 4, generate a list of content

ideas. Remember that content consists of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

My tone: _____

My content ideas: _____

Key Takeaways

- Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks of information.
- The content of each paragraph and document is shaped by purpose, audience, and tone.
- The four common academic purposes are to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate.
- Identifying the audience's demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will affect how and what you write.
- Devices such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language communicate tone and create a relationship between the writer and his or her audience.
- Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations. All content must be appropriate and interesting for the audience, as well as the purpose and tone.

6.2 Effective Means for Writing a Paragraph

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Learning Objectives

</div>

1. Identify characteristics of a good topic sentence.
2. Identify the three parts of a developed paragraph.
3. Apply knowledge of topic sentences and parts of a developed paragraph in an assignment.

Now that you have identified common purposes for writing and learned how to select appropriate content for a particular audience, you can think about the structure of a paragraph in greater detail. Composing an effective paragraph requires a method similar to building a house. You may have the finest content or materials, but if you do not arrange them in the correct order, then the final product will not hold together very well.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. **Topic Sentence.** The topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. **Body.** The body is composed of supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. **Conclusion.** The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay (see Chapter 4: Writing Essays From Start to Finish for more information about thesis statements) and guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

This section covers the major components of a paragraph and examines how to develop an effective topic sentence.

Developing a Topic Sentence

Pick up any newspaper or magazine and read the first sentence of an article. Are you fairly confident that you know what the rest of the article is about? If so, you have likely read the topic sentence. An effective topic sentence combines a main idea with the writer's personal attitude or opinion. It serves to orient the reader and provides an indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

Read the following example:

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

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 states. If the purpose of the essay is actually to evaluate education in only one particular state or to discuss math or English education specifically, then the topic sentence is misleading.

Tip

When writing a draft of an essay, allow a friend or colleague to read the opening line of your first paragraph. Ask your reader to predict what your paper will be about. If he or she is unable to guess your topic accurately, you should consider revising your topic sentence so that it clearly defines your purpose in writing.
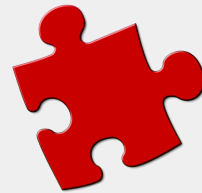
Main Idea versus Controlling Idea

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 (as you will read about in Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?), 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 paragraphs in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject.

Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The antinausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalizing marijuana would create a higher demand for Class A and Class B drugs.

Although the main idea—marijuana—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.** The military deserves 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 the military 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.)

Exercise 2

Choose the most effective topic sentence from the following sentence pairs.

1. a. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.

   b. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.

2. a. The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.

   b. Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure.

3. a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.

   b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.

4. a. Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.

   b. This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry.

Exercise 3

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a main idea. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species

   _____

2. The cost of fuel

_____

3. The legal drinking age

_____

4. A controversial film or novel

_____

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

When creating a workplace document, use the "top-down" approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each paragraph with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

Developing Paragraphs That Use Topic Sentences, Supporting Ideas, and Transitions Effectively

Learning how to develop a good topic sentence is the first step toward writing a solid paragraph. Once you have composed your topic sentence, you have a guideline for the rest of the paragraph. To complete the paragraph, a writer must support the topic sentence with additional information and summarize the main point with a concluding sentence.

This section identifies the three major structural parts of a paragraph and covers how to develop a paragraph using transitional words and phrases.

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. This chapter has already discussed its purpose—to express a main idea combined with the writer's attitude about the subject. The body of

the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. **Supporting sentences** help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The **concluding sentence** is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Figure 6.2: Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer

Paragraph Stucture Graphic Organizer

Topic Sentence

(main idea + personal opinion)

_____

_____

Body

Supporting Sentence

_____

Supporting Sentence

_____

Supporting Sentence

_____

Supporting Sentence

_____

Conclusion

(summary of main idea + personal opinion)

Concluding Sentence

_____

_____

Image Text Description

Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

<u>After reading the new TV guide this week I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows?</u> 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 the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Last year, a cat travelled 130 miles to reach its family, who had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my 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. <u>Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.</u>

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

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

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. <u>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.</u> The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the underlined sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic. To read more about topic sentences and where they appear in paragraphs, see Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?.

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:

> Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment, stretched

across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated. This technique is often used in descriptive or narrative writing. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

Tip

Avoid using implied topic sentences in an informational document. Readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. The clearest and most efficient way to communicate in an informational document is to position the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.
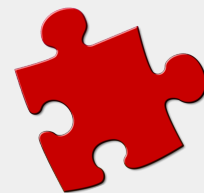
Exercise 4

Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentence, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.

> The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a miniscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Supporting Sentences

If you think of a paragraph as a hamburger, the supporting sentences are the meat inside the bun. They 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
Sentence: The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.

Fact
Sentence: Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.

Statistic
Sentence: Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.

Quotation
Sentence: "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns.

Example
Sentence: Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position, you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Read the following example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **(Topic sentence)**

First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **(Supporting sentence 1: statistic)**

Second, they produce very few emissions during low-speed city driving. **(Supporting sentence 2: fact)**

Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)**

Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 4: 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." **(Supporting sentence 5: 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)**

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources:

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

Tip

When searching for information on the Internet, remember that some websites are more reliable than others. websites ending in .gov or .edu are generally more reliable than websites ending in .com or .org. Wikis and blogs are not reliable sources of information because they are subject to inaccuracies.

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. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the "meat" or body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the 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 synonyms such as *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: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.

- Summarize the key points in the paragraph.

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

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

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

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

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

- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

  Example: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Exercise 5

On your own paper, write one example of each type of concluding sentence based on a topic of your choice.

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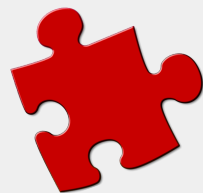r lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I've owned." Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

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 he or she has 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 do not require 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.

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences. See Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin? for a more comprehensive look at transitional words and phrases.

Table 6.2 Useful Transitional Words and Phrases

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	

Exercise 6

Using your own paper, write a paragraph on a topic of your choice. Be sure to include a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence and to use transitional words and phrases to link your ideas together.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Transitional words and phrases are useful tools to incorporate into workplace documents. They guide the reader through the document, clarifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs so that the reader understands why they have been written in that particular order.

For example, when writing an instructional memo, it may be helpful to consider the following transitional words and phrases: *before you begin*, *first*, *next*, *then*, *finally*, *after you have completed*. Using these transitions as a template to write your memo will provide readers with clear, logical instructions about a particular process and the order in which steps are supposed to be completed.

Key Takeaways

- A good paragraph contains three distinct components: a topic sentence, a body, and a concluding sentence.
- The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph combined with the writer's attitude or opinion about the topic.
- Good topic sentences contain both a main idea and a controlling idea, are clear and easy to follow, use engaging vocabulary, and provide an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
- Topic sentences may be placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph. In most academic essays, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph.
- 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.
- Transitional words and phrases help organize ideas in a paragraph and show how these ideas relate to one another.

6.3 Writing Paragraphs: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Exercises

1. Select one of the following topics or choose a topic of your choice:

   - Drilling for oil in Alberta
   - Health care reform
   - Introducing a four-day workweek
   - Bringing pets to work
   - Charging airline passengers to use the in-flight bathroom

   Create a topic sentence based on the topic you chose, remembering to include both a main idea and a controlling idea. Next, write an alternative topic sentence using the same main idea but a different controlling idea. Explain how each fully developed paragraph might differ in tone and content.

   ### Collaboration

   Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2. At some point during your career, you may be asked to write a report or complete a presentation. Imagine that you have been asked to report on the issue of health and safety in the workplace. Using the information in section 6.1 "Identifying the Audience", complete an analysis of your intended audience—your fellow office workers. Consider how demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will influence your report and explain how you will tailor it to your audience accordingly.

   ### Collaboration

   Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

3. **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.

4. **Group activity.** Working in a small group, select a workplace document or academic essay that has a clear thesis. Examine each paragraph and identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions:

   ◦ Is the topic sentence clearly identifiable or is it implied?
   ◦ Do all the supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence?
   ◦ Does the writer use effective transitions to link his or her ideas?
   ◦ Does the concluding sentence accurately summarize the main point of the paragraph?

   As a group, identify the weakest areas of the paragraph and rewrite them. Focus on the relationship among the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Use transitions to illustrate the connection between each sentence in the paragraph.

5. **Peer activity.** Using the information you have learned in this chapter, write a paragraph about a current event. Underline the topic sentence in your paragraph. Now, rewrite the paragraph, placing the topic sentence in a different part of the paragraph. Read the two paragraphs aloud to a peer and have him or her identify the topic sentence. Discuss which paragraph is more effective and why.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate, compare your answers, and discuss the contrasting results.

UNIT 3: WRITING STYLE

WRIT Course Learning Outcomes (LO) Addressed

- **Compose** complete sentences and paragraphs using effective vocabulary (LO 6).
- **Express** a clear written argument (LO 7).
- **Apply** basic principles of quotation and/or paraphrase integration (LO 9).

Rubric Spotlight

Demonstrating **COMMANDING STYLE** in an essay includes:

- Nuanced and seamless transitions
- Varied, purposeful, exemplary sentence types and structures
- Exemplary, formal language fully clear of casual tones and phrases

Chapter 7: Writing Basics

7.1 Sentence Writing

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the components of a basic sentence.
2. Identify the four most serious writing errors.

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. 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 e-mail or writing a report, it is your responsibility 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:

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.

> Malik 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 *Malik*.

> 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: a *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: a *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 italicized.
- LV means linking verb, HV means helping verb, and V means action verb.
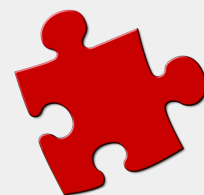
Compound Subjects

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.

> <u>Desmond</u> and <u>Maria</u> have been working on that design for almost a year. <u>Books, magazines,</u> and <u>online articles</u> are all good resources.

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 circled phrases 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.)

Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.

5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. 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 action verbs are in italics.

The dog *barked* at the jogger.
He *gave* a short speech before we ate.

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 linking verbs are in italics.

The coat *was* old and dirty.
The clock *seemed* broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas 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.
She *does speak up* when prompted in class.
We *have seen* that movie three times.
She *can tell* when someone walks on her lawn.
(is, does, have, and can are helping verbs and known, speak up, seen, and tell are verbs)

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?

Exercise 2

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

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 and Run-ons

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 (subject) *hum* (verb)

Subject–Linking Verb–Noun

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) tool (noun)

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) expensive (adjective)

Subject–Verb–Adverb

Computers (subject) *calculate* (verb) quickly (adverb)

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.

Sally (subject) rides (verb) a motorcycle (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 (subject) *gave* (verb) me (indirect object) the reports (direct object)

Exercise 3

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use the following lines or your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Collaboration

Find an article in a newspaper, a magazine, or online that interests you. Bring it to class or post it online. Then, looking at a classmate's article, identify one example of each part of a sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO). Please share or post your results.

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 makes a mess and creates an S-V-N sentence structure.

Figure 7.1 Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb
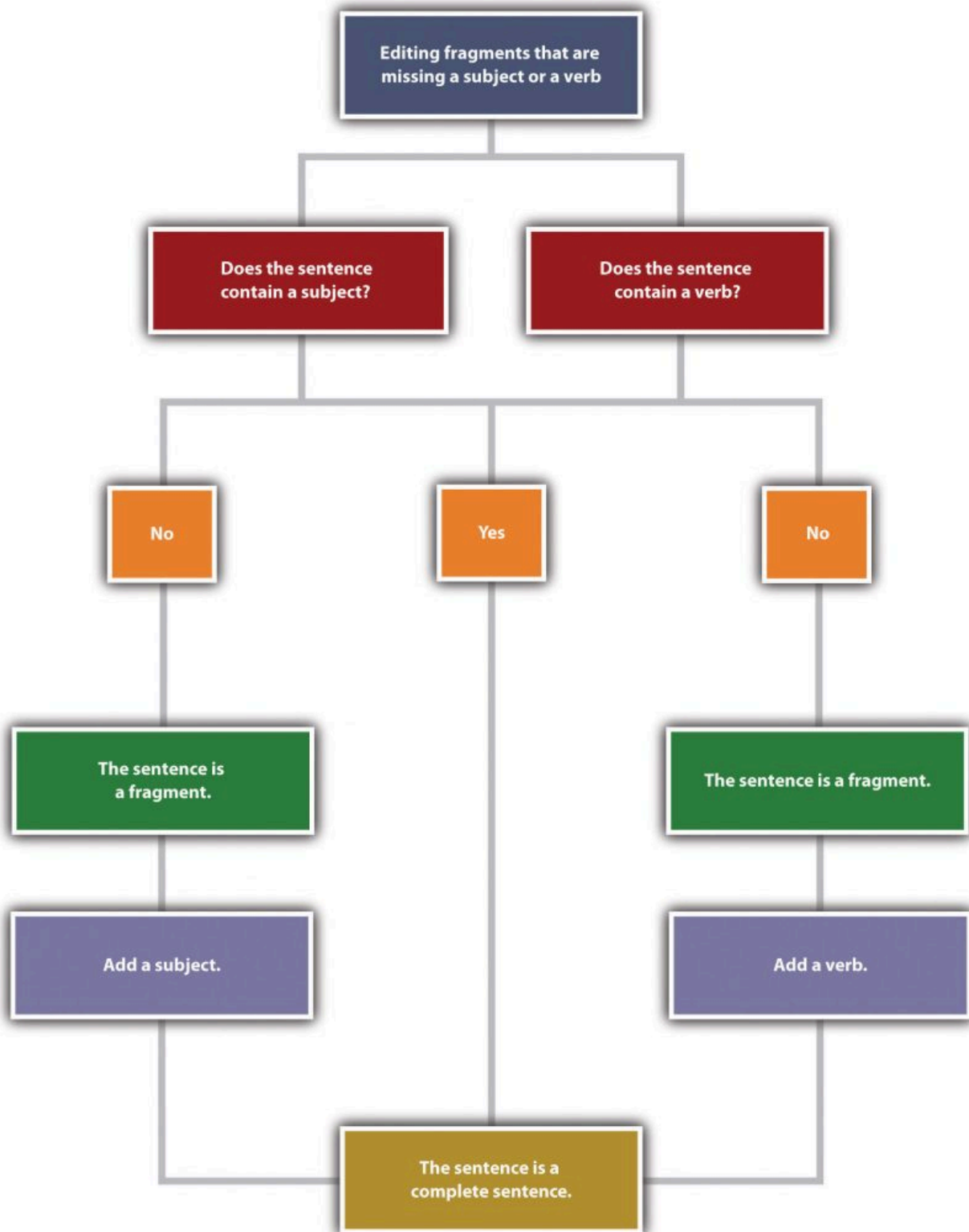
Image Text Description

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.

Fragment: The store down on Main Street.
Complete sentence: The store down on Main Street **sells music**.

Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an **infinitive**, or a **gerund**. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

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.

Figure 7.2 Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Editing fragments that │
│   begin with a preposition │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
┌─────────────────────────┐
│  Can you find a preposition │
│  or prepositional phrase?  │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
        ┌───────┐
        │  Yes  │
        └───────┘
      ┌─────┴─────┐
      │           │
┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│ Can you find │  │ Can you find │
│ a subject?   │  │ a verb?      │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
      │                  │
  ┌───┴───┐          ┌───┴───┐
  │  Yes  │          │       │
  └───────┘          │       │
 ┌────┐                      ┌────┐
 │ No │                      │ No │
 └────┘                      └────┘
       ┌──────────────────┐
       │  The sentence is a │
       │  complete sentence.│
       └──────────────────┘
       ┌──────────────────┐
       │   The phrase is   │
       │   a fragment.     │
       └──────────────────┘
       ┌──────────────────────┐
       │ Combine the prepositional │
       │ phrase with another       │
       │ sentence.                 │
       └──────────────────────┘
   ┌─────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Add the      │ ┌────┐ │ Add the prepositional │
   │ prepositional│ │ OR │ │ phrase to the beginning│
   │ phrase to the│ └────┘ │ of the combined sentence│
   │ end of the   │        │ and add a comma after  │
   │ combined     │        │ the prepositional phrase.│
   │ sentence.    │        └──────────────────┘
   └─────────────┘
```

Image Text Description

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~~ 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~~ when it was switched on.

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.

Incorrect: Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.
Correct: Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.
Correct: The entire family overslept ~~Because~~ 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~~ since his accident.

When you encounter a word ending in *-ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is 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* (helping verb) *working* (verb) on homework until midnight.

Noun: <u>Working</u> 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 7.3 Editing Fragments That Begin with Gerunds

Editing fragments that begin with a gerund

Does the phrase contain a word that ends in -ing?

Yes

Does the -ing word have a helping verb?

Yes

No

The -ing word is a verb.

The -ing word is a gerund, a noun.

Does the phrase make sense on its own?

Yes

No

The sentence is a complete sentence.

The phrase is a fragment.

Correct by adding the missing part of speech.

OR

Correct by combining with a nearby sentence.

Image Text Description

Incorrect: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.
Correct: Taking deep breaths**,** Saul prepared for his presentation.
Correct: Saul prepared for his presentation. He **was taking** deep breaths.

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 three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.
Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes **to** reach the one-thousand mark.
Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. **We wanted to** reach the one-thousand mark.

Exercise 4

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and circle the fragments. Then, combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.

4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Robert tries to conserve energy whenever possible.
5. You'll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as **run-on sentences**. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a **fused sentence**. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a **comma splice**. Both errors can easily be fixed.

Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.
Correct: There were no seats left. ~~we~~ We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses. For more information on semicolons, see section [7.4: "Capitalize Proper Nouns"](#).

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic**;** we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma. For more information on transition words, see Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin? .

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete sentence: The project was put on hold**; however,** we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a **coordinating conjunction**. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

Tip

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym FANBOYS will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.
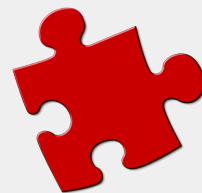
Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete sentence: The new printer was installed**, but** no one knew how to use it.

Dependent Words

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.
Complete sentence: Although we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.
Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Review Isabelle's e-mail below. It opens with two fragments and two run-on sentences containing comma splices. The e-mail ends with another fragment. What effect would this e-mail have on Mr. Blankenship or other readers? Mr. Blankenship or other readers may not think highly of Isaebelle's communication skills or—worse—may not understand the message at all! Communications written in precise, complete sentences are not only more professional but also easier to understand. Before you hit the "send" button, read your e-mail carefully to make sure that the sentences are complete, are not run together, and are correctly punctuated.

Figure 7.1 Sample e-mail

To:

Subject:

Insert: 📎 Attachments 📇 Office docs 🖼 Photos ▾ 🖼 From Bing ▾ 😊 Emoticons

Tahoma ▾ 10 ▾ **B** *I* U ▤ ▤ ▤ ▤ ▤ ▤ ▤ 🌐 ▤ **A**

Dear Mr. Blankenship:

The invoice we received yesterday. From your office was dated February 25. This date is incorrect, the date should read February 28, attached is the original invoice with the incorrect date. Please correct the date and resend the invoice. We will be able to send the funds promptly. By the end of the day.

Sincerely,

Isabelle

Exercise 5

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. Use what you have learned about run-on sentences to correct the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.

2. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.
3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Writing Application

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

- A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
- A business letter to a potential employer.
- A status report about your current project.
- A job description for your résumé.

Key Takeaways

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and a verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- A prepositional phrase describes or modifies another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.
- Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting

and more complex.

- Focusing on the six basic sentence patterns will enhance your writing.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

7.2 Subject-Verb Agreement

1. Define subject-verb agreement.
2. Identify common errors in subject-verb agreement.

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must *agree*, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms. For more information on pronoun case agreement, see section 7.5 "Pronoun Agreement".
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. For more information on subjects and verbs, see section 7.1 "Sentence Writing".

> **Singular:** The <u>cat</u> *jumps* over the fence.
>
> **Plural:** The <u>cats</u> *jump* over the fence.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in *-s*. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in *-s*. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I live.	We live.
Second Person	You live.	You live.
Third Person	He/She/It live**s**.	They live.

Tip

Add an -es to the third-person singular form of regular verbs that end in -sh, -x, -ch, and -s.

(I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

> **Singular:** I *read* every day.
>
> **Plural:** <u>We</u> *read* every day.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the first-person singular and the first-person plural.

> **Singular:** <u>You</u> *stretch* before you go to bed.

Plural: <u>You</u> *stretch* before every game.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the second-person singular and the second-person plural. In the singular form, the pronoun *you* refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun *you* refers to a group of people, such as a team.

Singular: My <u>mother</u> *walks* to work every morning.

In this sentence, the subject is *mother*. Because the sentence only refers to one mother, the subject is singular. The verb in this sentence must be in the third-person singular form.

Plural: My <u>friends</u> *like* the same music as I do.

In this sentence, the subject is *friends*. Because this subject refers to more than one person, the subject is plural. The verb in this sentence must be in the third-person plural form.

Tip

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an *-s*. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an *–s* in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

Singular subject, singular verb: The <u>cat</u> *races* across the yard.

Plural subject, plural verb: The <u>cats</u> *race* across the yard.
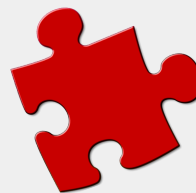
Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

1. I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.
2. You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
4. She (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called **irregular verbs**. Some of the most common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

Study the different forms of the verb *to be* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Have

Study the different forms of the verb *to have* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I have.	We have.
Second Person	You have.	You have.
Third Person	He/She/It has.	They have.

Do

Study the different forms of the verb *to do* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I do.	We do.
Second Person	You do.	You do.
Third person	He/She/It does.	They do.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I _____ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _____ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He _____ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We _____ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _____ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _____ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _____ all going to pass this class.
8. She _____ not going to like that.
9. It _____ appear to be the right size.
10. They _____ ready to take this job seriously.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;

- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A **compound subject** is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

> **Two singular subjects:** <u>Alicia</u> and <u>Miguel</u> *ride* their bikes to the beach.
>
> **Two plural subjects:** The <u>girls</u> and the <u>boys</u> *ride* their bikes to the beach.
>
> **Singular and plural subjects:** <u>Alicia</u> and the <u>boys</u> *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

> **Two singular subjects:** Either <u>you</u> or <u>Jason</u> *takes* the furniture out of the garage.
>
> **Two plural subjects:** Either <u>you</u> or <u>the twins</u> *take* the furniture out of the garage.
>
> **Singular and plural subjects:** Either <u>Jason</u> or the <u>twins</u> *take* the furniture out of the garage.
>
> **Plural and singular subjects:** Either the <u>twins</u> or <u>Jason</u> *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

If you can substitute the word they for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates

the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

The <u>students</u> with the best grades *win* the academic awards.

The <u>puppy</u> under the table *is* my favourite.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

The <u>car</u> that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof.

The <u>representatives</u> who are courteous *sell* the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Singular: <u>Everybody</u> in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

Plural: <u>All</u> the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

Singular: <u>All</u> the cake *is* on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective Nouns

A **collective noun** is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

Singular: The <u>class</u> *is* going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Here *is* my <u>wallet</u>!

There *are* thirty <u>dolphins</u> in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Who *are* the <u>people</u> you are related to?

When *am* I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked:

When am I going to the grocery store? I am going to the grocery store tonight!

Exercise 3

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write *OK*. Copy the corrected sentence or the word *OK* on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.
2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.
3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.
4. My family are moving to California._
5. Here is the lake I told you about.
6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.
7. Which room is bigger?
8. When are the movie going to start?
9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.
10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

Exercise 4

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone

skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,
Felicia Fellini

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

Figure 7.2 Advertisement

Terra Services are dedicated to serving our clients' needs. We settles for nothing less than high quality work, delivered on time. The next time you needs assistance getting your project off the ground, contact Terra Services, where everybody know how important it is that you get the job done right.

Writing Application

Use your knowledge of subject-verb agreement to write one of the following:

1. An advertisement for a potential company
2. A memo to all employees of a particular company
3. A cover letter describing your qualifications to a potential employer

Be sure to include at least the following:

- One collective noun
- One irregular verb
- One question

Key Takeaways

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words *and*, *or*, or *nor*.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *many*, *no one*, and *something*, refer to unspecified people or objects. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and treats those people, places, or things as one singular unit. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with *here* and *there*, the subject follows the verb.
- In questions, the subject follows the verb.

7.3 Verb Tense

<div style="background:red">

Learning Objectives

</div>

1. Use the correct regular verb tense in basic sentences.
2. Use the correct irregular verb tense in basic sentences.

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might judge you harshly. Mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression.

Regular Verbs

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. **Regular verbs** follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add *-ed* or *-d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have,* also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

> **Present Tense:** <u>Time</u> *walks* to the store. (Singular subject)
>
> **Present Tense:** <u>Sue</u> and <u>Kimmy</u> *walk* to the store. (Plural subject)
>
> **Past Tense:** Yesterday, <u>they</u> *walked* to the store to buy some bread. (Singular subject)

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Irregular Verbs

The past tense of **irregular verbs** is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow. Study Table 7.3 "Irregular Verbs", which lists the most common irregular verbs. The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

Table 7.3 Irregular Verbs

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
be	was, were	lose	lost
become	became	make	made
begin	began	mean	meant
blow	blew	meet	met
break	broke	pay	paid
bring	brought	put	put
build	built	quit	quit
burst	burst	read	read
buy	bought	ride	rode
catch	caught	ring	rang
choose	chose	rise	rose
come	came	run	ran
cut	cut	say	said
dive	dove (dived)	see	saw
do	did	seek	sought
draw	drew	sell	sold
drink	drank	send	sent
drive	drove	set	set
eat	ate	shake	shook
fall	fell	shine	shone (shined)
feed	fed	shrink	shrank (shrunk)
feel	felt	sing	sang
fight	fought	sit	sat
find	found	sleep	slept
fly	flew	speak	spoke
forget	forgot	spend	spent
forgive	forgave	spring	sprang
freeze	froze	stand	stood
get	got	steal	stole

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
give	gave	strike	struck
go	went	swim	swam
grow	grew	swing	swung
have	had	take	took
hear	heard	teach	taught
hide	hid	tear	tore
hold	held	tell	told
hurt	hurt	think	thought
keep	kept	throw	threw
know	knew	understand	understood
lay	laid	wake	woke
lead	led	wear	wore
leave	left	win	won
let	let	wind	wound

Here, we consider using irregular verbs.

> **Present Tense:** Lauren *keeps* all her letters.
>
> **Past Tense:** Lauren *kept* all her letters.
>
> **Future Tense:** Lauren *will keep* all her letters.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.

2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (teached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)

Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:

The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd *started* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approaches* the finish line.

Tip

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

> When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a firefighter, but not I am studying computer science.

If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.
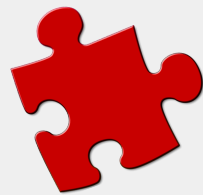
Exercise 4

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

> In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a "lord," and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants' families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant's day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Read the excerpt from a work e-mail below.

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace.

> I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeting last week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over the next several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Before we do that, however, I would like to review your experiences with the Customer Relationship Management Program. Please suggest a convenient time next week for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

Writing Application

Tell a family story. You likely have several family stories to choose from but pick the one you find most interesting to write about. Use as many details as you can when telling. As you write and proofread, ensure all your verbs are correct and the tenses are consistent.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Using consistent verb tense is a key element to effective writing.

7.4 Capitalization

1. Learn the basic rules of capitalization.
2. Identify common capitalization errors.

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of **capitalization**. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

Incorrect: the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.
Correct: The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Incorrect: cooking can be therapeutic.
Correct: Cooking can be therapeutic.

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Incorrect: He grew up in harlem, new york.
Correct: He grew up in Harlem, New York.

> **Incorrect:** The <u>s</u>ears <u>t</u>ower in <u>c</u>hicago has a new name.
>
> **Correct:** The <u>S</u>ears <u>T</u>ower in <u>C</u>hicago has a new name.

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	*Pride and Prejudice*
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
2.
3.
4.
5.

Common noun: musician

1.
2.
3.
4.

Common noun: magazine

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Incorrect: On w̲ednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.
Correct: On W̲ednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Incorrect: The f̲ourth of j̲uly is my favorite holiday.
Correct: The F̲ourth of J̲uly is my favorite holiday.

Capitalize Titles

Incorrect: The play, *fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.
Correct: The play, *F̲ences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Incorrect: The p̲resident of the u̲nited s̲tates will be speaking at my university.
Correct: The P̲resident of the U̲nited S̲tates will be speaking at my university.

Computer-related words such as "Internet" and "World Wide Web" are usually capitalized; however, "e-mail" and "online" are never capitalized.

Exercise 2

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. "Ode to a nightingale" is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. *The house on Mango street* is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

Exercise 3

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

david grann's *the lost City of Z* mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett's voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch's expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.

The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it's thrilling but also because this is a true account of grann's experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself A Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Did you know that if you use all capital letters to convey a message, the capital letters come across like shouting? In addition, all capital letters are actually more difficult to read and may annoy the reader. To avoid "shouting" at or annoying your reader, follow the rules of capitalization and find other ways to emphasize your point.

Writing Application

Write a one-page biography.

Make sure to identify people, places, and dates and use capitalization correctly.

Key Takeaways

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

7.5 Pronouns

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A*. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the **antecedent** of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

   * *She* refers to *Lani.*
   * *Lani* is the antecedent of *she.*

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

   * *Him* refers to Jeremy.
   * *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him.*

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.

   * *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie.*
   * *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they.*

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

Incorrect: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Correct: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* (sing.) must have a receipt.
*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.

Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Agreement in Person

	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I should* (1st) should leave a tip.

Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit

at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

Common Indefinite Pronouns				
all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Indefinite pronoun agreement

Incorrect: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *they* (plur.) can to help.

Correct: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *he or she* (sing.) can to help.

Incorrect: *Someone* (sing.) left *their* (plur.) backpack in the library.

Correct: *Someone* (sing.) left *his or her* (sing.) backpack in the library.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Common Collective Nouns		
audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team
company	jury	tribe

Collective noun agreement

Incorrect: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *their* (plur.) annual picnic next week.

Correct: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *its* (sing.) annual picnic next week.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. **Object pronouns** function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
Subject	**Object**	**Subject**	**Object**
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jane moved *it* to the corner.

Tip

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

> Near *them*, the children played.

> My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near* whom? And *between* whom?
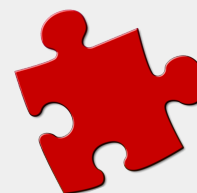
Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

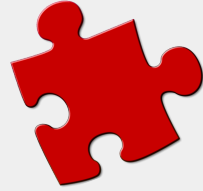**Incorrect:** I have a good feeling about *Janice and I*.

Correct: I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, "Me and Donnie went to a movie last night." However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.
4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.
5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.
6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.
7. New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.
8. You exercise much more often than me.
9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.
10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

Who versus *Whom*

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

> *Who/Whom* do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

> I consider *him* my best friend.

> I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.
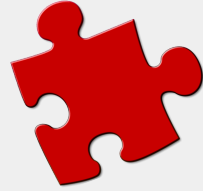
Exercise 4

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____, did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Writing Application

Write about what makes an ideal marriage or long-term relationship. Provide specific details to back up your assertions.

After you have written a few paragraphs, go back and proofread your paper for correct pronoun usage.

Key Takeaways

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- *Who* serves as a subject of a verb.
- *Whom* serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

7.6 Adjectives and Adverbs

<div style="background:red">**Learning Objectives**</div>

1. Identify adjectives and adverbs.
2. Use adjectives and adverbs correctly.

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life.

Adjectives and Adverbs

An **adjective** is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many?*

1. The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.
2. She looks *beautiful*.

- In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.
- In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

An **adverb** is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in -*ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

3. Bertrand sings *horribly*.
4. My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.
5. He threw the ball *very* accurately.

- In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.
- In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.
- In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

Comparative versus Superlative

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.
2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.

- Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin*.
- Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

- If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add -er to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.
- If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Jackie is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.
2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.

- Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.
- Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

- If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add -est to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.
- If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in -y, change the -y to an -i and add -est.

For example, *happy* would change to *happiest* in the superlative form; *healthy* would change to *healthiest*.
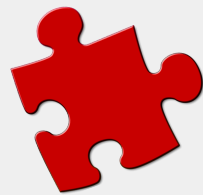
Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

> Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Irregular Words: *Good*, *Well*, *Bad*, and *Badly*

Good, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

		Comparative	Superlative
Adjective	good	better	best
Adverb	well	better	best
Adjective	bad	worse	worst
Adverb	badly	worse	worst

Good versus *Well*

Good is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

> **Incorrect:** Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.
>
> **Correct:** Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

> **Incorrect:** Cecilia's team received a *well* score.
>
> **Correct:** Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

Bad versus *Badly*

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

> **Incorrect:** I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.
>
> **Correct:** I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

> **Incorrect:** The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.
>
> **Correct:** The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

Better and *Worse*

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

> Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long-distance running. The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

Best and *Worst*

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

> Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors. Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

Exercise 3

Write *good*, *well*, *bad*, or *badly* to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Donna always felt _____ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a _____ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves _____ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was _____ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking _____ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very _____ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very _____.
8. Juan has a _____ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a _____ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She _____ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

Exercise 4

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

- This research paper is _____ (good) than my last one.
- Tanaya likes country music _____ (well) of all.
- My motorcycle rides _____ (bad) than it did last summer.
- That is the _____ (bad) joke my father ever told.
- The hockey team played _____ (badly) than it did last season.
- Tracey plays guitar _____ (well) than she plays the piano.
- It will go down as one of the _____ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
- The deforestation in the Amazon is _____ (bad) than it was last year.
- Movie ticket sales are _____ (good) this year than last.
- My husband says mystery novels are the _____ (good) types of books.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

The irregular words good, well, bad, and badly are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms better, best, worse, and worst. You may not hear the difference between worse and worst, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

Writing Application

Using the exercises as a guide, write your own ten-sentence quiz for your classmate(s) using the concepts covered in this section. Try to include two questions from each subsection in your quiz. Exchange papers and see whether you can get a perfect score.

Key Takeaways

- Adjectives describe nouns or pronouns.
- Adverbs describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb.
- Most adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective.
- Comparative adjectives and adverbs compare two persons or things.
- Superlative adjectives or adverbs compare more than two persons or things.
- The adjectives *good* and *bad* and the adverbs *well* and *badly* are unique in their comparative and superlative forms and require special attention.

7.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify modifiers.
2. Learn how to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

</div>

A **modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

Misplaced Modifiers

A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

> **Incorrect:** She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.
>
> **Correct:** She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

> **Incorrect:** They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.
>
> **Correct:** They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

> **Incorrect:** The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains.*
>
> **Correct:** The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

Tip

Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.
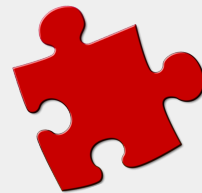
Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.

9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

> **Incorrect:** *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.
>
> **Correct:** As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

> **Incorrect:** *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.
>
> **Correct:** As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.
>
> **Correct:** The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

> **Incorrect:** To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.
>
> **Correct:** If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

Tip

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:
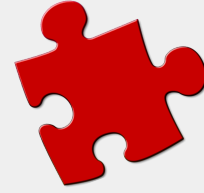
1. Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *-ing* modifier.)

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

   After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

   Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph, correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

> I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing Application

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

Key Takeaways

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

7.8 Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct (no error). Then rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

   My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 _____. Written in 1931 _____. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes _____. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point _____. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" _____. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma _____. because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living _____. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there _____. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out _____. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read _____.

2. Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.

   a. Maria and Ty meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.

   b. John's ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.

   c. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.

d. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.

e. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.

f. Bernard asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.

g. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.

h. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.

i. Neither Soren nor Andrew are excited about the early morning swim meet.

j. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.

k. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.

l. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.

m. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone's feelings.

n. Davis winded the old clock and set it atop his nightstand.

o. Cherie losed four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.

p. Janis and Joan describes their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.

q. You should decides for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.

r. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.

s. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.

t. The batter swinged at the ball several times but never hit it.

3. Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

> lance worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol records on june 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, nothing to lose, lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the irs revealed. lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire robert bergman, a prominent music Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. bergman represented lance all the way to the supreme court, where lance won the case against capitol records. Lance worthington was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. worthy is now a successful Label based out of chicago, illinois, and its Artists have

appeared on well known shows such as The tonight show and Saturday night live. Lance worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself World that has become the Music Industry.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

4. Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

a. Denise has a (cheerful) _____ outlook on life than her husband.

b. I don't mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) _____ cook in my family.

c. Lydia is the (thoughtful) _____ person I know.

d. Italy experienced the (bad) _____ heat wave in its history last year.

e. My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) _____ person I know, and I like that.

f. Dorian's drawing skills are (good) _____ this semester than last.

g. My handwriting is the (sloppy) _____ of all my classmates.

h. Melvin's soccer team played (badly) _____ than it did last season.

i. Josie's pen writes (smooth) _____ than mine.

j. I felt (lucky) _____ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.

Chapter 8: Working with Words

8.1 Commonly Confused Words

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Learning Objectives

</div>

1. Identify commonly confused words.
2. Use strategies to avoid commonly confused words.

Just as a mason uses bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Builders need to use tough, reliable materials to build a solid and 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 and in every sentence in between.

You already know many words that you use every day as part of your writing and speaking **vocabulary**. You probably also know that certain words fit better in certain situations. Letters, e-mails, and even quickly jotted grocery lists require the proper selection of vocabulary. 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 on 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. This chapter covers word choice and vocabulary-building strategies that will improve your writing.

Commonly Confused Words

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words 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 her *new* sweater.

I *knew* she 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*. To read more about adjectives, verbs, and other parts of speech see [Chapter 7: Writing Basics](#).

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.

Commonly Confused Words

A, An, And

- *A* (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.

  a key, **a** mouse, **a** screen

- *An* (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.

  an airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo

- *And* (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.

  peanut butter **and** jelly, pen **and** pencil, jump **and** shout

Accept, Except

- *Accept* (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.

  They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.

- *Except* (conjunction). Means only or but.

  We could fly there **except** the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- *Affect* (verb). Means to create a change.

  Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.

- *Effect* (noun). Means an outcome or result.

  The heavy rains will have an **effect** on the crop growth.

Are, Our

- *Are* (verb). A conjugated form of the verb *to be*.

  My cousins **are** all tall and blonde.

- *Our* (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun *we*.

  We will bring **our** cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

- *By* (preposition). Means next to.

  My glasses are **by** the bed.

- *Buy* (verb). Means to purchase.

  I will **buy** new glasses after the doctor's appointment.

Its, It's

- *Its* (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession.

  The butterfly flapped **its** wings.

- *It's* (contraction). Joins the words *it* and *is*.

  It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

Know, No

- *Know* (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.

  I **know** the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.

- *No*. Used to make a negative.

  I have **no** time to visit the zoo this weekend.

Loose, Lose

- *Loose* (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.

  Without a belt, her pants are **loose** on her waist.

- *Lose* (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.

  She will **lose** even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

Of, Have

- *Of* (preposition). Means *from* or *about*.

  I studied maps **of** the city to know where to rent a new apartment.

- *Have* (verb). Means to possess something.

  I **have** many friends to help me move.

- *Have* (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.

I should **have** helped her with that heavy box.

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- *Quite* (adverb). Means *really* or *truly*.

  My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.

- *Quiet* (adjective). Means not loud.

  I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.

- *Quit* (verb). Means to stop or to end.

  I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

- *Right* (adjective). Means proper or correct.

  When bowling, she practices the **right** form.

- *Right* (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.

  The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.

- *Write* (verb). Means to communicate on paper.

  After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

Set, Sit

- *Set* (verb). Means to put an item down.

  She **set** the mug on the saucer.

- *Set* (noun). Means a group of similar objects.

  All the mugs and saucers belonged in a **set**.

- *Sit* (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place

  I'll **sit** on the sofa while she brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to think or to consider

  I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to suggest.

  Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.

- *Supposed* (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.

She was **supposed** to create the menu.

Than, Then

- *Than* (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing

  Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.

- *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.

  Doctors first complete medical school and **then** obtain a residency.

Their, They're, There

- *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession.

  The dog walker feeds **their** dogs everyday at two o'clock.

- *They're* (contraction). Joins the words *they* and *are*.

  They're the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.

- *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place.

  The dogs' bowls are over **there**, next to the pantry.

- *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something

  There are more treats if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

- *To* (preposition). Indicates movement.

  Let's go **to** the circus.

- *To*. A word that completes an infinitive verb.

  to play, **to** ride, **to** watch.

- *Two*. The number after one. It describes how many.

  Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.

- *Too* (adverb). Means *also* or *very*.

  The tents were **too** loud, and we left.

Use, Used

- *Use* (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.

  We **use** a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

- *Used*. The past tense form of the verb *to use*

He **used** the lawnmower last night before it rained.

- *Used to*. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present

    He **used to** hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

Who's, Whose

- *Who's* (contraction). Joins the words *who* and either *is* or *has*.

    Who's the new student? **Who's** met him?

- *Whose* (pronoun). A form of *who* that shows possession.

    Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

Your, You're

- *Your* (pronoun). A form of *you* that shows possession.

    Your book bag is unzipped.

- *You're* (contraction). Joins the words *you* and *are*.

    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!

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns _____(to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor'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 résumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves _____(are, our) changing, and _____(it's, its) getting darker earlier.

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 also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity.

The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

1. **Use a dictionary.** Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.
2. **Keep a list of words you commonly confuse.** Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.
3. **Study the list of commonly confused words.** You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

Tip

Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing.
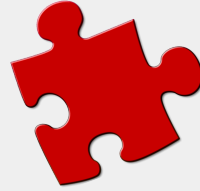
Figure 8.1 A Commonly Misused Word on a Public Sign

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job, employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to* days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your boss and colleagues.

Exercise 2

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

> 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.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing Application

Review the latest assignment you completed for school or for work. Does it contain any commonly confused words? Circle each example and use the circled words to begin your own checklist of commonly confused words. Continue to add to your checklist each time you complete an assignment and find a misused word.

Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write or study the chart in this book.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

8.2 Spelling

1. Identify common spelling rules.
2. Identify commonly misused homonyms.
3. Identify commonly misspelled words.

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

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 some 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 its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like "neighbor" 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 = faxe

Exercise 1

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and an 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 and possibly mental retardation. 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's The 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, noteably 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 pow wows 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.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

Eight Tips to Improve 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. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
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.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. **Use your computer's spell checker.** The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. **Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to

spell them correctly.

6. **Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.

7. **Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.

8. **Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.** Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

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. To read more about the writing process and editing and revising, see [Chapter 3: The Writing Process: Where Do I Begin?](#)

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

Principle, Principal

- **Principle (noun).** A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.

  The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.

- **Principal (noun).** The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.

The payment plan allows me to pay back only the **principal** amount, not any compounded interest.

- **Principal (noun).** A person who is the main authority of a school.

  The **principal** held a conference for both parents and teachers.

Where, Wear, Ware

- **Where (adverb).** The place in which something happens.

  Where is the restaurant?

- **Wear (verb).** To carry or have on the body.

  I will **wear** my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.

- **Ware (noun).** Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, *wares*).

  When I return from shopping, I will show you my **wares**.

Lead, Led

- **Lead (noun).** A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.

  The **lead** pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.

- **Led (verb).** The past tense of the verb *lead*.

  After the garden, she **led** the patrons through the museum.

Which, Witch

- **Which (pronoun).** Replaces one out of a group.

  Which apartment is yours?

- **Witch (noun).** A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.

  She thinks she is a **witch**, but she does not seem to have any powers.

Peace, Piece

- **Peace (noun).** A state of tranquility or quiet.

  For once, there was **peace** between the argumentative brothers.

- **Piece (noun).** A part of a whole.

  I would like a large **piece** of cake, thank you.

Passed, Past

- **Passed (verb).** To go away or move.

  He **passed** the slower cars on the road using the left lane.

- **Past (noun).** Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.

  The argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

Lessen, Lesson

- **Lessen (verb).** To reduce in number, size, or degree.

  My dentist gave me medicine to **lessen** the pain of my aching tooth.

- **Lesson (noun).** A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.

  Today's **lesson** was about mortgage interest rates.

Patience, Patients

- **Patience (noun).** The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).

  The novice teacher's **patience** with the unruly class was astounding.

- **Patients (plural noun).** Individuals under medical care.

  The **patients** were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.

Sees, Seas, Seize

- **Sees (verb).** To perceive with the eye.

  He **sees** a whale through his binoculars.

- **Seas (plural noun).** The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.

  The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and **seas** are influenced by the moon.

- **Seize (verb).** To possess or take by force.

  The king plans to **seize** all the peasants' land.

Threw, Through

- **Threw (verb).** The past tense of *throw*.

  She **threw** the football with perfect form.

- **Through (preposition).** A word that indicates movement.

  She walked **through** the door and out of his life.

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. I like to _____(where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.
3. Marjorie felt like she was being _____(led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
4. Serina described _____(witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.
5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a _____(peace, piece) of his apple.
6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the _____(passed, past) all the time?
7. Eating healthier foods will _____(lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the _____(patients, patience) of a saint.
9. Daniela _____(sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.
10. 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. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Tip

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
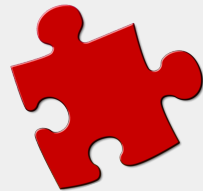2. Copy the words onto flashcards and have a friend test you.

Table 8.2 Commonly Misspelled Words

a**c**ross	dis**app**oint	int**eg**ration	parti**cu**lar	sep**ara**te
a**ddr**ess	disa**pp**rove	int**ell**igent	**per**form	sim**ilar**
ans**we**r	do**es**n't	int**ere**st	**per**haps	**sin**ce
arg**u**ment	eig**hth**	int**e**rfere	perso**nne**l	sp**ee**ch
a**thl**ete	emba**rr**ass	jew**el**ry	po**ss**ess	stren**gth**
begi**nn**ing	envir**on**ment	ju**dgm**ent	po**ss**ible	su**cc**ess
beha**vio**r	exa**gge**rate	knowle**d**ge	**pre**fer	**sur**prise
cal**e**ndar	fam**ilia**r	maint**ain**	pre**jud**ice	**tau**ght
ca**ree**r	fina**lly**	math**e**matics	privil**ege**	temper**a**ture
cons**cie**nce	gove**rn**ment	me**an**t	pro**bab**ly	th**orou**gh
crow**ded**	gramm**a**r	ne**ce**ssary	**psy**cholo**gy**	thou**ght**
defi**ni**te	hei**ght**	nerv**ous**	**pu**rsue	tire**d**
d**es**cribe	**ill**egal	o**cc**asion	ref**e**rence	unt**il**
desp**era**te	immed**iate**ly	opin**ion**	**rhy**th**m**	wei**ght**
di**ffe**rent	import**ant**	opt**i**mist	ridi**cul**ous	wri**tt**en

---

Exercise 3

Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it "Breuckelen." Immedietely 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. Finalley 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 nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The

completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinien, the intagration into New York City should have never happened; they though Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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

The best thing to do after you proofread an e-mail to an employer and run the spell checker is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the e-mail and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, which may also be able to assist you.

Writing Application

What is your definition of a successful person? Is it based on a person's profession or is it based on his or her character? Perhaps success means a combination of both. 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.

Key Takeaways

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
- Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
- Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

8.3 Word Choice and Dictionary Use

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. 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.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. The precise selection of your words will help you to understand them more clearly—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. 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 very 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.

precocious *adj*, *She's such a precocious little girl!*: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

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.

Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meagre in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a **scrawny** child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (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

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
- **Word used in a sentence: Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (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

- **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a **lean** figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.
- **Connotation:** (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 it 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.

Exercise 1

In each of the following items, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words' connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

1. curious, nosy, interested
2. lazy, relaxed, slow
3. courageous, foolhardy, assured
4. new, newfangled, modern
5. mansion, shack, residence
6. spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
7. giggle, laugh, cackle
8. boring, routine, prosaic
9. noted, notorious, famous
10. assertive, confident, pushy

Positive	Negative	Neutral

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 correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture has desensitized many of us to slang. In certain situations, using slang at work may not be problematic, but keep in mind that words can have a powerful effect. Slang in professional e-mails or during meetings may convey the wrong message or even mistakenly offend someone.

Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

> I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying "like" and "um," and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being

up there. I feel like I've been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I'm surprised that people didn't boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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.

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.

2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
3. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

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 new puppy is cute.

Specific: My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

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.

Exercise 4

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

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 Application

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school.

Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words and rewrite them using stronger language.

Key Takeaways

- 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.

8.4 Prefixes and Suffixes

1. Identify the meanings of common prefixes.
2. Become familiar with common suffix rules.

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words.

Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Prefixes

A **prefix** is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning. The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is not to add letters or leave out any letters. See Table 8.4 "Common Prefixes" for examples of this rule.

Table 8.4 Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Exercise 1

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper.

> At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it in there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue! I forgot that he was color-blind. Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 2

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _____glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _____aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _____locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____combatant is another word for a civilian.

Suffixes

A **suffix** is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes *–ness* and *–ly* to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Examples:

- dark + ness = darkness
- scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in *y*, change the *y* to *i* before adding *–ness* and *–ly*.

Examples:

- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent *e* in the root word.

Examples:

- care + ing = caring
- use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in *ce* or *ge*, keep the silent *e* if the suffix begins with *a* or *o*.

Examples:

- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent *e* in the original word.

Examples:

- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

Exceptions to Rule 3

Examples:

- true + ly = truly
- argue + ment = argument

Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant plus *y*, change the *y* to *i* before any suffix not beginning with *i*.

Examples:

- sunny + er = sunnier
- hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Examples:

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)
- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)
- prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, write the forms of the words correctly with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed

7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing one of your life goals. Include five words with prefixes and five words with suffixes.

Exchange papers with a classmate and circle the prefixes and suffixes in your classmate's paper. Correct each prefix or suffix that is spelled incorrectly.

Key Takeaways

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.

8.5 Synonyms and Antonyms

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Learning Objectives

1. Recognize how synonyms improve writing.
2. Identify common antonyms to increase your vocabulary.

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As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an "easy task" or a "simple task" because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a "large city" or a "metropolis" because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words with subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, struggle to choose the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, they reach your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

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Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word *pay*, *salary*, or hourly *wage*. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

</div>

Exercise 1

Replace the underlined words in the paragraphs below with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one's dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one's vision.

The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi's career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your anwers.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful

6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. Table 8.5 "Common Antonyms" lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 8.5 Common Antonyms

Word	Antonym	Word	Antonym
absence	presence	frequent	seldom
accept	refuse	harmful	harmless
accurate	inaccurate	horizontal	vertical
advantage	disadvantage	imitation	genuine
ancient	modern	inhabited	uninhabited
abundant	scarce	inferior	superior
artificial	natural	intentional	accidental
attractive	repulsive	justice	injustice
borrow	lend	knowledge	ignorance
bravery	cowardice	landlord	tenant
create	destroy, demolish	likely	unlikely
bold	timid, meek	minority	majority
capable	incapable	miser	spendthrift
combine	separate	obedient	disobedient
conceal	reveal	optimist	pessimist
common	rare	permanent	temporary
decrease	increase	plentiful	scarce
definite	indefinite	private	public
despair	hope	prudent	imprudent
discourage	encourage	qualified	unqualified
employer	employee	satisfactory	unsatisfactory
expand	contract	tame	wild
forget	remember	vacant	occupied

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

> ### Exercise 3
>
> Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.
>
> 1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
> 2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
> 3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.

4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

Key Takeaways

- Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.
- Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.
- Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.
- Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

8.6 Using Context Clues

<div class="learning-objectives">

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the different types of context clues.
2. Practice using context clues while reading.

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Context clues are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

- Brief definition or restatement
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Examples

Brief Definition or Restatement

Sometimes, a text directly states the definition or a restatement of the unknown word. The brief definition or restatement is signalled by a word or a punctuation mark. Consider the following example:

> If you visit Alaska, you will likely see many glaciers or slow-moving masses of ice.

In this sentence, the word *glaciers* is defined by the phrase that follows the signal word *or*, which is *slow moving masses of ice*.

In other instances, the text may restate the meaning of the word in a different way, by using punctuation as a signal. Look at the following example:

> Marina was indignant—fuming mad—when she discovered her brother had left for the party without her.

Although *fuming mad* is not a formal definition of the word *indignant*, it does serve to define it. These two examples use signals—the word *or* and the punctuation dashes—to indicate the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Other signals to look for are the words *is, as, means, known as*, and *refers to*.

Synonyms and Antonyms

Sometimes, a text gives a synonym of the unknown word to signal the meaning of the unfamiliar word:

> When you interpret an image, you actively question and examine what the image connotes and suggests.

In this sentence, the word *suggests* is a synonym of the word *connotes*. The word *and* sometimes signals synonyms.bLikewise, the word *but* may signal a contrast, which can help you define a word by its antonym.

> I abhor clothes shopping, but I adore grocery shopping.

The word *abhor* is contrasted with its opposite: *adore*. From this context, the reader can guess that *abhor* means to dislike greatly.

Examples

Sometimes, a text will give you an example of the word that sheds light on its meaning:

> I knew Mark's ailurophobia was in full force because he began trembling and stuttering when he saw my cat, Ludwig, slink out from under the bed.

Although *ailurophobia* is an unknown word, the sentence gives an example of its effects. Based on this example, a reader could confidently surmise that the word means a fear of cats.

Tip

Look for signal words like *such as*, *for instance*, and *for example*.

These words signal that a word's meaning may be revealed through an example.
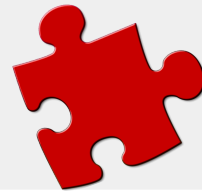
Exercise 1

Identify the context clue that helps define the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the context clue on your own sheet of paper.

1. Lucinda is very <u>adroit</u> on the balance beam, but Constance is rather clumsy.
2. I saw the <u>entomologist</u>, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.
3. Lance's comments about politics were <u>irrelevant</u> and meaningless to the botanist's lecture on plant reproduction.
4. Before I left for my trip to the Czech Republic, I listened to my mother's <u>sage</u> advice and made a copy of my passport.
5. His <u>rancour</u>, or hatred for socializing, resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.
6. Martin was <u>mortified</u>, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.
7. The <u>petulant</u> four-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.
8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with several <u>conundrums</u>, or riddles, to solve.
9. Most Canadians are <u>omnivores</u>, people that eat both plants and animals.
10. Elena is <u>effervescent</u>, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

> Maggie was a <u>precocious</u> child to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents were <u>flabbergasted</u>—utterly blown away—by their daughter's ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie's <u>dexterity</u>, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie never <u>gloated</u> or took pride in her paintings; she just smiled contentedly when she finished one and requested her parents give it to someone as a gift. Whenever people met Maggie for the first time they often watched her paint with their mouths <u>agape</u>, but her parents always kept their mouths closed and simply smiled over their "little Monet."

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

In addition to context clues to help you figure out the meaning of a word, examine the following word parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Jargon is a type of shorthand communication often used in the workplace. It is the technical language of a special field. Imagine it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant and your manager tells you he is going to "eighty-six" the roasted chicken. If you do not realize that "eighty-six" means to remove an item from the menu, you could be confused.

When you first start a job, no matter where it may be, you will encounter jargon that will likely be foreign to you. Perhaps after working the job for a short time, you too will feel comfortable enough to use it. When you are first hired, however, jargon can be baffling and make you feel like an outsider. If you cannot decipher the jargon based on the context, it is always a good policy to ask.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your first job. In the paragraph, use five words previously unknown to you. These words could be jargon words or you may consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find a new word. Make sure to provide a specific context clue for understanding each word. Exchange papers with a classmate and try to decipher the meaning of the words in each other's paragraphs based on the context clues.

Key Takeaways

- Context clues are words or phrases within a text that help clarify vocabulary that is unknown to you.
- There are several types of context clues, including brief definitions and restatements, synonyms and antonyms, and examples.

8.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. Proofread the paragraph and correct any commonly confused words and misspelled words.

   > Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quiet popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic an expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. There music was striped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not ware makeup or sport extravagent hairstyles like many of the day's rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would by they're clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics too grunge songs were also quit different compared two what was populer at the time. Grunge lyrics are charecterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today buy music lovers of all ages.

2. Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homonym or frequently misspelled word.

   a. Kevin asked me a serious question and _____(then, than) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.

   b. A hot compress will _____(lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.

   c. Jason was not a graceful _____(looser, loser) because he knocked his chair over and stormed off the basketball court.

   d. Please consider the _____(effects, affects) of not getting enough green vegetables in your diet.

e. _____(Except, Accept) for Ajay, we all had our tickets to the play.

f. I am _____(threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.

g. I don't care _____(whose, who's) coming to the party and _____(whose, who's) not.

h. Crystal could _____(sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.

i. The _____(principal, principle) gave the students a very long lecture about peer pressure.

j. Dr. Frankl nearly lost his _____(patience, patients) with one of his _____(patience, patients).

3. Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language with stronger, more precise language.

> My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don't even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, "What happened to your face?" Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn't know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn't last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can't fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

4. Write the correct synonym for each word.

a. lenient _____(relaxed, callous)

b. abandon _____(vacate, deceive)

c. berate _____(criticize, encourage)

d. experienced _____(callow, matured)

e. spiteful _____(malevolent, mellow)

f. tame _____(subdued, wild)

g. tasty _____(savory, bland)

h. banal _____(common, interesting)

i. contradict _____(deny, revolt)

j. vain _____(boastful, simple)

Chapter 9: Refining Your Writing

9.1 Sentence Variety

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways to vary sentence structure.
2. Write and revise sentence structure at the beginning of sentences.
3. Write and revise sentence structure by connecting ideas.

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Have you ever ordered a dish in a restaurant and been not happy with its taste, even though it contained most of your favourite ingredients? Just as a meal might lack the finishing touches needed to spice it up, so too might a paragraph contain all the basic components but still lack the stylistic finesse required to engage a reader. Sometimes, writers have a tendency to reuse the same sentence pattern throughout their writing. Like any repetitive task, reading text that contains too many sentences with the same length and structure can become monotonous and boring. Experienced writers mix it up by using an assortment of sentence patterns, rhythms, and lengths.

In this chapter, you will follow a student named Naomi, who has written a draft of an essay but needs to refine her writing. This section discusses how to introduce sentence variety into writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. You can use these techniques when revising a paper to bring life and rhythm to your work. They will also make reading your work more enjoyable.

Incorporating Sentence Variety

Experienced writers incorporate **sentence variety** into their writing by varying sentence style and structure. Using a mixture of different sentence structures reduces repetition and adds emphasis to important points in the text. Read the following example:

> During my time in office, I have achieved several goals. I have helped increase funding for local schools. I have reduced crime rates in the neighbourhood. I have encouraged young people to get involved in their community. My competitor argues that she is the better choice in the upcoming election. I argue that it is ridiculous to fix something that isn't broken. If you re-elect me this year, I promise to continue to serve this community.

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length

and style. Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text more clear for the reader, but the result is a choppy, unsophisticated paragraph that does not grab the audience's attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

> During my time in office, I have helped increase funding for local schools, reduced crime rates in the neighbourhood, and encouraged young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn't broken? If you re-elect me this year, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don't take a chance on an unknown contender; vote for the proven success.

Notice how introducing a short rhetorical question among the longer sentences in the paragraph is an effective means of keeping the reader's attention. In the revised version, the writer combines the choppy sentences at the beginning into one longer sentence, which adds rhythm and interest to the paragraph.

Tip

Effective writers often implement the "rule of three," which is basically the thought that things that contain three elements are more memorable and more satisfying to readers than any other number. Try to use a series of three when providing examples, grouping adjectives, or generating a list.
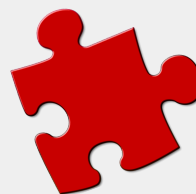
Exercise 1

Combine each set of simple sentences into a compound or a complex sentence. Write the combined sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Gay marriage is now legal in six states. Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine all permit same-sex marriage. Other states are likely to follow their example.
4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas.

Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.

5. Mitch Bancroft is a famous writer. He also serves as a governor on the local school board. Mitch's two children attend the school.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences

Read the following sentences and consider what they all have in common:
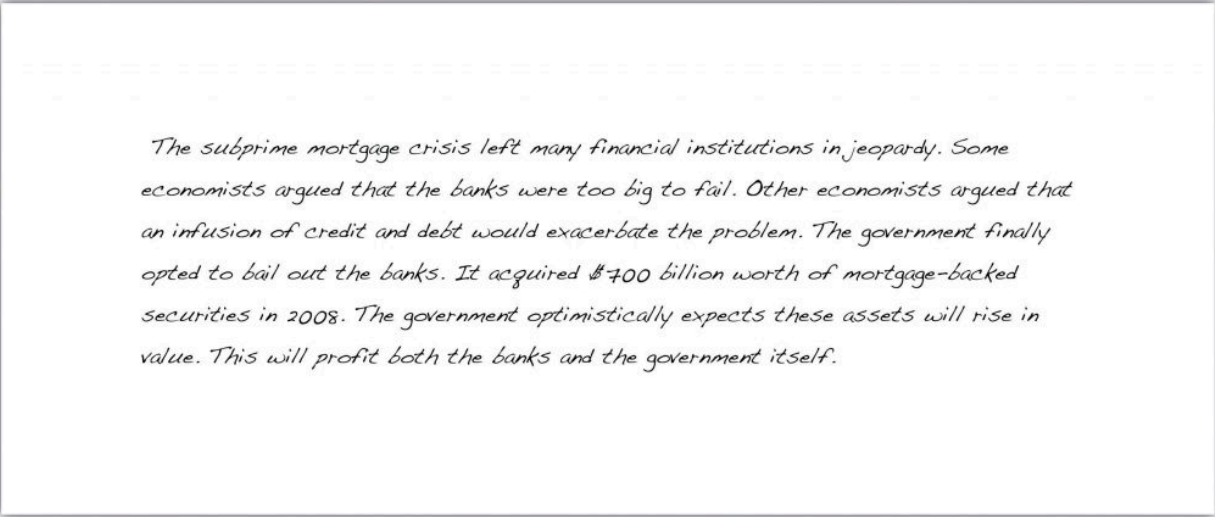
John and Amanda will be analyzing this week's financial report.

The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young boy.

Students rarely come to the exam adequately prepared.

If you are having trouble figuring out why these sentences are similar, try underlining the subject in each. You will notice that the subject is positioned at the beginning of each sentence—*John and Amanda*, *the car*, *students*. Since the subject-verb-object pattern is the simplest sentence structure, many writers tend to overuse this technique, which can result in repetitive paragraphs with little sentence variety.

Naomi wrote an essay about the 2008 government bailout. Read this excerpt from Naomi's essay:

> The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

This section examines several ways to introduce sentence variety at the beginning of sentences, using Naomi's essay as an example.

Starting a Sentence with an Adverb

One technique you can use so as to avoid beginning a sentence with the subject is to use an adverb. An **adverb** is a word that describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb and often ends in –*ly*. Examples of adverbs include *quickly*, *softly*, *quietly*, *angrily*, and *timidly*. Read the following sentences:

> She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.
>
> Slowly, she turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

In the second sentence, the adverb *slowly* is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If you read the two sentences aloud, you will notice that moving the adverb changes the rhythm of the sentence and slightly alters its meaning. The second sentence emphasizes how the subject moves—slowly—creating a buildup of tension. This technique is effective in fictional writing.

Note that an adverb used at the beginning of a sentence is usually followed by a comma. A comma indicates that the reader should pause briefly, which creates a useful rhetorical device. Read the following sentences aloud and consider the effect of pausing after the adverb:

Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog's reaction.

Solemnly, the policeman approached the mayor and placed him under arrest.

Suddenly, he slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

In an academic essay, moving an adverb to the beginning of a sentence serves to vary the rhythm of a paragraph and increase sentence variety.

> The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government _finally_ opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government _optimistically_ expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

Naomi has used two adverbs in her essay that could be moved to the beginning of their respective sentences. Notice how the following revised version creates a more varied paragraph:

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Finally, the government opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. Optimistically, the government expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences by moving the adverbs to the beginning.

1. The red truck sped furiously past the camper van, blaring its horn.
2. Jeff snatched at the bread hungrily, polishing off three slices in under a minute.
3. Underage drinking typically results from peer pressure and lack of parental attention.
4. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.
5. Mayor Johnson privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.

Starting a Sentence with a Prepositional Phrase

A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Prepositional phrases contain a **preposition** (a word that specifies place, direction, or time) and an **object of the preposition** (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition).

Table 9.1 Common Prepositions

above	beneath	into	till
across	beside	like	toward
against	between	near	under
after	beyond	off	underneath
among	by	on	until
around	despite	over	up
at	except	past	with
before	for	since	without
behind	from	through	
below	inside	throughout	

Read the following sentence:

> The terrified child hid **underneath the table**.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase is *underneath the table.* The preposition *underneath* relates to the object that follows the preposition—*the table*. Adjectives may be placed between the preposition and the object in a prepositional phrase.

> The terrified child hid **underneath the heavy wooden table**.

Some prepositional phrases can be moved to the beginning of a sentence in order to create variety in a piece of writing. Look at the following revised sentence:

> **Underneath the heavy wooden table**, the terrified child hid.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject—the terrified child—to the location in which the child is hiding. Words that are placed at the beginning or end of a sentence generally receive the greatest emphasis. Take a look at the following examples. The prepositional phrase is underlined in each:

- The bandaged man waited **in the doctor's office**.
- **In the doctor's office**, the bandaged man waited.
- My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m**.
- **At 6:45 a.m.**, my train leaves the station.
- Teenagers exchange drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.
- **Under the railway bridge**, teenagers exchange drugs and money.

Prepositional phrases are useful in any type of writing. Take another look at Naomi's essay on the government bailout.

> The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

Now, read the revised version.

> _Throughout 2007 and 2008_, the subprime mortgage crisis worsened, leaving many financial institutions in jeopardy. _According to some economists_, the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. _Despite public objections_, the government finally opted to bail out the banks. _Since the 2008 bill passed_, it has acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

The underlined words are all prepositional phrases. Notice how they add additional information to the text and provide a sense of flow to the essay, making it less choppy and more pleasurable to read.

Unmovable Prepositional Phrases

Not all prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Read the following sentence:

> I would like a chocolate sundae **without whipped cream**.

In this sentence, *without whipped cream* is the prepositional phrase. Because it describes the chocolate sundae, it cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence. "Without whipped cream, I would like a chocolate sundae" does not make as much (if any) sense. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

Overuse of Prepositional Phrases

Experienced writers often include more than one prepositional phrase in a sentence; however, it is important not to overload your writing. Using too many modifiers in a paragraph may create an unintentionally comical effect as the following example shows:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard, where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

A sentence is not necessarily effective just because it is long and complex. If your sentence appears cluttered with prepositional phrases, divide it into two shorter sentences. The previous sentence is far more effective when written as two simpler sentences:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

The overuse of prepositional phrases often occurs when our thoughts are jumbled and we are unsure how concepts or ideas relate to one another. If you are preparing a report or a proposal, take the time to organize your thoughts in an outline before writing a rough draft. Read the draft aloud, either to yourself or to a colleague, and identify areas that are rambling or unclear. If you notice that a particular part of your report contains several sentences over twenty words, you should double-check that particular section to make certain that it is coherent and does not contain unnecessary prepositional phrases. Reading aloud sometimes helps detect unclear and wordy sentences. You can also ask a colleague to paraphrase your main points to ensure that the meaning is clear.

Starting a Sentence by Inverting the Subject and Verb

As we noted earlier, most writers follow the subject-verb-object sentence structure. In an **inverted sentence**, the order is reversed so that the subject follows the verb. Read the following sentence pairs:

- A truck was parked in the driveway.
  - Parked in the driveway was a truck.
- A copy of the file is attached.
  - Attached is a copy of the file

Notice how the second sentence in each pair places more emphasis on the subject—*a truck* in the first example and *the file* in the second. This technique is useful for drawing the reader's attention to your primary area of focus. We can apply this method to an academic essay. Take another look at Naomi's paragraph.

> The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

To emphasize the subject in certain sentences, Naomi can invert the traditional sentence structure. Read her revised paragraph:

> The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. _The banks were too big to fail, argued some economists_. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. _These assets will rise in value, expects the government optimistically_. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

Notice that in the first underlined sentence, the subject (_some economists_) is placed after the verb (_argued_). In the second underlined sentence, the subject (_the government_) is placed after the verb (_expects_).

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences as inverted sentences.

1. Teresa will never attempt to run another marathon.
2. A detailed job description is enclosed with this letter.
3. Bathroom facilities are across the hall to the left of the water cooler.
4. The well-dressed stranger stumbled through the doorway.
5. My colleagues remain unconvinced about the proposed merger.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety

Reviewing and rewriting the beginning of sentences is a good way of introducing sentence variety into your writing. Another useful technique is to connect two sentences using a modifier, a relative clause, or an appositive. This section examines how to connect ideas across several sentences to increase sentence variety and improve writing.

Joining Ideas Using an *–ing* Modifier

Sometimes it is possible to combine two sentences by converting one of them into a modifier using the *–ing* verb form—*singing*, *dancing*, *swimming*. A **modifier** is a word or phrase that qualifies the meaning of another element in the sentence. Read the following example:

> **Original sentences:** Steve checked the computer system. He discovered a virus.
>
> **Revised sentence:** Checking the computer system, Steve discovered a virus.

To connect two sentences using an *–ing* modifier, add *–ing* to one of the verbs in the sentences (*checking*) and delete the subject (*Steve*). Use a comma to separate the modifier from the subject of the sentence. It is important to make sure that the main idea in your revised sentence is contained in

the main clause, not in the modifier. In this example, the main idea is that Steve discovered a virus, not that he checked the computer system.

In the following example, an –*ing* modifier indicates that two actions are occurring at the same time:

1. Noticing the police car, she shifted gears and slowed down.

    This means that she slowed down at the same time she noticed the police car.

2. Barking loudly, the dog ran across the driveway.

    This means that the dog barked as it ran across the driveway.

You can add an –*ing* modifier to the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on which fits best.

Beginning: Conducting a survey among her friends, Amanda found that few were happy in their jobs.

End: Maria filed the final report, **meeting her deadline**.

Dangling Modifiers

A common mistake when combining sentences using the –*ing* verb form is to misplace the modifier so that it is not logically connected to the rest of the sentence. This creates a **dangling modifier**. Look at the following example:

Jogging across the parking lot, my breath grew ragged and shallow.

In this sentence, *jogging across the parking lot* seems to modify *my breath*. Since breath cannot jog, the sentence should be rewritten so that the subject is placed immediately after the modifier or added to the dangling phrase.

> Jogging across the parking lot, I felt my breath grow ragged and shallow.

For more information on dangling modifiers, see [Chapter 7: Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?](#).

Joining Ideas Using an –*ed* Modifier

Some sentences can be combined using an –*ed* verb form—*stopped*, *finished*, *played*. To use this method, one of the sentences must contain a form of *be* as a helping verb in addition to the –*ed* verb form. Take a look at the following example:

> **Original sentences:** The Jones family was delayed by a traffic jam. They arrived several hours after the party started.
>
> **Revised sentence:** Delayed by a traffic jam, the Jones family arrived several hours after the party started.

In the original version, *was* acts as a **helping verb**—it has no meaning by itself, but it serves a grammatical function by placing the main verb (*delayed*) in the perfect tense.

To connect two sentences using an –*ed* modifier, drop the helping verb (*was*) and the subject (*the Jones family*) from the sentence with an –*ed* verb form. This forms a modifying phrase (*delayed by a traffic jam*) that can be added to the beginning or end of the other sentence according to which fits best. As with the –*ing* modifier, be careful to place the word that the phrase modifies immediately after the phrase in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using –*ing* or –*ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences. Take a look at how Naomi might use modifiers in her paragraph.

> The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. <u>Opting to bail out the banks, the government acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008.</u> It optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

The revised version of the essay uses the –*ing* modifier *opting* to draw a connection between the government's decision to bail out the banks and the result of that decision—the acquisition of the mortgage-backed securities.

Joining Ideas Using a Relative Clause

Another technique that writers use to combine sentences is to join them using a relative clause. A **relative clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and describes a noun. Relative clauses function as adjectives by answering questions such as *which one?* or *what kind?* Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun, such as *who*, *which*, *where*, *why*, or *when*. Read the following examples:

> **Original sentences:** The managing director is visiting the company next week. He lives in Seattle.
>
> **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who lives in Seattle, is visiting the company next week.

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*he*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Seattle*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*). Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize

as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that he is visiting the company.

Revised sentence: The managing director, who is visiting the company next week, lives in Seattle.

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence. Take a look at how Naomi might incorporate relative clauses into her essay.

> The subprime mortgage crisis, which had been steadily building throughout 2007 and 2008, left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists, who favored the bailout, argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists, who opposed the bailout, argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

Notice how the underlined relative clauses can be removed from Naomi's essay without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Joining Ideas Using an Appositive

An **appositive** is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

Original sentences: Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930. He is Colonel Sanders or "the Colonel."

Revised sentence: Harland Sanders, "the Colonel," began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence, *"the Colonel"* is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers:

Appositive after noun: Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

Appositive before noun: A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or a set commas. Take a look at the way Naomi uses appositives to include additional facts in her essay.

The subprime mortgage crisis, <u>the biggest financial disaster since the 1929 Wall Street crash</u>, left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government, <u>the institution that would decide the fate of the banks</u>, finally opted to bail them out. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Image Text Description

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using the techniques you have learned in this section.

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways.
2. The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
3. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
4. Ashley introduced her colleague, Dan, to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In addition to varying sentence structure, consider varying the types of sentences you are using in a report or other workplace document. Most sentences are declarative, but a carefully placed question, exclamation, or command can pique colleagues' interest, even if the subject material is fairly dry. Imagine that you are writing a budget analysis. Beginning your report with a rhetorical question, such as "Where is our money going?" or "How can we increase sales?" encourages people to continue reading to find out the answers. Although they should be used sparingly in academic and professional writing, questions or commands are effective rhetorical devices.

Key Takeaways

- Sentence variety reduces repetition in a piece of writing and adds emphasis to important points in the text.
- Sentence variety can be introduced to the beginning of sentences by starting a sentence with an adverb, starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase, or by inverting the subject and verb.
- Combine ideas using modifiers, relative clauses, or appositives to achieve sentence variety.
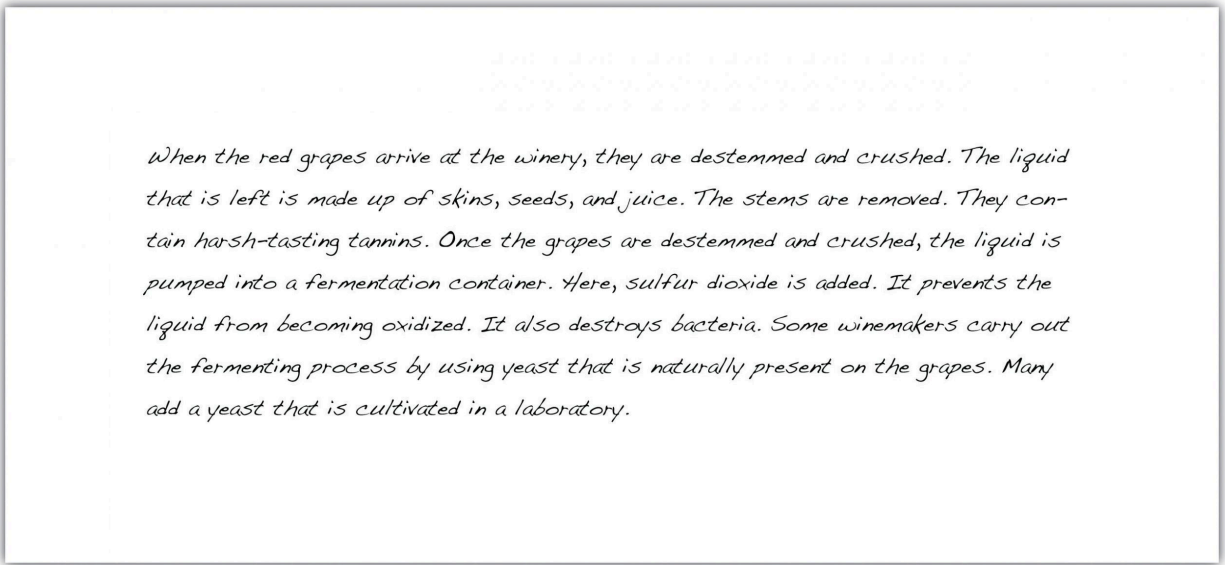
9.2 Coordination and Subordination

In the previous section, we learned how to use different patterns to create sentence variety and to add emphasis to important points in our writing. Next, we will examine two ways in which we can join sentences with related ideas:

- **Coordination**. Joining two related ideas of equal importance.
- **Subordination**. Joining two related ideas of unequal importance.

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs and, in turn, produces more effective writing. In this section, you will read excerpts from Naomi's classmate Joshua, who drafted an essay about wine production. Read this excerpt from Joshua's essay.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Image Text Description

This section examines several ways to combine sentences with coordination and subordination, using Joshua's essay as an example.

Coordination

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

> **Original sentences:** I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week *because* I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

> **Revised sentence:** I spent my entire paycheck last week, **so** I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck*; *I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A **coordinating conjunction** is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses.

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
I plan to stay home.	and (joins two ideas)	I will complete an essay for class.	I plan to stay home, and I will complete an essay for class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Tom won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but (indicates a contrast)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
My parents are worried that I am antisocial.	yet (indicates a reason)	I have many friends at school.	My parents are worried that I am antisocial, yet I have many friends at school.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

Tip

To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym FANBOYS: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*.

Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction in a sentence, a comma should precede it.
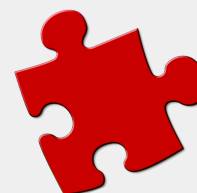
Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon (see Chapter 7: Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence? for information on semicolon usage). A **conjunctive adverb** is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. Read the following sentences:

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget's desire to take part in the next Olympics and her daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

Review the following chart of some common conjunctive adverbs with examples of how they are used:

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

Take a look at Joshua's essay on wine production and identify some areas in which he might use coordination.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Image Text Description

Now, look at Joshua's revised essay. Did you coordinate the same sentences? You may find that your answers are different because there are usually several ways to join two independent clauses.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed, for they contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized and also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes; however, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Image Text Description

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb. Then, copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

When writing an essay or a report, it is important that you do not use excessive coordination. Workplace documents should be clear and concise, so only join two clauses that are logically connected and can work together to make one main point. If you repeat the same coordinating conjunction several times in a sentence, you are probably including more than one idea. This may make it difficult for readers to pick out the most important information in each sentence.

Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by merging them into a **main clause** (a complete sentence) and a **dependent clause** (a construction that relies on the main clause to complete its meaning). Coordination allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined,

and subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though*.

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence and a dependent clause (*even though Tracy would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man rather than the fact she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

Tip

To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause.

If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main cause, no punctuation is required.
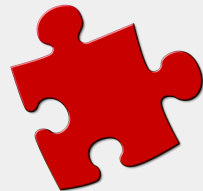
Subordinating Conjunctions

A **subordinating conjunction** is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Review the following chart of some common subordinating conjunctions and examples of how they are used:

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner	as if, as, though	Everyone in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Rita is in San Jose where she has several important client meetings.
Reason	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

Take a look at the excerpt from Joshua's essay and identify some areas in which he might use subordination.
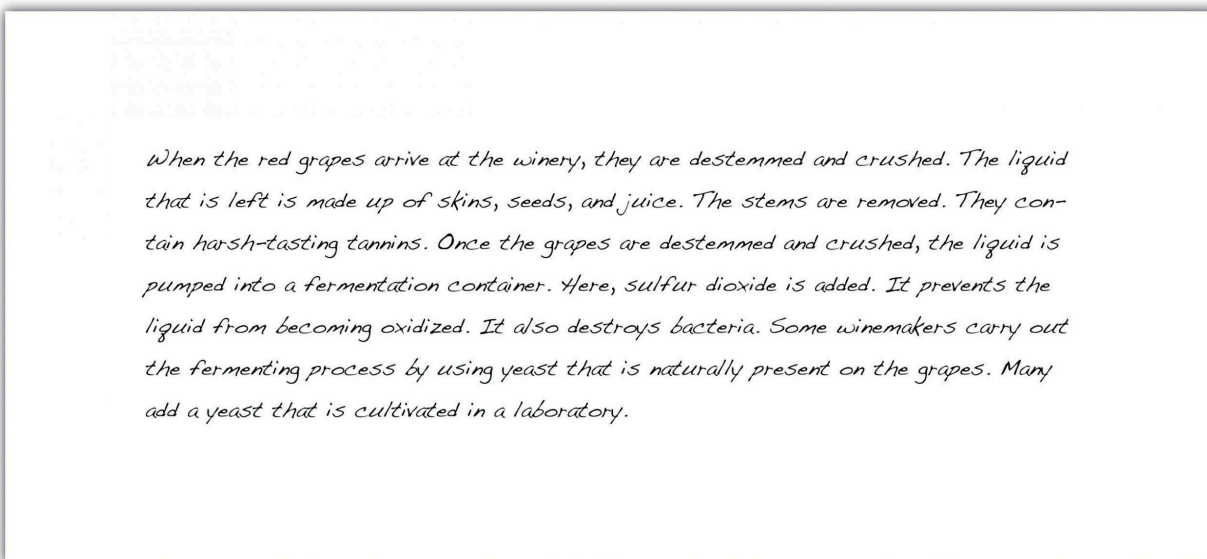

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Image Text Description

Now, look at Joshua's revised essay and compare your answers. You will probably notice that there are many different ways to subordinate sentences.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. Because the stems contain harsh-tasting tannins, they are removed. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added in order to prevent the liquid from becoming oxidized. Sulfur dioxide also destroys bacteria. Although some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Image Text Description

Exercise 2

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction and then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Jake is going to Mexico. There are beautiful beaches in Mexico.
2. A snowstorm disrupted traffic all over the East Coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
3. My neighbour had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
4. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Ashley marinated the chicken.
5. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Exercise 3

Copy the paragraph from Joshua's essay onto your own sheet of paper. Then, edit using the

techniques you have learned in this section. Join the underlined sentences using coordination or subordination. Check your revised sentences for punctuation.

> The yeast is added to the must. Alcoholic fermentation then begins. Here, the red wine production process differs from the method used in white wine production. Red wine is fermented for a shorter time. It is fermented at a higher temperature. Whereas white wines may ferment for over a month, red wines typically ferment for less than two weeks. During fermentation, contact between the skins and the juice releases tannins and flavor compounds into the must. This process is known as maceration. Maceration may occur before, during, or after fermentation. The fermentation process is completed. The next stage is pressing. Many methods are used for pressing, the most common of which is basket pressing.

Image Text Description

Key Takeaways

- Coordination and subordination join two sentences with related ideas.
- Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas, whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.
- Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.
- Subordinate sentences are characterized by the use of a subordinate conjunction.
- In a subordinate sentence, a comma is used to separate the main clause from the dependent clause if the dependent clause is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

9.3 Parallelism

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify sentences that are parallel and not parallel.
2. Identify ways to create parallelism in writing.
3. Write and revise sentences using parallelism.

</div>

Earlier in this chapter, we learned that increasing sentence variety adds interest to a piece of writing and makes the reading process more enjoyable for others. Using a mixture of sentence lengths and patterns throughout an essay is an important writing technique. However, it is equally important to avoid introducing variation within individual sentences. A strong sentence is composed of balanced parts that all have the same structure. In this section, we will examine how to create a balanced sentence structure by using **parallelism**.

Using Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of similar structures in related words, clauses, or phrases. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct <u>faulty parallelism</u>—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Read the following sentences aloud:

> **Faulty parallelism:** Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.
>
> **Faulty parallelism:** Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.
>
> **Faulty parallelism:** Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (*coordination*, *jeans*), but ends with a phrase (*to have good eyesight*, *wearing a suit*). Now, read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

> **Correct parallelism:** Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.
>
> **Correct parallelism:** Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.
>
> **Correct parallelism:** Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Tip

A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.
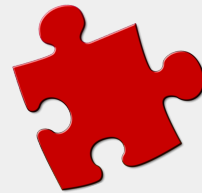
Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

> **Faulty parallelism:** When I walk the dog, I like **to listen to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.
>
> **Correct parallelism:** When I walk the dog, I like **listening to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen*, *talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

> **Faulty parallelism:** This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lowering workers' wages**.
>
> **Correct parallelism:** This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lower workers' wages**.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce*, *cut*) and a third item that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar at weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Creating Parallelism Using *Than* or *As*

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using a parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as*, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

> **Faulty parallelism: Swimming in the ocean** is much tougher than **a pool**.
>
> **Correct parallelism: Swimming in the ocean** is much tougher than **swimming in a pool**.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (*than*) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (*swimming*) with a noun (*a pool*). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

> **Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk** is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.
>
> **Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk** is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase *going for* to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using *than* or *as*.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A **correlative conjunction** is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

- either...or
- not only...but also
- neither...nor
- whether...or
- rather...than
- both...and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

> **Faulty parallelism:** We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **can we take** evasive action.
> **Correct parallelism:** We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **take** evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.
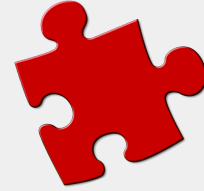
> **Faulty parallelism:** It was both a long movie and poorly written.
>
> **Correct parallelism:** The movie was both long and poorly written.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Speechwriters use parallelism not only within sentences but also throughout paragraphs and beyond. Repeating particular key phrases throughout a speech is an effective way of tying a paragraph together as a cohesive whole and creating a sense of importance. This technique can be adapted to any piece of writing, but it may be especially useful for creating a proposal or other type of persuasive workplace document.

Note that the spelling and grammar checker on most word processors will not draw attention to faulty parallelism. When proofreading a document, read it aloud and listen for sentences that sound awkward or poorly phrased.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 4

Read through the following excerpt from Alex's essay and revise any instances of faulty parallelism. Rewrite the sentences to create a parallel structure.

Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a romantic partner.

Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

Image Text Description

Key Takeaways

- Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas.
- Faulty parallelism occurs when elements of a sentence are not balanced, causing the sentence to sound clunky and awkward.
- Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions, by comparing two items using than or as, or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

9.4 Refining Your Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.
3. Work with a variety of academic and on-the-job, real-world examples.

Exercises

1. Children's stories are deliberately written in short, simple sentences to avoid confusion. Most sentences are constructed using the standard subject-verb-object format. Choose a children's story that is suitable for eight- to ten-year-olds. Rewrite a chapter of the story so that it appeals to a slightly older age group, by editing for sentence variety. Experiment with the techniques you learned in section 9.1 "Sentence Variety" including the three different ways to vary sentence structure at the beginning of a sentence and the three different ways to connect ideas between sentences. Compare the revised chapter with the original version and consider how sentence variety can be used to target a particular audience.

   ### *Collaboration*

   Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2. Compile a selection of real-life writing samples from the workplace or around the home. You might like to choose one of the following: e-mail, junk mail, personal letter, company report, social networking page, local newspaper, bulletin-board posting, or public notice. Choose two samples that lack sentence variety. Highlight areas of each writing sample that you would edit for sentence variety and explain why. Replace any recognizable name with a pseudonym or a fictitious name.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

3. **Group activity.** Choose a well-known speech, such as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, Winston Churchill's "Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat" speech, or Barack Obama's inaugural address. Make a copy of the speech and, as a group, underline examples of parallelism. Discuss the effects of using parallelism and consider whether it is always used to achieve the same result or whether the writer manipulates parallelism to create a variety of responses among his or her audience.

4. **Group activity.** Working in a small group, select a workplace document or academic essay. Examine each paragraph and identify examples of sentence variety, coordination and subordination, and parallelism. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions below. As a group, identify the weaker areas of the paragraph and rewrite them. Focus on sentence structure and sentence variation. Use coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions to join sentences.

   ◦ Does the writer use sentence variety effectively?
   ◦ Does the writer connect his or her ideas effectively?
   ◦ Does the writer use subordination and coordination correctly?
   ◦ Does the writer use parallelism to emphasize his or her points?

5. Choose a college essay or a recent piece of writing from your work or everyday life. Use the techniques you have learned throughout this chapter to edit your writing for sentence variety, appropriate coordination and subordination, and parallelism. When you have finished, compare the two versions and write a brief analysis of how sentence variety, coordination and subordination, and parallelism help refine a piece of writing.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

UNIT 4: WRITING MECHANICS

Unit 4: Writing Mechanics
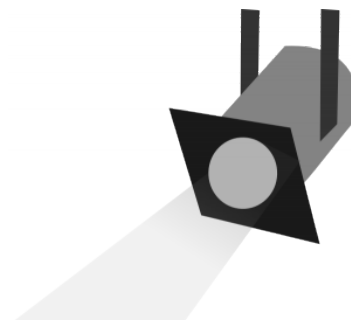
[Chapter 10: Punctuation](#)

WRIT Course Learning Outcomes (LO) Addressed

- **Compose** complete sentences and paragraphs using effective vocabulary (LO 6).
- **Express** a clear written argument (LO 7).
- **Provide** evidence in support of arguments (LO 8).
- **Apply** basic principles of quotation and/or paraphrase integration (LO 9).

Rubric Spotlight

An essay demonstrating *EXEMPLARY MECHANICS* includes:

- Composition that is error-free or has a forgivable typographical error
- Assured and sophisticated command of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics
- Exemplary language use that enhances the argument

Chapter 10: Punctuation

10.1 Commas

One of the punctuation clues you may encounter when reading is the **comma**. A comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends, and the main sentence begins.

> Without spoiling the surprise**,** we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun is called a **coordinating adjective**. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated

by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that, unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

It was a bright**,** windy**,** clear day.

Our kite glowed red**,** yellow**,** and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*. For a full list of conjunctions, see [Chapter 7: Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence](#)?

He missed class today**,** and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone**,** but he is still very tired.

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.
2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.
3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.
4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.
5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.
6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.
7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.
8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.
9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.
10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called **Interrupting words**. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

If you can believe it**,** people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily**,** some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2024.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2023.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2020, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the province (or state) and the postal/zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, London, Ontario N5Y 4R6.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,

Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.

Sincerely,
Jack Fremont

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2019
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
Toronto, ON M5S 2C6

Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you
Alexa

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.

2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.

3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.

4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2019. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can

contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word *and* is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the postal/zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

10.2 Semicolons

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the **semicolon (;)**. Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

> **Correct:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**;** appearances are important.
>
> **Choppy:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**.** Appearances are important.
>
> **Incorrect:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**,** appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey**;** green, brown, and black**;** or red, green, and brown.
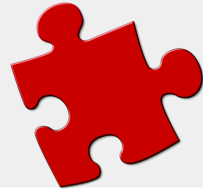
Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colours.

Tip

Use semicolons to join two main clauses.

Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as and, or, and but.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

10.3 Colons

1. Identify the uses of colons.
2. Properly use colons in sentences.

The **colon (:)** is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

> Dear Hiring Manager**:**
>
> To**:** Human Resources
>
> From**:** Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

> The team will tour three provinces**:** Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia.
>
> I have to take four classes this semester**:** Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quote

You can use a colon to introduce a quote.

Mark Twain said it best**:** "When in doubt, tell the truth."

If a quote is longer than forty words, skip a line after the colon and indent five spaces from the left margin of the quote. Because quotations longer than forty words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

My father always loved Mark Twain's words:

> There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Tip

Long quotations, which are forty words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers.

For more information about block quotations, see "When to Use a Block Quotations" from Guide to Writing in the ancillary resources section.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like *such as* or *for example*.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services**:** writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as**:** writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries**:** Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from *Hamlet***:** "To thine own self be true."

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology**:** My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple**:** Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write *OK*.

1. Don't give up you never know what tomorrow brings.
2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2020 January 13, 2019 and November 16, 2018.
3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.
4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.
5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.
6. I have lived in Toronto, Montreal Vancouver, Winnipeg and Los Angeles, California.
7. The boss's message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.
8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.
9. My little sister said what we were all thinking "We should have stayed home."
10. Trust me I have done this before.

Key Takeaways

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

10.4 Using Quotes

1. Identify the uses of quotes.
2. Correctly use quotes in sentences.

Quotation marks (" ") set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person's words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A **direct quotation** is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An **indirect quotation** is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person's exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

> **Direct quotation:** Carly said, **"**I'm not ever going back there again.**"**
>
> **Indirect quotation:** Carly said that she would never go back there.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

Most word-processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.

- The client said, "He thought our manuscript was garbage."

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote, meaning the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word "garbage"? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client's words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is "he" in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person's exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

> **Beginning:** Madison said**, "L**et's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner**."**
>
> **Middle: "**Let's stop at the farmers market**,"** Madison said**, "**to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner**."**
>
> **End: "**Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner**,"** Madison said.
>
> **Speaker not identified: "**Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner**."**

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote, even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked**, "**When is lunch**?"**

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were **"**the next Picasso**"?**

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed**, "**Thanks for all of your hard work**!"**

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I **"**single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars**"!**

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (' ') to show a quotation within a quotation.

Theresa said, **"**I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, **'**No dogs allowed.**'"**

"When you say, **'**I can't help it,**'** what exactly does that mean?**"**

"The instructions say, **'**Tighten the screws one at a time.**'"**

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

"Annabelle Lee**"** is one of my favourite romantic poems.

The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write *OK*.

1. Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.
2. Where should we go? said Russell.
3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.
4. I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.
5. Perfect! said Yasmin.
6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.
7. I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?
8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.
9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?
10. That's the one said Russell.

Key Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

10.5 Apostrophes

<div style="border:1px solid #ccc;">

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of apostrophes.
2. Correctly use apostrophes in sentences.

</div>

An **apostrophe (')** is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter *s* indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add *'s*.

> Jen**'s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.
>
> The dog**'s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.
>
> Jess**'s** sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in *s* still take the apostrophe *s* (*'s*) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in *s*, just add an apostrophe ('). If the plural noun does not end in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s* (*'s*).

> **Plural noun that ends in** *s*: The drummers **sticks** all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.
>
> **Plural noun that does not end in** *s*: The people**'s** votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A **contraction** is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

> I do not like ice cream.
>
> I **don't** like ice cream.

Notice how the words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don't*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

> We will see you later.
>
> **We'll** see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse *it's* with *its*. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun.

- **It's** cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)
- The cat was chasing **its** tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If the sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.
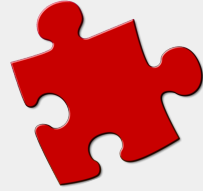
Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add *'s* to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in *s*. Add *'* to plural nouns that end in *s*.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

10.6 Parentheses

1. Identify the uses of parentheses.
2. Properly use parentheses in sentences.

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen **(**so far**)**.

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious **(**and nutritious**)** foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write *OK*.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Key Takeaways

- Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.
- Parentheses are always used in pairs.

10.7 Dashes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of dashes.
2. Correctly use dashes in sentences.

A **dash (—)** is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write *OK*.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Key Takeaways

- Dashes indicate a pause in the text.
- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

10.8 Hyphens

<table>
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Learning Objectives

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

1. Identify the uses of hyphens.
2. Properly use hyphens in sentences.

</td></tr>
</table>

A **hyphen (-)** looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

> The fifty–five–year–old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.
>
> My doctor recommended against taking the medication since it can be habit–forming.
>
> My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

> My supervisor was concerned that the team meet–
>
> ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

10.9 Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Exercises

1. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write *OK*.

   Commas

   a. The wedding will be July 13 2021.

   b. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.

   c. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.

   d. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.

   e. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.

   f. The photography the catering and the music will all be friends.

   Semicolons

   a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.

   b. The flowers will be either roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

   Colons

   a. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.

   b. They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.

c. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable.

Quotes

a. The invitations said that the wedding would be "outdoor casual."

b. "What exactly does 'outdoor casual' mean?" I asked the bride.

c. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Apostrophes

a. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.

b. My brothers wife will make the arrangements.

c. Shes a great party organizer.

Parentheses

a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for fifteen years.

b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

Dashes

a. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.

b. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

Hyphens

a. The groom danced with his new mother in law.

b. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

2. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

a. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.

b. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.

c. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.

d. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!

e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.

f. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.

g. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.

h. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.

i. Arent gardens wonderful?

j. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

3. The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2024

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don't have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

4. Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing Application

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal e-mails. Does your work contain any punctuation errors? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

APPENDIX A: WRITING SUPPORTS FOR EAP

A Note About Appendix Material

Please note: the contents of these appendices (A, B, and C) do not appear in this book's Print or Digital PDF versions (*available to download from the book homepage page*) to reduce the printing size of this book's output.

Appendix A Sections

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF ESSAYS

Appendix B Sections

APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTATION RESOURCES

Documentation and Formatting

As an introductory level-one writing course, the WRIT: Reason and Writing curriculum does not explore the more advanced aspects of academic research, including locating and citing sources correctly.

Research and documentation skills are a core component of our level-two professional communications curriculum.   For most learners at Fanshawe College, WRIT is a prerequisite course for a mandatory professional communications class that is part of many programs.

Nevertheless, because academic integrity is important to student success, we include open educational resources for the two most common forms of documentation: MLA and APA format.

Open Educational Resources

- MLA Style Citations by Ulrike Kestler from Kwantlen Polytechnic University is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.
- APA Style Citations by Ulrike Kestler from Kwantlen Polytechnic University is licensedunder a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Fanshawe College Library Learning Commons Resources

- APA 7th Edition Citation Guide
- MLA 9th Edition Citation Guide
- Academic Integrity Resources

Version History

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve a number of changes, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted alongside this book always reflect the most recent version.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	01 July 2020	First publication	N/A
2.0	01 July 2024	Second publication This edition includes changes in overall formatting, style, and deletions of some dated content throughout the text, including the following: • New cover • Updated textboxes and styles • Grammatical and punctuation improvements • Improved organization of chapters and parts • Updated chapter titles and permalinks • Removal of Appendices in Print PDF • Removal of Appendix C content and replacement with existing OER resource links • Overall improvements in Accessibility compliance	All webpages