

Foundations of Academic Writing

FOUNDATIONS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

A primer for Academic Upgrading students preparing for degree programs

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Conestoga Open Learning
Kitchener

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PREFACE

Foundations of Academic Writing is designed for students preparing for a degree program at a college or university. The focus of this OER is writing, with sections on summary writing, persuasive writing, and writing a research report. However, the resource also covers the key skills of reading, critical thinking, and research skills, and covers the topics of academic integrity and AI use.

Each chapter begins with and is organized around **Learning Objectives** aligned to the Grade 12 University English (Ontario) graduate expectations for reading and writing. These objectives are reinforced with the end-of-chapter **Key Takeaways**. **Glossary** terms with **pop-up definitions** are in bold in the text, and each chapter includes **ProTip** boxes that highlight information critical for learners preparing for their post-secondary education.

Check Your Understanding formative quizzes help learners assess their progress. **Critical Thinking Exercises** offer students opportunities to practice what they are learning, either for their own reflection or for assessment by their instructor. These exercises build upon one another as learners progress through the writing process, and student samples help to illustrate the progression. **Videos** and **Additional Resources** boxes throughout this OER offer further explanation of key concepts and identify useful sources of information.

By working through this OER and completing the exercises, students will develop the skills needed to successfully participate in degree programs and life beyond.

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AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the support of our management team, Tanya du Plessis and Karen Morgan-Bowyer, who provided us time to work on this project. We are also grateful for Rachel Stuckey, Stephanie Yantha, and Girish Bhuteja, whose expertise with OERs, kind support, and hard work helped make this text possible.

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[Microsoft Copilot](#) was used to research and brainstorm content, as well as to develop examples and assessments. Prompts used to generate content are recorded in Appendix B. Some assessments were also developed using the [Arizona State University Question Generator tool](#).

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Multiple Formats Available

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CHAPTER 1 - READING AND CRITICAL THINKING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Reading happens in every part of your life. Sometimes it is small, such as reading text messages, social media posts and emails, or larger, such as stories and articles. In your day-to-day life, consider all the different ways you read. Reading is not an unfamiliar skill, but reading for college may be.

Reading for college and academics in general requires you to dig deeper into a **text**. It involves understanding HOW to read effectively, HOW to analyze and critically evaluate what you are reading, and HOW to share that through reflection and writing. This chapter looks at the various skills you will use when reading texts in degree programs.

To start, one of the words you will see a lot in this chapter is text. Text just means written material. It is a catch-all term to discuss any form of writing. Texts can have images, but the majority of the work will be written. A text can be any of the things we mentioned above. Most likely, though, the types of texts you will encounter in college will depend on your program and its focus. It can be a mix of both academic and news articles, textbooks, nonfiction or fiction books, research papers, lab reports or case studies, and/or different forms of digital media. By building your reading skills, you will be able to tackle whatever TEXT comes your way.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Use** reading strategies to build vocabulary and understanding.
2. **Describe** how to analyze and synthesize a text.
3. **Explain** the concept of rhetoric and the three rhetorical appeals.
4. **Identify** different logical fallacies and biases and how they weaken a text.
5. **Discuss** reflection and how it improves understanding.

1.1 READING STRATEGIES

When reading a text in college, you want to use different reading strategies to help you understand the text. In college, every reading you do will have a purpose behind it. The overall purpose is to help you understand and learn the material in your courses, but to show your understanding, you may need to work with the text in some way, such as writing reflections, summaries, answering questions on it and so on. Reading strategies will help you understand the text and help you to respond to it in whatever way your teacher asks. Below you will find some starting strategies to use when reading!

**ProTip
Icon**

We will be talking about note-taking later in the text, but it is best to start practicing note-taking now. When you are taking notes, try to capture in your own words some of the following: main ideas of the text and supporting arguments, YOUR thoughts on the reading, any questions you may have, and new vocabulary.

Use Pre-reading Strategies

When you're ready to settle in with a text, it's a good idea to begin with "pre-reading." With pre-reading, you'll turn into a temporary sleuth, examining the text for visual clues as to its meaning. Here's how it's done:

Bronze statue of Sherlock Homes in a deerstalker hat holding a pipe to his mouth in a thoughtful pose.

Start by Reading and Considering the Title

A good title will inform you about the text's content. It's always nice if titles are also interesting, catchy, or even clever, but the most important job of a title is to let the reader know what's coming and what the text will be about.

For instance, imagine you're reading a magazine article entitled "Three Hundred Sixty-five Properly Poofy Days."

Reading that, do you have any idea what this article is going to be about?

- It could be written by a meteorologist, reporting on a year of observing cloud formations.
- It might be a biopic (a biographical story) about an eccentric salon that specializes in “big hair” dos, retro-style.
- Or perhaps it’s a set of guidelines for using poofy cotton balls to apply cosmetics.

Would you be surprised to discover it’s a story about a dog groomer who does show grooms for poodles, the poofiest of dogs?

See my point? The title should, hopefully, give you clues to the article content. (Keep this in mind when you’re writing your own titles.)

Here are some other starting strategies to start with BEFORE you even start reading a text:

- **Look at the author’s name** Have you heard of the author? Do you know anything about them? Sometimes you’ll find a short bio about the author at the beginning or end of a text. You can always Google them to look for more details. Ideally, the author should be an acknowledged expert on the subject or should have degrees, training, or credentials that make them an expert. (Learn more about the [CRAAP method](#) for evaluating sources in [Chapter 2](#))
- **Skim through the article, looking for headings or “pull-outs”** (content that is pulled off to one side or highlighted in a box). Headings, if present, will often give you clues as to the text’s content as well as showing you how the subject has been divided into sections.
- **Look for any images: photographs, charts, graphs, maps, or other illustrations.** Images—and their captions—will often give you valuable information about the topic.
- **If working with an e-text, you may also find embedded web links.** Follow these: they’ll often lead you to resources that will help you better understand the article.
- **Here’s a seriously expert-level suggestion: most academic texts and essays follow a fairly similar structure**, including beginning every paragraph with a strong, focused topic sentence—you can often get a quick summary or understanding of a written text by simply reading the first sentence in every paragraph. Some authors may use the second sentence as their topic sentence, and if you notice this pattern, reading all of the second sentences in each paragraph will help you follow the text.

After working through the above suggestions when examining a text, try to see if you can figure out the main purpose of the text simply by pre-reading. In other words, look for the global or central idea or argument. In academic writing, this sentence (expressing the main idea of a text) is called a **thesis statement**.

Now, you’re ready to dive in and read the text completely. Your pre-reading has given you an

overall picture of what to expect and helped you build a **schema** of what the author wants you to know at the end of the reading. If the pre-reading has worked well, giving you clues to the text's content, your actual in-depth reading will be easier and more effective, and you'll begin reading with your curiosity already activated, which is a great way to start!

Check Your Understanding: Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=31#h5p-1>

Exploring the Structure of a Text

Exploring a text's structure may sound a little complicated, but it really isn't. We're simply looking for how it's been constructed or built, and then we're thinking about how the structure supports the work the text is trying to do. The fancy literary terms for this are "**form**" and "**function**." Form refers to the way the text is structured, while function refers to what it communicates to the reader.

Consider these questions when thinking about structure:

- How is the text organized? (Does it seem logical? Is it in time-related, chronological order? Does it skip around in time with flashbacks or flash-forwards? Does it follow a standardized academic structure?)
- Is it divided into obvious sections? Do the sections have headings, or are they just visually separated?
- What kind of writing style does the author use (narrative writing, descriptive writing, ana-

lytical/logical writing, persuasive writing)? How do they organize their supporting detail (comparison/contrast, cause and effect, or a process to present their ideas)?

- Is there a lot of detail and description in the text? Is the detail supported with citations, references or links?
- Does the author do anything unusual* or unexpected with the text?

Tone, Voice, and Point of View

What's good?

Hey, how you doin'?

Hello, how are you today?

Which of the above greetings sounds most formal? Which sounds the most informal? What causes the change in tone?

Your voice can't actually be heard when you write, but it can be conveyed through the words you choose, the order you place them in, and the point of view from which you write. When you read something, it has been written for a specific audience. You can often see this through tone of voice: serious, professional, funny, friendly, neutral, etc.

What is point of view, and how do I know which was used?

Point of view can be tricky, so this is a good question. Point of view is the perspective from which you're writing, and it dictates what your focus is. Consider the following examples:

- I love watching the leaves change in the fall. (First person point of view)
- You will love watching the leaves change color. (Second person)
- The leaves in fall turn many vibrant colors. (Third person)

Which of the above sentences focuses most clearly on the leaves? Third person, right? The first-person sentence focuses on what "I" love and the second person sentence focuses on what "you" will love.

- **First person** uses the following pronouns: I, me, my, us, we, myself, our, ours ... any words that include the speaker/writer turn the sentence into first person.
- **Second person** uses any form of the word "you," which has the effect of addressing the reader.
- **Third person** uses pronouns like he, she, it, they, them ... any words that direct the reader to a person or thing that is not the writer or reader turn the sentence into third per-

son. Often this is the form of writing found in academics. Third person point of view texts are meant to be taken as object (outside the author and reader)

That's a lot to think about. When is it okay to use each of these points of view?

It always depends on the audience and purpose of the writing. **As a critical reader, you should be asking yourself the following:**

1. What point of view did the author use (first, second, or third person)?
2. What was the tone of the text? What kind of language did they use?

Both of these questions will help you analyze the **purpose** and **audience** behind writing the text, which in turn will help you analyze how well the author achieved their purpose!

Considering Vocabulary

Often when you are reading, you will come across new vocabulary terms. It is important to understand these new words, not only, because it will help you understand the text you are reading right now, but also because it will help you be a stronger reader. This is especially true when you come across career or program specific words! There are a few ways to support yourself when learning new vocabulary.

First, when you come across an unfamiliar word, ask yourself, “is it important that I understand this word in full, or can I make an educated guess on its meaning and move on.”

Take a look at the following two sentences:

*The artist's **mercurial** temperament made it difficult for her to maintain long-term collaborations, as her moods and creative visions shifted unpredictably.*

Versus

*The historian **expounded** on the significance of the artifact.*

In the one sentence, with the difficult adjective (mercurial), there are enough **context** clues in the sentence to make a good guess as to what that word means. In the second sentence, with the difficult verb (expounded), there may not be enough context clues to know what expounded means. When that happens as you are reading, these are the words you want to look up.

When you look up new words while taking a course, I would encourage you to keep a list (a glossary) of new terms for yourself with a definition and a sentence using it. Then make sure to review these terms and refer to them throughout the course. This book and many other text books will include a glossary of terms to review as well.

**ProTip
Icon**

It is always better to try and write your own sentence with a new vocabulary term as this can help you learn how to use the new vocabulary. The best strategy, though, for gaining new vocabulary is just to read as often as you can and in as many different genres or areas as you can!

Check Your Understanding: Structure, Point of View, Vocabulary

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Critical Thinking Exercises

Now that we've covered some pre-reading practices, let's put those skills to the test. Take a look at the article below and write some short pre-reading notes about it.

Then you can do an in-depth reading to explore tone of voice/point of view and text structure.

- [The Power of Pets: Health Benefits of Human-Animal Interactions](#) from the NIH News in Health website.

Before reading the article, work through the pre-reading skills discussed above.

- Based on what you found in your pre-reading, what do you think the text is about? What position will the article take on the idea of owning pets? How much do you know about the topic already?
- How is the text organized? Is it divided into obvious sections? Do the sections have headings, or are they just visually separated?

Now, switch to in-depth reading and read the article carefully, taking note of any questions you have or words you don't understand.

- Is there a lot of detail and description in the text? Is it supported with researched evidence?

Reflection

Jot down some notes on the following reflection questions:

1. How did the pre-reading work affect your ideas of what to expect from the text?
2. How did your understanding of the piece compare between what you learned from pre-reading versus a complete reading?
3. What does this tell you about the relationship between pre-reading and in-depth reading?

Attributions

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1.2 READING CRITICALLY

One of the most key skills of reading AND writing for college is **Critical reading**. Instead of simply reading for your own purposes, you will now also read through the writer's eyes, seeking to understand the deeper, interwoven meanings layered within a text. Critical reading involves the reader in grappling with the text and then interacting with it.

The critical reader digs in and explores a text. They do some or all of the following:

- **They analyze the structure of the piece through pre-reading strategies.** What kind of organization does it follow? Where is the thesis statement? (As we introduced in [Chapter 1.1](#), a thesis is used throughout academic writing and particularly in essay writing to tell the reader the main point or idea of the essay.) What types of sentences and language are used? How are the paragraphs structured?
- **They analyze the text itself**, either exploring its content or its use of rhetoric, i.e., the ways the text uses language to make its message effective.
- **They capture the text's main points** by summarizing its meaning.
- **They critique the text**, passing judgment on its effectiveness.
- **They reach conclusions** (make **inferences**) about the text.
- **They combine their own ideas with the textual analysis** to synthesize new ideas and insights.

In any reading, you'll begin, of course, by using your pre-reading strategies, and then reading the text. Don't forget to use any other "Reading Strategies" mentioned in the section found at the beginning of this chapter. As you read the text, you will want to jot down notes you have while reading that help you analyze, identify the main idea, critique, reach conclusions and synthesize. Below we further discuss critiquing and synthesizing.

Critiquing a Text

- When we **summarize** a text, we capture its main points.
- When we **analyze** a text, we consider how it has been put together—we dissect it, more or less, to see how it works

When we **critique**¹ a text, we evaluate it, asking it questions. Critique shares a root with the word “criticize.” Most of us tend to think of criticism as being negative or mean, but in the academic sense, doing a critique is not the least bit negative. Rather, it’s a constructive way to better explore and understand the material we’re working with. The word’s origin means “to evaluate,” and through our critique, we do a deep evaluation of a text.

When we critique a text, we interrogate it. Imagine the text, sitting on a stool under a bright, dangling light bulb while you ask, in a demanding voice, “What did you mean by having Professor Mustard wear a golden yellow fedora?”

Okay, seriously. When we critique, our own opinions and ideas become part of our textual analysis. We question the text, we argue with it, and we delve into it for deeper meanings.

Here are some ideas to consider when critiquing a text:

- How did you respond to the piece? Did you like it? Did it appeal to you? Could you identify with it?
- Do you agree with the main ideas in the text?
- Did you find any errors in reasoning? Any gaps in the discussion?
- Did the organization make sense?
- Was evidence used correctly, without manipulation? Has the writer used appropriate sources for support?
- Is the author objective? Biased? Reasonable? (Note that the author might just as easily be subjective, unbiased, and unreasonable! Every type of writing and tone can be used for a specific purpose. By identifying these techniques and considering why the author is using them, you begin to understand more about the text.)
- Has the author left anything out? If yes, was this accidental? Intentional?
- Are the text’s tone and language appropriate?
- Are all of the author’s statements clear? Is anything confusing?
- What worked well in the text? What was lacking or failed completely?
- What is the **cultural context*** of the text?

*Cultural context is a fancy way of asking who is affected by the ideas and who stands to lose or gain if the ideas take place. When you think about this, think of all kinds of social and cultural variables, including age, gender, occupation, education, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, and so forth.

These are only a few ideas relating to critique, but they’ll get you started. When you critique,

1. crih-TEEK

try working with these statements, offering explanations to support your ideas. Bring in content from the text (textual evidence) to support your ideas.

Synthesizing

The front cover of J.D. Salinger's novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

To **synthesize** is to combine ideas and create a completely new idea. That new idea becomes the conclusion you have drawn from your reading. This is the true beauty of reading: it causes us to weigh ideas, to compare, judge, think, and

explore—and then to arrive at a moment that we hadn't known before. We begin with a simple **summary**, work through **analysis**, evaluate using **critique**, and then move on to **synthesis**.

For example, many people read J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* at some point during their lives, often during high school. The book focuses on an angsty, rebellious teen who relates aspects of his teenage experiences, and he does this from his room in a mental institution. In the end, the teen understands more about himself and the world, and he begins to consider his possible future.

Many teens read this story and see themselves in it; grappling with the ideas in the text helps them better understand themselves and often encourages them to reach for their own futures. This is an example of how they draw their own conclusions from the text and synthesize their own directions and ideas.

We will be using synthesis when we start looking at research. With research projects, you want to take many different sources or texts and bring them together through synthesis to support or refute your research question/ideas. We will look more at this in Chapter 6.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Critiquing a Text

Let's refer back to one of the texts we looked at previously and critique it.

- [The Power of Pets: Health Benefits of Human-Animal Interactions](#) from the NIH News in

Health website.

In your own words, try to answer the questions below. To start with a critique, you don't need to go in depth or use full sentences, but you want to jot down your ideas.

- How did you respond to the piece? Did you like it? Did it appeal to you? Could you identify with it?
- Do you agree with the main ideas in the text?
- Did you find any errors in reasoning? What might have been missed or not addressed?
- Did the organization make sense?
- Was evidence used correctly, without manipulation? Has the writer used appropriate sources for support?
- Is the author objective? Biased? Reasonable?
- Are the text's tone and language appropriate?
- Are all of the author's statements clear? Is anything confusing?
- What worked well in the text? What was lacking or failed completely?
- What is the cultural context of the text?

The answers to these questions will help you start to build a critique of the text, which will in turn allow you to evaluate it, come to a conclusion, or build a reflection of the text. We will continue on these skills in the following chapters.

Check in with your instructor to discuss your work up to this point and next steps.

Attributions

"1.2: Reading critically" remixes and revises [Reading Critically](#), [Critiquing a Text](#), [Drawing Conclusions](#), [Synthesizing](#), and [Reflecting](#) in [The Word on College Reading and Writing](#), by Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

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["JD Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye"](#) by Andy Field, on Flickr, licensed [CC BY 2.0](#).

1.3 RHETORIC

What Is Rhetoric?

The definition of **rhetoric**¹ commonly used is “the art of persuasion.” Rhetoric is everywhere and can involve any kind of text, including speech, written word, images, movies, documentaries, the news, etc. So, it is important to understand how to navigate the murky waters of persuasion and rhetoric.

Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab website, known as [Purdue OWL](#), clearly describes some of the intricacies of rhetoric on its “Rhetorical Situations” page

Instead of just persuasion, rhetoric is the set of methods people use to identify with each other, to encourage each other to understand things from one another’s perspectives (see Burke, 1969, p. 25). From interpersonal relationships to international peace treaties, the capacity to understand or modify another’s perspective is one of the most vital abilities that humans have. Hence, understanding rhetoric in terms of “identification” helps us better communicate and evaluate all such situations. (Purdue OWL, n.d.)

Why Do I Need to Think Rhetorically?

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

To locate a text’s historical context, you must determine where in history the text is situated—was it written in the past five years? Ten? One hundred? You should think about how that might affect the information being delivered. Once you determine the background of the text, you should determine the rhetorical situation (i.e. who, what, when, where, why).

Meaning can change based on when, where, and why a text was produced, and meaning can change depending on who reads the text. It may have been written for a specific audience, in a specific place, and during a specific time. An important part of the rhetorical situation is the audience, and since many of the articles were not written with you, a college student, in mind, the meaning you interpret or recognize might be different from the author’s original tar-

1. REH-torr-ick

get audience. For example, if you read an article about higher education written in 2025, then you, the reader, are connected with and understand the context of the topic. However, if you were asked to read a text about higher education written in 1876, you would probably have a hard time understanding and connecting to it because you are not the target audience, and the text's context (or rhetorical situation) has changed.

Furthermore, the occasion for writing might be very different, too. Articles or scholarly works that are at least five years old may include out-of-date references and may not represent relevant or accurate information (e.g. think of the change in perspectives on same-sex marriage, from the 1990s, to when it was legally recognized nationwide in 2005, to the current day). Older works require that you investigate significant historical moments or changes that have occurred since the writing of text.

Targeted audience, occasion, and the date, site, and medium of publication will all affect the way you, the reader, read a text. Therefore, it is your duty as a thoughtful reader to consider and/or research these aspects in order to fully understand and conceptualize the text's rhetorical situation. Furthermore, even though you might not be a member of the target audience or perhaps not even alive during the production of a text, you can still recognize rhetorical moves within it.

Analyzing Content and Rhetoric

When we talk about rhetoric, we're talking about the ways we write and speak effectively and persuasively. We use rhetoric to explain, to describe, and to argue or persuade.

In developing your reading and analysis skills, always think about what you're reading, questioning the text—and your responses—as you read. Use the following questions to help analyze as you assess the text's content and the ways it makes its points.

ProTip

Icon

Many of these questions are similar to the ones we've listed above in reading critically.

Think of it as taking the text apart—dissecting it to see how it works:

- **What is the author's main point?** Describe this in your own words. Do they make the

point successfully? Is the point held consistently throughout the text, or does it wander at any point?

- **What information does the author provide to support the central idea?** Making a list of each point will help you analyze. Hint: each paragraph should address one key point, and all paragraphs should relate to the text's central idea.
- **What kind of evidence does the author use?** Is it based more on fact or opinion, and do you feel those choices are effective? Where does this evidence come from? Are the sources authoritative and credible? (Learn more about the CRAAP method for evaluating sources in [Chapter 2.5: Evaluating Sources](#).)
- **What is the author's main purpose?** The author's purpose refers to what they hope to accomplish. For example, a cookbook is assembled in order to share recipes and cooking methods, but perhaps, the author also wanted to include a group of treasured family recipes in hopes of sharing them with a wider cooking audience.
- **Describe the tone in the piece.** Is it friendly? Authoritative? Does it lecture? Is it biting or sarcastic? Does the author use simple language, or is it full of jargon? Does the language feel positive or negative? Point to aspects of the text that create the tone; spend some time examining these and considering how and why they work.
- **Is the author objective, or does he/she try to convince you to have a certain opinion?** Why does the author try to persuade you to adopt this viewpoint? If the author is biased, does this interfere with the way you read and understand the text?
- **Do you feel like the author knows who you are?** Does the text seem to be aimed at readers like you or at a different audience? What assumptions does the author make about their audience? Would most people find these reasonable, acceptable, or accurate?
- **Does the text's flow make sense?** Is the line of reasoning logical? Are there any gaps? Are there any spots where you feel the reasoning is flawed in some way?
- **Does the author try to appeal to your emotions?** Does the author use any controversial words in the headline or the article? Do these affect your reading or your interest?
- **Do you believe the author?** Do you accept their thoughts and ideas? Why or why not?

Critical Thinking Exercise

Analyzing Rhetoric in Media

One of the best ways to examine rhetoric is to read a variety of texts. Below, we have two articles on the same idea. One is from CBC and the other is from CTV News. These news sources both have different political alignments, which will impact their purpose and who their audience is.

Please read through BOTH articles. Then answer the questions below for each article.

- [“‘We’re Canadians’: Some Albertans divided about separation in cross-province checkup”](#) by The Canadian Press, on CTV News Calgary (May 11, 2025).
- [“What, exactly, are Alberta separatists mad about?”](#) by Kevin Maimann, on CBC News (May 14, 2025).

1. What is the author’s main point?
2. What are two different ways the author provides support for their central idea?
3. What is the tone in the article?
4. Does the author seem objective?
5. Does the text seem to be aimed at readers like you or at a different audience?
6. Does the author try to appeal to your emotions?

Rhetorical Appeals: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos Defined

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

We can look first at classical rhetorical appeals, which are the three ways to classify authors’ intellectual, moral, and emotional approaches to get the audience to react in the way that

the author hopes. These classical rhetorical appeals are known as **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**. These are classical Greek terms, dating back to **Aristotle**, who is traditionally seen as the father of rhetoric. To be rhetorically effective (and thus persuasive), an author must engage the audience in a variety of compelling ways, which involves carefully choosing how to craft their argument so that the outcome, audience agreement with the argument or point, is achieved. Aristotle defined these modes of engagement and gave them the terms that we still use today: **logos**, **pathos**, and **ethos**.

Logos: Appeal to Logic

When an author relies on logos, it means that he or she is using logic, careful structure, and objective evidence to appeal to the audience. An author can appeal to an audience's intellect by using information that can be fact-checked (using multiple sources) and thorough explanations to support key points. Additionally, providing a solid and non-biased explanation of one's argument is a great way for an author to invoke logos.

For example, if your teacher was trying to convince my students to complete their homework, they might explain that they understand students are busy and have other classes (non-biased), but the homework will help students get a better grade on their test (explanation). Your teacher could add to this explanation by providing statistics showing the number of students who failed and didn't complete their homework versus the number of students who passed and did complete their homework (factual evidence).

Logical appeals rest on rational modes of thinking, such as

- Comparison – a comparison between one thing (with regard to your topic) and another, similar thing to help support your claim. It is important that the comparison is fair and valid – the things being compared must share significant traits of similarity.
- Cause/effect thinking – you argue that X has caused Y, or that X is likely to cause Y, to help support your claim. Be careful with the latter – it can be difficult to predict that something “will” happen in the future.
- Deductive reasoning – starting with a broad, general claim/example and using it to support a more specific point or claim
- Inductive reasoning – using several specific examples or cases to make a broad generalization
- Exemplification – use of many examples or a variety of evidence to support a single point
- Elaboration – moving beyond just including a fact, but explaining the significance or relevance of that fact
- Coherent thought – maintaining a well-organized line of reasoning; not repeating ideas or

jumping around

ProTip

Icon Academic writing is often written with the logos rhetorical approach in mind. Academic writing is meant to be written objectively based on facts. The goal is to present a non-biased explanation of your argument.

Read the article [“The Impact of Pets on Everyday Life for Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic”](#) in the *Frontiers in Public Health* journal to see an example of the logos appeal. Note that even though this is dealing with emotion, it is not written to sway the reader using emotions. Instead, it presents the findings logically.

Pathos: Appeal to Emotions

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

Pathos-based rhetorical strategies are any strategies that get the audience to “open up” to the topic, the argument, or to the author. Emotions can make us vulnerable, and an author can use this vulnerability to get the audience to believe that his or her argument is a compelling one. One of the biggest examples of pathos you can see today is on the internet with articles that use titles like “5 Simple Household Items that are Killing You”, or social media posts that are meant to make you feel angry, commonly called “rage-bait.”

Pathos appeals might include

- Expressive descriptions of people, places, or events that help the reader to feel or experience those events
- Vivid imagery of people, places or events that help the reader to feel like he or she is seeing those events

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

When reading a text, try to locate when the author is trying to convince the reader using emotions because, if used to excess, pathos appeals can indicate a lack of substance or emotional manipulation of the audience.

Watch the video “Help save more women” to see an example of the pathos appeal.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#oembed-1>

Source: Heart & Stroke. (2023, January 19). [Help save more women](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Ethos: Appeal to Values/Trust

Ethical appeals have two facets: audience values and authorial credibility/character.

When an author makes an ethical appeal, they are attempting to **tap into the values or ideologies that the audience holds**, for example, patriotism, tradition, justice, equality, dignity for all humankind, self-preservation, or other specific social, religious or philosophical values (Christian values, socialism, capitalism, feminism, etc.). These values can sometimes feel very close to emotions, but they are felt on a social level rather than only on a personal level. When an author evokes the values that the audience cares about to justify or support his or her argument, we classify that as ethos. The audience will feel that the author is making an argument that is “right” (in the sense of moral “right”-ness, i.e., “My argument rests upon the fact the

values that matter to you. Therefore, you should accept my argument”). This first part of the definition of ethos, then, is focused on the audience’s values.

Ethical appeal also aims to use the author’s credibility/character to support their argument.

Credibility of the speaker/author is determined by his or her knowledge and expertise in the subject at hand. To establish his or her credibility, an author may draw attention to who he or she is or what kinds of experience he or she has with the topic being discussed as an ethical appeal. Some authors do not have to establish their credibility because the audience already knows who they are and that they are credible.

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

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

In building ethical appeals, we see authors

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

Watch the video “[Hanks for Our Troops](#)” about Tom Hanks’ coffee company to see an example of an ethos appeal.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#oembed-2>

Source: Hanks For Our Troops. (2025, August 18). [Hanks for Our Troops | A Message from Our Founder, Tom Hanks](#) [Video]. YouTube.

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

So far, we've established a working definition of Rhetoric and explored the three basic categories of rhetorical appeals: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos.

Close up of toy wooden box with different shaped holes and different shaped coloured wooden blocks

However, as readers and writers, we should be aware that rhetoric is often more complicated than these broad categories. Writers often employ techniques that blur the lines within this classification system. Very often, an author's most effective rhetorical moves are of this unclassifiable nature. And as readers, we should strive to move beyond thinking in terms of separating everything into the categories of Logos, Pathos, and Ethos, and instead ask ourselves what the writer is trying to DO in every sentence, paragraph and their text as a whole. We want to read critically, and rhetoric is just one way of examining a text.

Check Your Understanding: Rhetorical Appeals

Watch the following videos and identify the rhetorical appeal used.

Watch: [TD: The Power of Community](#)

Source: TD. (2024, December 18) [TD: The power of community](#) [Video]. YouTube.

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#h5p-3>

Watch: [SickKids VS: Undeniable](#)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#oembed-3>

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#oembed-3>

Source: SickKids Foundation. (2016, October 14). [SickKids VS: Undeniable](#) [Video]. YouTube.

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#h5p-4>

Watch: [Flex TAPE® Commercial \(2017\) — Phil Swift](#)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#oembed-4>

Source: Flex Seal. (2017, January 31). [Flex TAPE® commercial \(2017\) — Phil Swift](#) [Video]. YouTube.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=38#h5p-5>

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Attributions

“1.3: Rhetoric” remixes and revises [6.1 What is Rhetoric?](#) by Melanie Gagich, [6.4 Rhetorical Appeals: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos Defined](#) by Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel, and [6.6 Moving Beyond Logos, Pathos, and Ethos: Speech Act Theory](#) by Justin Lazor in [A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing \(The Interactive 2nd Edition\)](#) by Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted; and [Analyzing Content and Rhetoric](#) in [The Word on College Reading and Writing](#) by Carol Burnell; Jaime Wood; Monique Babin; Susan Pesznecker; and Nicole Rosevear, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

“[Shape sorter](#)“, by Ella’s Dad, on Flickr, licensed [CC BY 2.0](#)

1.4 LOGICAL FALLACIES/BIAS

In academia, arguments are often structured to follow the logos appeal and, thus, are meant to be logically sound. We seek to create work that is rooted in rational discourse. We seek to produce our own rational discourse. We value carefully researched, methodically crafted work. There are some common pitfalls that writers can fall into when using the logos appeal; these are called logical fallacies, which are flaws in reasoning.

Fallacy means false. Think of the concept of a logical fallacy as something that makes an argument problematic, open to attack, or weak. In academic discourse, logical fallacies are seen as failures, as things you will want to avoid.

Thinking about fallacies can be confusing because you see them all the time: in advertising, in conversation, in political discourse. Fallacies are everywhere. But as a student, part of your job is to spend time identifying these fallacies in both your own writing to avoid them and in others' work to understand and dissect their argument.

Logical Fallacies – A Short List

Generalization

A conclusion or judgment made from insufficient evidence. When one piece of evidence or information is used to make a broad conclusion or statement.

Cherry Picking

Picking and choosing only some of the available evidence in order to present only points most favourable to your point of view. If someone knowingly chooses certain (favourable) pieces of information and conveniently ignores less favourable information, then the argument is not supported by all of the available research.

Straw Man

An oversimplification of an opposing perspective so that it becomes easy to attack.

This is unfair and illogical because when one oversimplifies or inaccurately represents an argument and refutes that oversimplified version, one is not actually addressing the argument.

Red Herring

Changing topics to avoid the point being discussed. This is an argument tactic in which one attempts to change the conversation, often by bringing up information that is not relevant to the claim or point being debated, in order to try to control the conversation. This can be a way to avoid having to address or answer the question at hand, and it harms the quality of an argument.

Ad Hominem

It is a personal attack rather than a way of engaging with someone's ideas. For example: "You are an idiot! That's why you're wrong!" This type of logical fallacy occurs when an arguer attacks or insults the person making opposing arguments instead of attacking the ideas, the logic, or the evidence within the opposing argument itself. It is a personal attack rather than a way of engaging with someone's ideas.

Ad Populum

A misused reference to popularly accepted values. For instance: "This is about freedom and righteousness, and if you believe in those things, then you should believe my argument." This is an example of **misused ethos** – when the author is referencing the values that the audience cares about, so that they think only about the values and not about the content of the argument (or, likely, the fact that there is little intellectual substance in what is being said).

Either/Or

This argument attempts to create a situation of absolutes with no options in between. For example: "Either we intervene, or we are basically no better than the Nazis." This thinking is fallacious because it assumes that there are only two options, with nothing in between.

Slippery Slope

This is a fallacy that assumes that one thing is going to have a series of consequences or effects, often leading to a worst-case scenario. For example: “If we let this happen, then that will happen, and then the worst possible thing will happen.” It is false reasoning because 1) it’s impossible to predict the future, 2) it is illogical to suggest that one action will always necessarily lead to the worst possible outcome, and 3) it assumes a very specific chain of future events. This “if we let this happen, there will be some horrible end” is a misuse of cause/effect reasoning, often with some pathos (fear) sprinkled in.

When you are reading others’ arguments, see if any of their reasoning is actually one of these fallacies of logic.

Bias

Bias is another part of writing to look out for. As humans, we all come with our biases based on our experiences, our beliefs, and our cultural and personal values. As such, our biases show up in our own writing and in the writing of others. They will also impact how we interact with a text.

When we write, our bias may influence how we write. For example, imagine you were writing an essay on the benefits of a particular diet, you may selectively choose information that supports the “benefits” side only while ignoring the other side or research. This is often referred to as **confirmation bias**.

We can also notice this in what we read, as biased writing may selectively choose information to present or skew the data to show it in a certain way.

Bias also appears in our news, as all news sources will build articles that appeal to a certain audience. Those who lean left will gravitate to left-leaning news sources, and those who lean right will gravitate to right-leaning news sources. This biased leaning may mean you don’t get the full picture of a story or get a biased picture of a story. This is why it is important to critique what you read, and you also want to read widely to look at the whole picture to generate a well-rounded opinion.

Additional Resources

Biased writing can lead to a skewed representation of the topic, misleading readers and undermining the credibility of the writing.

Read these articles to get a sense of some actual examples of the insidious effects of bias and how it can sway the reader's opinion.

- The Associated Press. (2016, September 13). [Sugar industry paid scientists for favourable research, documents reveal](#). CBC News.
- Lajous, M. (2019). [The Elephant in the spoon: Recognizing food industry influence in nutrition research](#). *American Journal of Public Health*, 109(7): 952–3.
- AllSides. (n.d.). [Media bias chart](#).
- Mastrine, J. (n.d.). [Examples of media bias and how to spot them](#). AllSides.

Check Your Understanding: Logical Fallacy and Bias

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=40#h5p-6>

Critical Thinking Exercise

Examining Propaganda

Below you will see three different examples of political cartoons. Take a look and try to identify the bias and if the cartoon used any logical fallacies to demonstrate their argument.

Cartoon 1

[Image 1: [Dr Seuss and the wolf chewed up the children – Category:1940s political cartoons of the United States – Wikimedia Commons](#)]

Cartoon 2

[Image 2: [Caricature climate change Gerhard Mester english – Category:2023 political cartoons – Wikimedia Commons](#)]

Cartoon 3

[Image 3: [“Nobody loves me - guess I’ll be a suffragette” Artist, signed, Ryan, C., published 1911, series... \(NBY_8372\).jpg \(506×815\)](#)]

Write a short response (5-8 sentences) detailing the following on **one** of the three cartoons:

- What is the author’s purpose/point of view in the cartoon?
- What are some of the cultural contexts of the cartoon (time period, audience, culture, where)?
- Did they use any techniques (bias or logical fallacies) and if so, what were they?
- How it made you feel?

Share your response with your instructor.

Examining Biased Media

Find an article from two different news sources on the same topic. How do they convey the news? Do they use any biased language or logical fallacies to discuss their point of view? Consider all questions we've looked at.

Once you have found two articles, write a short response (6-10 sentences) answering the questions above.

Share your response and the article links with your instructor.

Attributions

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1.5 REFLECTION AND DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Reflect

Whenever you finish a bit of college reading, it's worth your time to stop and reflect on it. This not only helps you think about the content and what it means to you, but it also helps cement it within your memory, allowing you to recall the key ideas later and to apply them in other reading and writing situations.

Black and white image of small body of water, reflecting the sun and a tree without leaves

Here are two ideas for post-reading reflection:

- Write in a personal reading journal.
- Angelo and Cross (1993) suggest writing a “minute paper.” To do this, take one minute to jot down a few sentences about something you learned or discovered while reading. Or ask yourself a question about the reading and write an answer.

Explore the Ways the Text Affects You

When you work with a text, you enter into a conversation with it, responding with your thoughts, ideas, and feelings. The way each of us responds to any text has a lot to do with who we are: our age, education, cultural background, religion, ethnicity, and so forth.

As you explore a text, be aware of how you're responding to it.

- Are you reading or exploring easily and fluidly, or are you finding it difficult to navigate the text? Why do you believe this is so?
- Do you find yourself responding with some sort of strong emotion? If so, why do you think that may be happening?
- Do formatting or structural issues (examples: unusual use of punctuation, use of dialect or jargon) affect your navigation of the text?
- Can you identify with the text's central idea or the information it's sharing?
- Have you had any experiences like those being described? Can you identify with the

story?

- Are you able to identify the surface meaning?
- Have you explored the text's deeper, hidden messages?
- Do you need to look up any words to do any quick research? If so, does this help you better understand the text?
- What questions do you have about the work?

What Is Self-Analysis?

How is reflective writing in the academic setting different from journaling or writing in a diary?

If you write in a diary or a journal, recording your thoughts and feelings about what has happened in your life, you are certainly engaging in the act of reflection. Many of us have some experience with this type of writing. In our diaries, journals, or other informal spaces for speaking – or writing- our mind, write to ourselves, for ourselves, in a space that will largely remain private.

Your **reflection** for college courses will contain some of those same features:

- The subject of the reflective work is you and your experiences
- You can generally use the first person in a reflective essay

Writing academic reflections is a bit different from journaling or keeping a diary (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Comparing Personal Journal and Academic Reflections

Element	Personal diary/journal	Reflection writing for a course
Audience	Only you will read it! (At least, that is often the intention.)	Professor, peers, or others will read your work. A reflective piece is written with the intention of submitting it to someone else.
Purpose	To record your emotions, thoughts, analysis; to get a sense of release or freedom to express yourself.	To convey your thoughts, emotions, and analysis about yourself to your audience, while also answering a specific assignment question or set of questions.
Structure	Free form. No one will be reading or grading your diary or journal, so you get to choose organization and structure; you get to choose whether or not the entries are edited.	The reflection should adhere to the style and content that your audience would recognize and expect. These would include traditional paragraph structure, strong proofreading, and whatever else the assignment requires. If you are asked to write an essay, it includes a thesis that conveys your essay's main points and well-developed body paragraphs.
Development	Since you are only writing for yourself, you can choose how much or how little to elaborate on your ideas.	All of the points you make in the reflection should be developed and supported using examples or evidence that comes from your experiences, actions, or work.

What can be gained from activities that ask you to reflect on your learning and your performance as a writer?

One of the major goals in any First-Year Writing class is to encourage students' growth as writers. No one is expected to be a perfect writer at the end of the semester. Your instructor's hope, however, is that after completing coursework, you are more confident, capable, and aware of yourself as a writer than you were at the beginning of the semester. Reflecting on the process that you go through as you write – even if your writing is not perfect – can help you to identify the behaviours, strategies, and resources that have helped you to be successful, or that could support your future success. In short, reflecting on how you write (or how you have written during a particular semester) can be quite powerful in helping you to identify areas where you have grown and areas where you still have room for more growth.

How can I write a reflective piece?

As with any assignment, a reflection piece should come with its own assignment sheet. On that assignment sheet, you should be able to identify the purpose of the reflection and the needed

scope of the reflection. Some key elements of the reflective piece that the assignment sheet should answer are:

- What, exactly, is the scope of the reflection? Are you reflecting on one lesson, one assignment, or the whole semester?
- Do you have detailed guidelines, resources, or reference documents that must be met for your reflections?
- Is there a particular structure for the reflection?
- Should the reflection include any outside resources?

If you are struggling to find the answers to these questions, ask your professor!

Additional Resources

Another wonderful resource for writing a reflective essay comes from the University of Waterloo, in the article [“Critical Reflection”](#). This article offers great information about the process of analyzing and then articulating your viewpoint.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Reflecting on What You’ve Read

First, watch the video [“Why having fun is the secret to a healthier life”](#) by Catherine Price.

Next, write a minute paper (see description above) by jotting down a few sentences in response to one of these questions:

- Do you agree an increase in fun as the presenter defines it would be beneficial to people’s health and happiness? Why or why not?

- How can you increase the fun into your own life, taking into account the three factors the presenter describes (playfulness, connection, and flow)?
- Do you think the ideas the presenter mentions on how to increase fun are practical and attainable for the average person? Why or why not? What barriers might someone face trying to implement these?

References

Angelo, T.A. & Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers*, (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Attributions

“1.5: Reflection and Drawing Conclusions” remixes and revises [Reflect](#) and [Explore the Ways the Text Affects You](#) in [The Word on College Reading and Writing](#), by Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted; and [6.7 What is self analysis?](#) by Emilie Zickel in [A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing \(The Interactive 2nd Edition\)](#) by Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

[“Water reflection,”](#) by Yuma Hori, on Wikimedia, licensed [CC BY 2.0](#).

1.6 CONCLUSION

Through this chapter, you have learned about a number of different skills. You learned about some basic reading strategies to employ and how to think or ask yourself questions to read critically, which includes examining rhetorical approaches and logical fallacies. We then looked at how these skills apply to evaluating media, and finally, we brought it all together in a discussion, building a conclusion, synthesizing what you read and reflecting on it. These skills will come in handy in any college program, as all programs will have readings to complete and writing to do based on what you read. Going forward, try to practice using what you learned here. The only way to get better at something is to practice!

Key Takeaways

1.1: **Use** reading strategies to build vocabulary and understanding.

- Pre-reading strategies prepare you to read a text by helping you preview the topic. Consider the basic details and examine what that may already tell you about the text. See if you can spot the main purpose of the text just through this and then confirm when you read it.
- When reading, consider the structure of the text to help you with the form and function
- Identifying tone of voice and point of view will help you understand the purpose and audience. This will also help you analyze how well the author achieved their purpose.
- When reading new words, use context clues to try to understand the meaning; then look up the word if you cannot understand the meaning and take notes.

1.2: **Describe** how to analyze and synthesize a text.

- A critical reader will analyze the text and ask questions about the structure to consider the main points of the text, the purpose of the text, and the audience using reading strategies.
- They will also critique the text and combine (synthesize) ideas from their own experience and other learning they've done.

1.3: **Explain** the concept of rhetoric and the three rhetorical appeals.

- Rhetoric is the art of persuasion: how we argue and what techniques we use to argue. To read critically, always consider how meaning changes based on when, where and why the text was produced
- Analyzing Context and Rhetoric includes looking at and evaluating the strength of the author's main point, the purpose, and the tone.
- Rhetorical appeals are a way to persuade the audience to the writer's point of view. The three types are logos, pathos and ethos. Often writers use a mix of all styles, so make sure to go back to the principles of critique and look at the whole picture when analyzing rhetoric.
- Misusing logos, pathos, and ethos will weaken the argument.

1.4: **Identify** different logical fallacies and biases and how they weaken a text.

- Logical fallacies are something that make an argument problematic, open to attack, or weak. In academic discourse, logical fallacies are seen as failures – as things you will want to avoid.
- You should always analyze and look for logical fallacies in your own writing and in the texts you read, as they indicate a weak argument.
- Logical fallacies can include generalization, cherry picking, straw man, red herring, ad hominem, ad populum, either/or, and slippery slope.
- Bias can also impact how you respond to a story AND how a story is presented.

1.5: **Discuss** reflection and how it improves understanding.

- Reflections involve exploring the way the text affects you.
- Completed after critical reading, making conclusions, synthesizing or critiquing.
- Self-analysis is about you and your experiences with the work, and so, it is generally written in the first person.

CHAPTER 2 – APA, AI, AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard of the term **academic integrity**? Consider what you think this term means.

Having academic integrity means acting fairly and honestly when engaging in academic activities. This includes, but is not limited to, tests, assignments, work-integrated learning, and research. In other words, anything for which you receive a grade or a credit (Academic Integrity, n.d.).

The main thing to know as you start on this chapter is that when you create work for college, the expectation is that this work is your own.

In any college program, though, you will be expected to write a variety of different assignments, many of which will involve incorporating other sources into your work through paraphrasing, quotations or summaries. **When you incorporate other people's ideas into your own, you are expected to cite them.** Citing involves providing key information on a source, so others can reference that source. At Conestoga, we use the APA 7th edition style guide, with slight modifications to become [APA @ Conestoga](#), but other colleges or programs may use other forms: IEEE, MLA, Chicago, etc.

There are several reasons why we cite in academics, which we will discuss below. For now, just be aware that going forward in this course and in courses to come, **the expectation is that you will need to cite any sources you use in your academic work.** This is a key component of academic integrity.

A newer component of academic integrity is the ethical use of Generative AI (gen AI). Generative AI can be a great tool to support you in school, but just like citing, there are rules around its use. We will be covering this in [Chapter 2.2 AI Use in Academics](#). Please make sure you take the time to read through this section, as improper generative AI use can lead to **academic integrity violations (AIV)**.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Describe** the concepts of academic integrity and plagiarism.
2. **Discuss** the ethical use of generative AI in a college setting.
3. **Explain** why citation is important in academic work.
4. **Outline** how to use APA@Conestoga style and citation guide in academic work.
5. **Evaluate** sources for reliability.

2.1 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a shared responsibility. As a student, you are a part of an academic community that is governed by the fundamental principles of academic integrity. It is important for all members of the community, professors and students alike, to uphold these principles for the advancement of academic scholarship and the continued building of knowledge.

Why You Should Care

A degree, diploma or certificate that is achieved without compromising your own integrity and simultaneously upholding your school's academic integrity standards is a true representation of all the hard work and dedication you put into your studies. You can therefore rightfully be proud of your achievement as you have maintained your reputation, as well as that of your school.

You will also be well prepared for success in your career as you have put the necessary time and effort into your work, increased your knowledge, and developed many valuable skills, such as research, critical thinking, writing, and more.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video "What is academic integrity?" to begin understanding the concept.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=52#oembed-1>

Source: RMIT University Library Videos. (2021, October 27). [What is academic integrity?](#) [Video]. YouTube.

PLEASE NOTE that academic integrity information in this section is specific to Conestoga College. However, expectations and regulations will be similar from school to school. Please refer to your own school's academic integrity policy to learn of anything that is different about your own school's policies.

Before you continue, be sure to read the [Conestoga College Academic Integrity Policy](#) to learn about the college's regulations and the consequences for breaches of academic integrity.

When it comes to academic integrity, all students are required to do the following:

- Read and understand the college's [academic integrity policy](#).
- Submit coursework and meet the learning outcomes of each course without breaches of academic integrity.
- Ask for help if they are unsure about any aspect of the policy or their specific course learning outcomes and course expectations.

You may also want to become familiar with [Conestoga's other academic policies](#), which are available on the [About Conestoga section of the college website](#), under "Corporate Information," on the "Policies and procedures" page. It is your responsibility to know the policies and regulations that apply to you.

Breaches of Academic Integrity

There are many forms of **academic misconduct**. As a college student, you are responsible for understanding ALL forms. There is a lot of terminology surrounding academic integrity. Different academic institutions may use slightly different words or definitions. You may hear some of these terms used in this context.

- Academic honesty or integrity
- Academic dishonesty or misconduct
- Plagiarism, cheating, impersonation, fabrication, falsification... and many more

Learn more about the [academic misconduct terms and definitions](#) used at Conestoga College on the Academic Integrity website.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Academic Offences | University of Lincoln](#)” for an overview of the types of academic misconduct.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=52#oembed-2>

Source: University of Lincoln Student Life. (2022, November 18). [Academic Offences | University of Lincoln](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Additional Resources

Conestoga College has many fantastic resources available through the [Student Success Portal](#) to help you gain the skills you need to be successful in your academic work. If you attend a different school, search your school’s website to see what resources are available specifically to you. Some of the links below work for students of any school.

You can complete the [Ask for Help Form](#) on the Student Success Portal, or read more about the following services:

- [Student Success](#)
- [Writing Resources](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Research & Citing](#)

- [Peer Tutoring](#)
- [Accessible Learning](#)
- [Teach Me Tech](#)

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Attributions

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2.1.1 PLAGIARIZING

Three-panel cartoon with two little dogs with speech bubbles; one says “Copying without permission is stealing!” The other repeats the statement. The first yells “THEIF!”

The standard definition of **plagiarism** is using someone else’s words, work, or ideas and passing them off as your own. Some plagiarism is intentional. Using an essay-writing service, for example, is obviously and intentionally plagiarism. So is using AI to write your paper when your instructor has told you not to. These acts are wrong, and we have discussed them above.

However, most plagiarism—at least in first-year college classes—is unintentional. It usually happens when a student attempts to paraphrase, quote, or cite a source, but they fail to do so correctly. Let’s take each of these in turn.

Paraphrasing and Plagiarizing

Paraphrasing is the biggest culprit. When a student tries to paraphrase but ends up **patch-writing** instead, the language sticks too close to the original. The best way to avoid this, at least until you become more expert with paraphrasing, is the process described in [Chapter 4.3 Paraphrasing Sources](#).

- Understand the passage
- Close the source
- Give yourself a short break
- Write the paraphrase
- Check it against the original

If your paraphrase is still too close to the original in either word choice or sentence structure (or both), try paraphrasing your paraphrase.

Quoting and Plagiarizing

Quoting makes it easier to avoid plagiarism, but you can still make mistakes.

The most common mistake is a student’s failure to use quotation marks when the words come directly from the source. When you use exact language from a source, even if it is a

phrase of just a few words, you must use quotation marks. You don't need to do this with commonly used language and phrasing, but if the wording is specific to the source, you need to include the quotation marks. If you don't have quotation marks around that exact language, you are claiming the language as your own, which could be considered plagiarism.

Citing and Plagiarizing

Sometimes students forget to include the citations themselves, which can be considered plagiarism. **Every time you quote and every time you paraphrase**, you need to give credit to your source. The specifics of what the citation will look like vary, but if you don't have a citation, you could be accused of plagiarism. We will look at citing skills in more depth in [Chapter 2.4](#).

This is especially true of in-text citations. Most professors will see a source missing from your list and assume a mistake, but missing in-text citations, particularly when citing paraphrases, aren't as obvious mistakes.

This problem seems to happen most to students who think that they will add the citations later. While this strategy can work to help you keep drafting, if you don't leave yourself some kind of reminder that you need to add the citations, you can have a serious problem later on. If you draft this way, it is recommended that you add parentheses as a reminder. It can be even more helpful if you put some kind of reminder about which source you are using.

Screenshot of four lines of text from Wikipedia about mushrooms; Paragraph ends with the blue text "citation needed" in square brackets.

Another common problem is students thinking that it's enough to include a citation at the end of a paragraph, particularly when there are several sentences from the same source that require citation. This also happens a lot at the end of slide decks, where students skip the in-text citations.

This is not sufficient! While there are more elegant and sophisticated ways to cite, you are better off adding a parenthetical citation to the end of every sentence than to leave one off. Look at it this way: If you cite too much, at worst, your professor will tell you that you don't need so many citations. If you cite too little, you can be accused of plagiarism.

If you have a long-ish section of material coming from the same source, such as when you are writing a summary, your best bet is to open that section with a reference to the author (in the sentence itself if your style guide and/or professor allows this), and then reminding your reader that the ideas are coming from that author another one or two times during the section by using pronouns and **attributive tags** to signal that these ideas are not yours. Remember that you must include page numbers whenever you quote or paraphrase (again, unless directed otherwise by your style guide and/or professor).

Plagiarizing Sources Other Than Writing

Written words are not the only things that can be plagiarized. If you include images, videos, sound clips, or other media that you did not create yourself, you need to give credit to the creator of those texts. Usually, this is done in a caption, particularly if the final product is a paper. Different style guides will have instructions for citing in captions, but if you aren't sure how best to do this, ask your professor.

**Pro tip
icon**

See the [APA @ Conestoga website](#) for [information on including visuals in your work](#).

How to Avoid Plagiarism

- **As much as possible, do your own work.** In other words, always start by writing what you know about a subject, turning to sources only when you need to support your own ideas with authoritative backing or when there's a knowledge gap you cannot fill on your own. Or, of course, to satisfy requirements imposed by your teacher, i.e., who asks you to use a certain number of sources in completing an assignment. But even then, much of the work should be your own.
- **Take notes carefully.** If you add source material to your work, mark it or identify it in such a way that you will know it's from a source. Cite the work immediately and add it to your works cited list.
- **Keep track of your work process.** Take and keep notes from class, group meetings, and meetings with your instructor, as well as any tutors or advisors. Save your notes from each stage of the process. Most importantly, save versions of your work, including notes, outlines, and multiple drafts.
- **And, if you use someone else's intellectual property, you must give them credit.** If you bring their work into your assignment, you must mention them as the work's owners.

Note: *The content of this box is licensed CC BY-NC; [see attribution](#).*

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “Academic Integrity Self-Defence” from the Conestoga College Library and Learning Services for tips on maintaining your academic integrity.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=56#oembed-1>

Source: Conestoga College Library. (2024, October 21). *Academic integrity self-defence* [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Academic Integrity

Before completing this quiz, **watch the video** “[Academic Integrity Self-Defence](#)” from the Conestoga College Library.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=56#h5p-7>

Critical Thinking Exercise

Academic Integrity at Conestoga

Test your skills to see how well you understand academic integrity and the various forms of misconduct.

Explore the Academic Integrity Skills section of the Conestoga College Academic Integrity website. (Please note that while this information is specific to one school, the policies and regulations are largely consistent from one school to the next. Refer to your own school's academic integrity policies for more information.) Take notes to help you remember this information AND refer to later. Review the three sections of the [I am a student](#) section of Conestoga's Academic Integrity website:

- [Accused of Misconduct](#)
- [Academic Integrity Skills](#)
- [Tools and Software](#)

After this review, complete the **Academic Integrity Quiz** at the bottom of the [Academic Integrity Skills](#) page.

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[“Citation Needed Example”](#) by [Wikipedia Contributors](#), [Wikimedia Commons](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) / A derivative from the [original work](#).

2.2 AI USE IN ACADEMICS

Gen AI Tools & Academic Integrity

What is **generative artificial intelligence (gen AI)**? What is your understanding when you hear this term? Before we dive into AI's use in education and in academics, you first want to have some understanding of these terms.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “What is AI” to begin understanding gen AI.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=58#oembed-1>

Source: Common Sense Education. (2023, September 22). [What is AI?](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Before you continue, be sure to read “[AI vs. Gen AI: What's the Difference?](#)” on the Conestoga College Library & Learning Services toolkit.

The most common form of AI you will have access to is generative artificial intelligence (gen AI). Gen AI tools, such as ChatGPT or Copilot, are becoming increasingly popular and more and more widely available. Many people are using them in their personal and professional lives, but what about in their academic careers?

While these tools may be very appealing, the unauthorized use of AI tools, such as (but not limited to) ChatGPT, Copilot, Quillbot, Wordtune, and Textsummarizer, mean that you are not completing assigned work yourself. Unauthorized use of AI is considered academic dishonesty

and can lead to academic integrity violations. It is best to check with your instructor if you can use AI BEFORE you use any gen AI program(s).

Note: There are more AI programs not listed here, and the same rules apply.

What Students Should Know about AI Tools & ChatGPT

Before you consider AI in academics and how it can be used as a tool, there are some limitations or issues you should consider first. As AI evolves, these may change, but each one will impact your use of these tools.

- **Misinformation:** Most AI tools use information from the internet. There is good information online, but there is also discriminatory, outdated, and incorrect information. Many also are known to [incorrectly explain ideas and misquote sources](#). AI tools will make errors, just as humans do! **It is important to double-check any detail an AI tool provides you and critically read through it!** Use the skills we learned in Chapter 1 to critique the AI output.
- **Bias:** gen AI models are trained on a variety of sources. These sources will create bias in the gen AI model. Therefore, the bias will be perpetuated in its output. Again, use the skills we learned in Chapter 1 to critique the AI output.
- **Privacy:** Students must create an account to use many gen AI tools, which enables the collection of data, which is a privacy concern. Some gen AI tools will require students to provide a phone number or other personal information. Students should be mindful of the information they share when creating an account. Please check out the privacy policy and terms of use for any gen AI service you plan to sign up for.¹ **Keep in mind that while using the tools, your conversations are typically recorded and stored by the tool and used for their purposes.**
- **Copyright:** Many AI tools use material taken from the internet, generally without the permission of the authors. It has been argued that ChatGPT is “copyright laundering” — making works derivative of existing material without breaking copyright” (Hern, 2022, para. 11). There are ongoing copyright lawsuits against ChatGPT right now to discuss this issue. **Copyright compliance is part of academic integrity, making it very important to be critical about the use of such tools in your academic work.** Additionally, in

1. Note that Microsoft Copilot is approved for use at Conestoga College; it does not require an account and does not retain the information you input.

academics, your writing is your intellectual property. This is true of everyone else's work, including your teacher and your fellow students. **Putting someone else's work into an AI program is considered intellectual property infringement and violates copyright rules.**

- **Environmental cost:** AI models use data servers to handle the processing power required to train AI models and to process users' queries: "According to estimates, ChatGPT emits 8.4 tons of carbon dioxide per year, more than twice the amount that is emitted by an individual, which is 4 tons per year" (McLean, 2023, para. 4). Additionally, there is also a significant freshwater consumption cost associated with AI Models (McLean, 2023, para. 5). **Every use of gen AI Models comes with a hidden environmental cost that each user needs to be aware of.**

Thinking of Using AI Tools? Know the Rules!

If you use AI in your work without specific permission from your professors, it can lead to the following consequences:

- Affects your integrity and credibility
- Prevents you from meeting the learning outcomes of your course/program
- Can result in a breach of academic misconduct and lead to an academic incident, which can then lead to academic penalties: [Academic Offence Policy \[PDF\]](#).

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video "Use ChatGPT to write essays for school? Students beware of this..." to learn more about the risks of using gen AI.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=58#oembed-2>

Source: Jeremy's Tutorials. (2023, February 7). [Use ChatGPT to write essays for school? Students beware of this...](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Remember, AI use can often be detected – text written by AI has numerous features that your professor can often identify. Since Generative AI is still relatively new, rules and regulations around its use can still be adjusted. **When in doubt, ask your professor what you are allowed to do and what you are not.**

If you are using an gen AI tool to help you complete work with specific permission from your professor, it is important to understand how you can use gen AI in academics.

Library & Learning Services at Conestoga has a [Gen AI for Students toolkit](#), which includes best practices for ensuring academic integrity when using gen AI.

- Review the instructions and ask your instructor before using AI
- Only use instructor- or college-approved AI tools
- Keep a record of all your prompts and the output from the AI tool (for example, copy the output and paste it into a Word document, then save that document in your college OneDrive).
- When using AI tools to edit or revise your work, keep copies of the original version, the edited version, and any subsequent revisions.
- Remember to [cite your use of any AI tools](#).

Learn more about how to use AI in your work, including how to prompt, how to cite, how to avoid misconduct, and how to protect yourself on the [Gen AI for Students toolkit](#) from Library & Learning Services.

Check Your Understanding: Academic Integrity

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

online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=58#h5p-8>

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2.3 CREDITING AND CITING YOUR SOURCES

Why Do We Cite?

It's important to understand why citations are a fundamental part of any research assignment or work you do within a college setting, aside from being a requirement. A citation is a reference to a source that contains key pieces of information about that source in order for those who read YOUR work to find the original source you cited.

The following are three main reasons why we cite:

- To participate in scholarly communication
- To give credit to our sources
- To avoid plagiarism

Reason 1: For Scholarly Communication

Two human head silhouettes facing each other, filled with a background image of bookshelves.

study by learning from its subject experts.

By reading, analyzing, and including scholarly sources in your assignments, you are contributing to and participating in scholarly communication!

You grow in your understanding of a field of

Reason 2: To Give Credit and Show Professionalism

Open book with a leaf on it and cup on the side.

This is key to showing professionalism and evidence in your paper.

You will mainly use scholarly and professional sources as evidence to support your research and give credit to their findings. Citations allow others (and you!) to find the sources used in your paper to learn more about them.

Reason 3: To Avoid Plagiarism

As discussed in 2.1.1. Plagiarizing, using citations and references to credit the work of others, is how we avoid plagiarism. Watch this short video to learn more about plagiarism and how to avoid it using APA @ Conestoga.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[A Quick Overview of APA @ Conestoga](#)”

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=62#oembed-1>

Video source: Conestoga College Library. (2020, August 19). [A quick overview of APA @ Conestoga](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Types of Sources

To identify the correct APA citation elements needed for your reference list citation, you first need to know what type of source you have. Looking at a source’s visual cues and descriptions from a library catalogue or database can help you figure this out.

Now that so many sources are online, it can be a bit confusing figuring out a source’s type. To help, we will go through some examples of source types and cues to look for together.

In [Appendix B](#), you will see some information on various source types you might come across in college or university, such as

- Journal articles
- Trade publications
- Websites
- Books and eBooks

This information in the appendix outlines cues that can help you to recognize the different source types and how to find important information about the source.

NOTE: We will be learning more about citations in text through paraphrasing and quoting within the following chapters as well, so you can use them within different writing formats.

Attributions

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2.4 WHAT IS APA – REFERENCING, CITATIONS, AND STYLE GUIDE

APA, as we mentioned above, is a **citation style guide**. A citation style guide refers to the rules around citing something, both in-text and referencing, and it refers to what your paper should look like, including formatting, margins, title pages, etc.

Style Guide

APA gives you guidance on what your paper should look like. The big key elements are title pages, margins, typeface, and headers. It is not your job to memorize the style guide rules, but it is your job to know where to go to find the right information on HOW your paper should look.

[APA @ Conestoga](#) includes a guide on formatting your assignments in APA style format, with templates you can use. Please familiarize yourself with the [Paper Formatting section of the website](#).

Two Types of Citation

In APA Style, there are two parts to every citation: an in-text citation and a reference list citation.

Reference list citations are longer citations that provide enough information needed to describe and find your source again, physically or online.

Sample of formatted reference list with four entries

The reference list page shows four formatted reference examples in alphabetical order.

In-text citations are the shortened form of a reference list citation where a source is credited in your paper. It has enough information to locate its matching reference citation.

What Is a Reference List Citation?

Narrative Example:

Smith and Gould (2009) recognized that eating cake is fun.

Parenthetical Example:

Eating cake is fun (Smith & Gould, 2009).

We will discuss both of these separately first and then together later. First, we will discuss reference list citations.

Let's begin by discussing what a reference list is. A reference list is an alphabetized list located on a separate page at the end of your paper that lists all the reference citations for the sources used in your paper to support your research.

Each reference citation includes key elements referred to as the Four W's:

The 4 W's:

- **WHO:** The author(s) or creator(s) of the work
- **WHEN:** The date of publication of the work (year, month & day if needed)
- **WHAT:** The title of the article, webpage, or other work
- **WHERE:** The source location of the work (journal or newspaper name, book name, website name, etc.)

Asking these four questions helps identify the key elements needed for a reference list entry.

Please note the APA videos and links below are specific to Conestoga College. If you are attending a different school, an excellent resource is the [OWL at Purdue](#).

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video "[Referencing in APA @ Conestoga](#)"

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=70#oembed-1>

Video source: Conestoga College Library. (2020, August 20). Referencing in APA @ Conestoga [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/DownoJf_k-k?si=RVfEzLPZmbuJUQIR

Review the [APA @ Conestoga guide for Referencing](#) to learn more about the college's version of the the APA citation system. Note that there are some minor differences, so you should always refer to APA @ Conestoga first.

You're not expected to memorize APA guidelines. Instead, use available resources ([APA @ Conestoga](#) and this tutorial) to help guide you. Over time, you will become more comfortable with creating citations yourself.

Creating Reference List Citations

As you've learned, creating a reference citation requires a few steps:

1. Identify the type of source.
2. Identify the 4W's of the work (Who, When, What, Where).
3. Write the reference citation using the 4W's and guidance from a correct example.
4. Lastly, it's also important to proofread your work.

When creating a reference citation, pay attention to the 4W's and how to correctly format each reference citation using punctuation and font emphasis (italics).

Complete the exercises below to practice creating reference citations.

Critical Thinking Exercises

Scholarly Journal Article

Screenshot of first page of a journal article.

Source: Victorino, K. R. & Hinkle, M. S. (2019, February). The development of a self-efficacy measurement tool for counselling in speech-language pathology. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology (AJSLP)*, 28(1), 108-120. [Screenshot used under Fair dealing.]

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=70#h5p-9>

Scholarly Journal Article Exercise (Text version)

You want to write a reference citation for this scholarly journal article. Select all the pieces of information you need to gather in order to write the complete reference citation.

1. Name of the journal
2. Year of publication
3. Author name(s)
4. Author credentials
5. DOI
6. Abstract
7. Volume and issue numbers
8. Page range
9. Title of the article

Check your answer¹**Book**

Screenshot of cover page and copyright information page of Applying
Cross-Curricular Approaches Creatively

Screenshot source: Jonathan Barnes, *Applying cross-curricular approaches creatively*. APA reference excluded due to nature of activity. [Screenshots created & used under Fair Dealing by [NorQuest College Library](#).]

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=70#h5p-10>

Book Exercise (Text version)

- <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315513614>
- Applying cross-curricular approaches creatively.
- (2018).
- Barnes, J.
- Routledge.

Check your answer²

What Is an In-Text Citation?

Lightbulb drawing on a sticky note which is put on a board

You find a great idea or argument in a source that supports your topic, and you want to include it in your writing. To do this, you need to create an

1. a, b, c, e, g, h, & i are all required

2. Barnes, J. (2018). *Applying cross-curricular approaches creatively*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315513614>

in-text citation and add it to your paper where you have discussed evidence from that source, either as a direct quote or a paraphrase. In-text citations tell your reader which ideas belong to you and which ideas belong to someone else.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Citing in APA @ Conestoga](#)”

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=70#oembed-2>

Video source: Conestoga College Library. (2020, August 25). Citing in APA @ Conestoga [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8bvp-PYCdQ>

There are two different ways that you can include in-text citations in your assignments: as a parenthetical citation or as a narrative citation. You include these citations in a paper when you are paraphrasing or quoting someone else’s ideas. We will learn about paraphrasing and quoting in greater detail in our writing units, but for now, we want to get you comfortable with the idea of citations!

Parenthetical vs. Narrative Citations

The following example (Figure 2.1) shows how these two types of in-text citations have been included in a paper. Click on the information symbols to learn about them.

Figure 2.1: Two types of in-text citations

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=70#h5p-11>

- **Parenthetical In-Text Citation:** (Betoret, 2006, p. 10).

This is a parenthetical in-text citation where the writer has paraphrased a common idea from two different works. It's inserted after the paraphrased sentence and before the ending punctuation. The parenthetical citation format for a work is: the family name or group name of the author(s), a comma, the publication year, all in parentheses, a comma, and then the location information of the cited information.

- **Narrative In-Text Citation:** “Berkman and Glass (2000) define social support as having an individual or group of individuals who provide resources, abstract and/or tangible, to another (p. 13).”

This sentence has a narrative in-text citation that is paraphrased. It is formatted with the author's family name within the paper's narrative, directly followed by the year in parentheses. Then, at the end of the paraphrase, it lists the location information of the material cited.

- **Citing Multiple Sources of the same information:** Each work is separated with a semicolon and ordered alphabetically, like in this example: (Betoret, 2006; Perrier et al., 2010).

Pro Tip

icon

Figure 2.1 example is a paraphrase, but these forms of in-text citations are also used for quotations.

Figure 2.2: Parenthetical and narrative citations

Infographic showing parenthetical and narrative citation; see image description.

Two ways to insert your citation. [\[See image description\]](#)

NOTE: In the infographic above, it does not list that you need page or paragraph number with a paraphrase. **For APA@Conestoga, listing the page or paragraph detail is a requirement for both paraphrases and quotes.**

As you can see in Figure 2.2, an in-text citation is formatted using three key pieces:

- Parentheses
- Author's family name or group name

- Year

In-text citations in APA may also include a page or paragraph number detailing where the cited information is from. This is required when quoting directly from the source and is for APA@Conestoga is required for paraphrasing. If there are page numbers, just use page numbers. If no page number exists, such as with a webpage, then you use the paragraph detail (you count from top down to get the paragraph number).

Pro Tip

icon

While there are many citation generators and guides available online, it is essential to ensure accuracy in your work as required by your program. Check in with your instructor to double-check the citation style guide to use. For Conestoga, most programs use APA@Conestoga. **If you have permission to use a citation generator, ensure that you double-check its output to confirm it matches the APA@Conestoga rules.**

Figure 2.3: Reference page entry vs. narrative in-text citation

Comparison of reference entry to in-text citation. See image description.

Reference page entry and narrative in-text citation. [\[See image description\]](#)

Figure 2.3 shows a reference page entry for the authors Berkman, L. F., & Glass, T. A. (2000). Below that reference page entry is the coordinating in-text citation that you would use in your paper. While the reference page entry contains all information about the source, the narrative citation in your paper that points to this reference page entry would be written with just the authors' surnames and the year in the format: Berkman and Glass (2000).

Critical Thinking Exercises

In-Text Citation

Complete the following three activities to practice creating parenthetical and narrative in-text citations by typing in the in-text citation.

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=70#h5p-12>

In-Text Citation Exercise (Text version)

Fill in the missing in-text citation using the reference citation provided above each sentence. Click on the information bubble for help if needed.

1. Matching reference citation for the following question:

Den Heyer, K. (2009). Implicated and called upon: Challenging an educated position of self, others, knowledge and knowing as things to acquire. *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, 3(1), 26-36. <http://www.criticalliteracyjournal.org>

Complete this sentence with the parenthetical citation for this paraphrased sentence.

This paraphrased information can be found on page 33 of the above reference.

The purpose of information mastery is often to ensure student success on standardized testing in order to show schools and school boards how well students are learning from their teachers (_____).

2. Matching reference citation for the following question:

Peck, C. (2011). Ethnicity and students' historical understandings. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 305-324). UBC Press.

Complete this sentence with the narrative citation for this paraphrased sentence. This paraphrased information can be found on page 307.

It is important to consider all perspectives when representing history because, according to

_____ students' ancestry, experiences, and ethnic identity influence how they understand and construct historical thinking _____.

3. Matching reference citation for the following question:

Anderson, C., Carrell, A., & Widdifield, J. L. (2010). What every student should know about citing sources with APA documentation. Allyn & Bacon.

The quote is from page 13.

Complete this sentence with the parenthetical citation for this direct short quote sentence:

Students can sometimes “get overwhelmed with citation but with experts like librarians to help them learn the basics they are able to succeed” (_____).

Check Answers [FN3]

[FN3:] 1. (Den Heyer, 2009, p. 33), 2. Peck (2011) and end of sentence (p. 307), 3. (Anderson et al., 2010, p. 13).

Attributions

“2.4: What is APA – Referencing, Citations” remixes and revises [8.8 – Two Types of Citation](#), [8.9 – What is a Reference List Citation?](#), [8.10 – Creating Reference List Citations](#), [8.11 – Creating Reference List Citations Activity](#), [8.12 – What is an In-Text Citation?](#), and [8.13 – In-Text Citations Activity](#) in [Communication Essentials for College](#) by Jen Booth, Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, Georgian College, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

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“[Reference vs. in-text](#)” by University of Alberta Library, used under [CC BY-NC-SA](#).

Image Descriptions

Figure 2.2: Parenthetical and narrative citations

Two Ways to Insert Your Citation

Parenthetical Citation

1. Author's family name and Year is included at the end of a sentence in parentheses.

- Example: ...virtues of wit (Smith, 2010).

Narrative Citation

1. The author's family name is included as part of a sentence followed by the Year in parentheses.

- Example: Smith (2010) discusses how....

2. The Year may also be included as part of the narrative.

- Example: In 2010, Smith noted that....

[\[back\]](#)

Figure 2.3: Reference page entry vs. narrative in-text citation

Boxed reference page entry reads:

Berkman, L.F., & Glass, T. A. (2000). Social integration, social networks, social support, and health. In L. F. Berkman & I. Kawachi (Eds.), *Social epidemiology* (pp. 137-173). Oxford University Press.

Boxed citation entry reads:

...2010). Berkman and Glass (2000) define social support as having an individual or group of individuals who provide resources, abstract and/or tangible, to another.

In both boxes, the author names and year are circled.

[\[back\]](#)

2.5 EVALUATING SOURCES

When using sources in assignments, you want to consider how valuable that source is. This involves evaluating your sources to really ask yourself, “Is this source good to use for my paper?” To do this, you want to critique and evaluate the source using the CRAAP test, which stands for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose.

The CRAAP Test and Evaluating Resources

The videos in this section will outline some key concepts to consider when analyzing internet sources. This knowledge will help you do better research for assignments and in daily life.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Evaluating internet sources and fake news with ncLibraries](#)” (8 mins).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-1>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2017, July 18). [Evaluating internet sources and fake news with ncLibraries](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Why is this important](#)” (1 min).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-2>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, January 30). [Why is this important?](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources I

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-13>

Consider the Source

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Consider the Source](#)” (1 min).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-3>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, January 30). [Consider the Source](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources II

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-14>

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Motivation/Bias](#)” (2 mins).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-4>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, January 30). [Motivation/bias](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources III

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-15>

Check the Evidence

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Evidence](#)” (1 min).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-5>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, January 30). [Evidence](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources IV

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-16>

Timeliness

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Timeliness](#)” (1 min).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-6>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, January 30). [Timeliness](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources V

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-17>

The CRAAP/RADAR Test

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “Evaluating Sources: [CRAAP/RADAR](#)” (1 min).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-7>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2022, February 18). [Evaluating sources: CRAAP/RADAR](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Before you continue, be sure to read [How to Apply the CRAAP Test](#) on the Research Prospect website for a full written breakdown of the CRAAP method.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources VI

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-18>

What Makes News “Fake”?

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Fake News](#)” (2 min).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-8>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, January 30). [Fake news](#). [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources VII

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-19>

Conclusion: Be a Skeptic!

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[Summary](#)” (1 min).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-9>

Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, January 30). [Summary](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Check Your Understanding: Evaluating Sources VIII

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#h5p-20>

Popular vs. Scholarly Sources

One element of analyzing a source for credibility is considering what KIND of source it is. In academic research, we have two main categories: Popular and scholarly sources. **Popular sources** are sources written for the general public. **Scholarly sources** are sources written for academics/scholars.

A pyramid titled “Scholarly and Popular Sources” with examples displayed on either side of the pyramid and an arrow beside labelled more popular at the base of the pyramid and more scholarly at the top. Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference papers, and theses and dissertations are at the top; newsletters, non-fiction, trade journals, and documentaries in the center; and fiction and social media are at the bottom.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video “[How Library Stuff Works: Scholarly vs Popular Sources](#)” (2 mins).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-10>

Video source: McMaster Libraries. (2016, February 24). [How library stuff works: Scholarly vs popular sources](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Watch the video “[Chapter 8 video 2](#)” (3 min) from “[Write Here, Right Now: An Interactive Introduction to Academic Writing and Research](#)” about how to apply the CRAAP test and then read the text below.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=73#oembed-11>

Video source: Toronto Metropolitan University DMP. (2018, July 10). [Chapter 8 video 2](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Evaluate the Sources

Using what you’ve learned about evaluating sources, evaluate the sources from the video.

- Wikipedia entry on [Online Social Movement](#)
 - Consider this a good starting point and look at the sources below for more information.

- Blog written by a professor: [Role of Social Media in Social Movements: Egyptian Revolution and Occupy Wall Street](#)
 - Select “Author”, “Author – Main Publications”
 - This article is not peer reviewed; consider why.
- Peer Reviewed (Open Source): [The Digital Evolution of Occupy Wall Street](#)
 - This article is peer reviewed. Why?
 - Look at the conflict of interest note at the beginning.

Attributions

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The Critical Thinking Exercise in this section is adapted from [Evaluate What You Find With the “CRAAP Test”](#) in [English for Degree Entrance \(EDE\)](#) by Carrie Molinski and Sue Slessor is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

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2.6 CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

2.1: Describe the concepts of academic integrity and plagiarism

- Academic Integrity is a shared responsibility, and it is your responsibility to know all college policies and regulations. [Conestoga College's Academic Integrity Policy](#) outlines the expectations for academic integrity. Breaches of academic integrity can have severe academic consequences
- Plagiarism is an academic integrity violation. Both intentional plagiarism and unintentional plagiarism can have academic consequences
- To avoid plagiarism, you should try to do the following:
 - Have evidence of your work – Take notes carefully, track version history, and use drafts or outlines.
 - Give credit through citing when you use someone else's intellectual property

2.2: Discuss the ethical use of generative AI in a college setting.

- The use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT and Copilot, to complete assignments without your professor's specific permission may result in a breach of academic integrity
- Before using AI, we must consider the limitations of these tools: misinformation, bias, privacy, copyright, and environmental cost.

2.3: Explain why citation is important in academic work.

- Citing is important because you are a part of a scholarly community, you want to give credit and be professional in your work, and you want to make sure you are not plagiarizing.

2.4: Outline how to use APA 7th edition style in academic work.

- APA is a referencing citation style guide. It provides rules around paper format and rules around how to cite: in-text citations and references
- It is not your job to memorize these rules. It is your job to learn where to go to find the information to reference correctly.
- Use [APA @ Conestoga](#) as your guide.

2.5: Describe how to evaluate sources for reliability

- It is important to evaluate your sources to ask yourself, is this the best source to use? Essentially, is it a credible source?
- Use the CRAAP test to evaluate your sources.

CHAPTER 3 – ACADEMIC WRITING, NOTE-TAKING, AND THE WRITING PROCESS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In any program at any post-secondary institution, you will be expected to write. Writing in post-secondary can serve several functions, but the two main purposes are to help you learn the material and to demonstrate or share your understanding of the material you are learning. No matter what task you've been given, academic writing should follow a set process. In this chapter, we will explore key areas of writing in college, including academic writing, note-taking, and the writing process. Once you master these skills, you can tackle any form of writing asked of you.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Define** academic writing and discuss its purpose.
2. **Utilize** various approaches to academic note-taking.
3. **Explain** the writing process plan for college writing assignments.

3.1 WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?

Writing, especially academic writing, is a very specific way of communicating, which is very different than other forms of communication. Understanding this distinction will help you become a better writer in general, but it will also help you write academically.

L. Lennie Irwin (2010), in “What is academic writing?” talks about how the biggest problem first-year writers face is failing to understand the differences between spoken and written conversation. The following excerpt talks about these differences and the challenges a writer faces as opposed to a speaker:

The biggest problem I see in first-year writers is a poor sense of the academic writing situation in general. To illustrate this problem, let’s look at the difference between speaking and writing.

When we speak, we inhabit the communication situation bodily in three dimensions, but in writing we are confined within the two-dimensional setting of the flat page (though writing for the web—or **multimodal writing**—is changing all that). Writing resembles having a blindfold over our eyes and our hands tied behind our backs: we can’t see exactly whom we’re talking to or where we are. Separated from our audience in place and time, we imaginatively have to create this context. Our words on the page are silent, so we must use punctuation and word choice to communicate our tone. We also can’t see our audience to gauge how our communication is being received or if there will be some kind of response. It’s the same space we share right now as you read this essay. (pp. 5–6)

When writing, we must make sure we are as clear as possible for our audience to ensure our purpose for writing is being accomplished. In other words, what may be clear to YOU may not be clear to the reader, so make sure to take a step back and consider whether someone else will get what you are writing.

Pro tip icon

Understanding the academic writing situation when tackling assignments and tasks involves

- knowing your audience.
- knowing the occasion or context.
- conveying the message clearly.

- understanding the formats and genres most applicable to the project at hand.

Common Academic Writing Myths

Students are often stymied by myths they have adopted throughout their schooling about writing, especially academic writing. All the myths listed below can result in problematic writing.

Myth #1: Paint By Numbers

Good writers perform certain steps in a particular order to write “correctly,” just like a paint-by-numbers kit.

Truth: Rather than being a lock-step linear process, writing is “recursive.” That means we cycle through and repeat the various activities of the writing process many times as we write.

Myth #2: All Figured Out

Good writers only start writing when they have everything figured out.

Truth: Writing is not like putting away ironed and folded clothing. Writers figure out much of what they want to write as they write it. Rather than waiting, get some writing on the page—even with gaps or problems. You can come back to patch up rough spots.

Myth #3: The First Draft Is the Final Draft

Good writers sit down and write a perfect first draft from start to finish.

Truth: We put unrealistic expectations on early drafts, either by focusing too much on the impossible task of making them perfect (which can limit the development of our ideas), or by making too little effort because we don’t care or know about their inevitable problems. Nobody writes perfect first drafts; polished writing takes lots of revision.

Myth #4: Writing Requires Natural Talent

Some have got it; I don’t—the “genius” fallacy.

Truth: When you see your writing ability as something fixed or out of your control (as if it were in your genetic code), then you won’t believe you can improve as a writer and are likely not to make any efforts in that direction. With effort and study, you can improve as a writer!

Myth #5: Good Grammar Is Good Writing

Good writers do not make grammatical errors.

Truth: When people say, “I can’t write,” what they often mean is that they have trouble with grammatical correctness. Writing, however, is about more than just grammatical correctness. Good writing is a matter of achieving a desired effect upon an intended audience. Plus, as we saw in myth #3, no one writes perfect first drafts. There are many tools available to help edit your writing to correct mistakes, but there is no point in having polished writing if you aren’t saying anything worth saying with your writing. Generative AI tools do not often make grammatical mistakes, but that doesn’t mean the output from these tools is “good writing”!

Note: At Conestoga, you have access to Grammarly Pro: [Grammarly – Library & Learning Services at Conestoga College](#). Please be aware that this subscription does not have access to GrammarlyGo, the Generative AI tool. If your instructor has not given permission for generative AI tools in your writing assignments, you should not be using GrammarlyGo or any other Generative AI tools.

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Attributions

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3.1.1 WHY STRONG WRITING SKILLS MATTER

Effective Communication and Persuasion

Whether for the benefit of your academic or professional life, or even for your personal life, writing is an effective tool to help you be understood and to influence others. Writing has an important power to help you get others to understand your message.

Writing gives you a voice. Writing can help you to state your position and support it in a way that might persuade others not only to understand your perspective, values, and beliefs but also to adopt them. When you're unsure about something, you can even use writing as a method for self-persuasion, to help you make up your mind about an important topic. From resumes to term papers to work-related documents to journaling and self-exploration, writing is an important and powerful tool to have at the ready. This text can help you sharpen that tool and to use it to the best of your ability.

Professional Opportunities

Good writing and communication skills can help you to be more professionally (and therefore financially) successful. As a member of a professional or working community, you will likely find you will need to write a variety of things, both formal and informal: job applications, resumes, reports, invoices, emails, etc. Strong writing will make your job easier. Writing can also help you with scheduling and time management skills (don't forget the ever-important to-do list!).

Today, the workplace is in flux due to the introduction of AI, and many workplaces are now utilizing gen AI to support these various writing tasks, but keep in mind that these are just tools. YOU still must utilize your critical thinking skills: understand the writing tasks you are asking gen AI to support with, critically examine its content for misinformation, edit it to bring in your personal voice (Al-Alami, 2024, p.9; Dahri et al., 2024, p. 36). Additionally, while a recent working paper by the National Bureau of Economic Research showed that when jobseekers utilized gen AI tools to improve their resume and cover letter, they were 8 % more like to get hired (Wiles et al., 2023, p. 20), there are some drawbacks to consider. For instance, "if AI tools like ChatGPT proliferate — and millions of job seekers begin using AI tools to craft their résumé, it might get harder to stand out" (Hoff & Zinkula, 2023 para. 7). Gen AI tools can prove useful

in your career, but as always make sure to use critical thinking to analyze its output and consider how you are using these tools to build your writing style. **Learning to write well BEFORE using these tools will make it easier to critique its output and edit it.**

Comprehension and Academic Performance

The previous paragraphs have already discussed the potential for writing to help you think, so it also should come as no surprise that it's a wonderful tool to help you learn. At some point in your experience as a student so far, you may have noticed that you understand a concept better once you've used it or worked with it somehow.

One of the reasons that experiencing or working with a concept helps you understand and remember it is that experience requires action. Have you ever read a chapter or two in a textbook only to ask yourself a few hours later (or even a few minutes later), "What did I just read?" The consumption of media and information can be a passive experience. We read. We watch. We listen. It takes effort to keep our brains engaged in a passive experience. Moreover, educational materials usually lack the level of excitement of our favourite action movie franchise or the adorable allure of cute animal videos that abound on TikTok. It's easy for our entertainment-hungry brains to check out and stop absorbing the meaning of what we're reading. If we can experience a subject in multiple ways, with increasing levels of engagement, we are more likely to remember what we're trying to learn. More importantly, beyond simply remembering it, we are more likely to understand its relevance to our own lives.

Writing for College

This course will focus on communications skills in general to help you make the transition to degree-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 for learning how to think about a particular academic discipline. It also helps demonstrate to the teacher that you have learned the material in class.

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.

Check Your Understanding: Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=83#h5p-21>

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3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF NOTE-TAKING AND DIFFERENT METHODS OF NOTE-TAKING

Basics of Note-taking

You've got the PowerPoint slides from your classes, the information in your textbook, and the information on your course learning shell. Do you need to take notes as well? Despite the vast amount of information available in electronic formats, taking notes is an important learning strategy.

Two Purposes for Taking Notes

People take notes for two main reasons:

- To keep a record of the information they heard. This is also called the external storage function of note-taking.
- To facilitate learning the material they are currently studying.

The availability of information on the internet may reduce the importance of the external storage function of note-taking. When the information is available online, it may seem logical to stop taking notes. **However, by neglecting to take notes, you lose the benefits of note-taking as a learning tool.**

How Note-Taking Supports Learning

Taking notes during class supports your learning in several important ways:

- Taking notes helps you to focus your attention and avoid distractions.
- As you take notes in class, you will be engaging your mind in identifying and organizing the main ideas. Rather than passively listening, you will be doing the work of active

learning while in class, making the most of your time.

- Creating good notes means that you will have a record for later review. Reviewing a set of condensed and well-organized notes is more efficient than re-reading longer texts and articles.

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When you take notes in college, **your instructors expect you to make connections between class lectures and reading assignments; they expect you to create an opinion about the material presented; they expect you to make connections between the material and life beyond school. Your notes are your road maps for these thoughts.** Actively listening and note-taking are key strategies to ensure your academic success.

Effective note-taking is important because it

- supports your listening efforts.
- allows you to test your understanding of the material.
- helps you remember the material better when you write key ideas down.
- gives you a sense of what the instructor thinks is important.
- creates your “ultimate study guide.”

Protip Icon

After class, be sure to review your notes and then summarize the class in one or two short paragraphs using your own words.

This summary will significantly affect your recall and will help you prepare for the next class.

Note-taking Methods

There are various forms of taking notes, and which one you choose depends on both your personal style and the instructor’s approach to the material. Each can be used in a notebook, index cards, or in a digital form on your laptop or tablet. No specific type is good for all students and all situations. We recommend that you develop your own style, but be ready to modify it to suit the needs of a specific class or instructor. To be effective, all of these methods require

you to listen actively and to think; merely jotting down words the instructor is saying will be of little use to you. **Table 3.1** summarizes four different note-taking methods. Each method is then illustrated with an example.

Table 3.1 – Note-taking methods

Method	Description	When to Use
Lists	A sequential listing of ideas as they are presented. Lists may be short phrases or complete paragraphs describing ideas in more detail.	This method is what most students use as a fallback if they haven't learned other methods. This method typically requires a lot of writing, and you may find that you are not keeping up with the professor. It is not easy for students to prioritize ideas using this method.
Outlines	The outline method places most important ideas along the left margin, which are numbered with Roman numerals. Supporting ideas to these main concepts are indented and are noted with capital letters. Under each of these ideas, further detail can be added, designated with a number, a lowercase letter, and so forth.	A good method to use when material presented by the instructor is well organized. Easy to use when taking notes on your computer.
Concept Maps	When designing a concept map, place a central idea in the centre of the page and then add lines and new circles to the page for new ideas. Use arrows and lines to connect the various ideas.	Great method to show relationships among ideas. Also, good if the instructor tends to hop from one idea to another and back.
Cornell Method	The Cornell method uses a two-column approach. The left column takes up no more than a third of the page and is often referred to as the "cue" or "recall" column. The right column (about two-thirds of the page) is used for taking notes using any of the methods described above or a combination of them. After class or completing the reading, review your notes and write the key ideas and concepts or questions in the left column. You may also include a summary box at the bottom of the page, in which to write a summary of the class or reading in your own words.	The Cornell method can include any of the methods above and provides a useful format for calling out key concepts, prioritizing ideas, and organizing review work. Most universities recommend using some form of the Cornell method.

Example: The List Method

Learning Cycle

September 3

Prof. Jones

The learning cycle is an approach to gathering and retaining info that can help students be successful in col. The cycle consists of 4 steps which should all be app'd. They are preparing, which sets the foundation for learning, absorbing, which exposes us to new knowledge, capturing, which sets the information into our knowledge base and finally reviewing and applying which lets us set the know. into our memory and use it.

Preparing for learning can involve mental preparation, physical prep, and oper. prep. Mental prep includes setting learning goals for self based on what we know the class w/ cover (see syllabus)/ Also it is **very important** to do any assignments for the class to be able to learn w/ confidence and....

Physical Prep means having enough rest and eating well. It's hard to study when you are hungry and you won't listen well in class if you doze off.

Operation Prep means bringing all supplies to class, or having them at hand when studying... this includes pens, paper, computer, textbook, etc. Also means getting to school on time and getting a good seat (near the front).

Absorbing new knowledge is a combination of listening and reading. These are two of the most important learning skills you can have.

The list method is usually not the best choice because it is focused exclusively on capturing as much of what the instructor says as possible, not on processing the information. Most students who have not learned effective study skills use this method because it's easy to think that this is what note-taking is all about. Even if you are skilled in some form of shorthand, you should probably also learn one of the other methods described here, because they are all better at helping you process and remember the material. You may want to take notes in class using the list method, but transcribe your notes to an outline or concept map method after class as a part of your review process. It is always important to review your notes as soon as possible after class and write a summary of the class in your own words.

Example: The Outline Method

Learning Cycle

September 3

Prof Jones

Learning is a cycle made up of 4 steps:

- I. Preparing: Setting the foundation for learning.
- II. Absorbing: (Data input) Exposure to new knowledge.
- III. Capturing: Taking ownership of the knowledge.
- IV. Review & Apply: Putting new knowledge to work.

I. Preparing

A. Mental Prep.

- 1. Do assignments – New knowledge is built on prior knowledge.
 - 1. assignments from prior classes.
 - 2. Readings! (May not have been assigned in class – see Syllabus!)
- 2. Review Syllabus
 - 1. Know what the instructor expects to cover
 - 2. Know what assignments you need to do
 - 3. Set your own objective

B. Physical Prep

- 1. Get right amount of rest. Don't zzz in class.
- 2. Eat right. Hard to focus when you are hungry.
- 3. Arrive on time.

C. Practical Prep (Organizational Prep):

- 1. Bring right supplies – (Notebooks, Texts, Pens, etc.)
- 2. Arrive on time

1. Get organized and ready to listen
 2. Don't interrupt the focus of others
 3. Get a good seat
-
3. Sit in the front of the class.

The advantage of the outline method is that it allows you to prioritize the material. Key ideas are written to the left of the page, subordinate ideas are then indented, and details of the subordinate ideas can be indented further. To further organize your ideas, you can use the typical outlining numbering scheme (starting with roman numerals for key ideas, moving to capital letters on the first subordinate level, numbers for the next level, and lowercase letters following.) At first, you may have trouble identifying when the instructor moves from one idea to another. This takes practice and experience with each instructor, so don't give up! In the early stages, you should use your syllabus to determine what key ideas the instructor plans to present. Your reading assignments before class can also give you guidance in identifying the key ideas.

Example: The Outline Method

Handwritten diagram with the word "Learning" circled at centre; with multiple lines branching out to additional circles, lines, and words, each branch representing key points related to the others.

[A concept map illustrating the key points from the lecture.](#)

This is a very graphic method of note-taking that is especially good at capturing the relationships among ideas. Concept maps harness your visual sense to understand complex material "at a glance." They also give you the flexibility to move from one idea to another and back easily (so they are helpful if your instructor moves freely through the material).

To develop a concept map, start by selecting an overarching idea (high-level or abstract) from the instructor's lecture and place it in a circle in the middle of the page. Then, create branches off that circle to record more detailed information, creating additional limbs as needed. Arrange the branches with others that connect closely. When a new high-level idea is

presented, create a new circle with its own branches. Link together circles or concepts that are related. Use arrows and symbols to capture the relationship between the ideas. For example, an arrow may be used to illustrate cause or effect, a double-pointed arrow to illustrate dependence, or a dotted arrow to illustrate impact or effect.

Example: The Cornell Method

Handwritten page of notes divided with a line down the middle and a line across the top and bottom, with details on the right, cue notes on the right, and a summary at the bottom.

A sample of Cornell notes recording the key points from the lecture.

The Cornell method follows a very specific format that consists of four boxes: a header, two columns, and a footer. The Cornell method was developed in the 1950s by Professor Walter Pauk at Cornell University (Pauk & Ownes, 2013). Many schools recommend this method because of its usefulness and flexibility. This method is simple to use for capturing notes, is helpful for defining priorities, and is a very helpful study tool.

This method can be done on paper, or it can be done in Word using the table function. The header is a small box across the top of the page. In it, you write identification information like the course name and the date of the class. Underneath the header are two columns: a narrow one on the left (no more than one-third of the page) and a wide one on the right. The wide column, called the “notes” column, takes up most of the page and is used to capture your notes using any of the methods outlined earlier. The left column, known as the “cue” or “recall” column, is used to jot down main ideas, keywords, questions, clarifications, and other notes. It should be used both during the class and when reviewing your notes after class. Finally, use the box in the footer to write a summary of the class in your own words. This will help you make sense of your notes in the future and is a valuable tool to aid with recall and studying.

Pro tip icon All note-taking methods end with the same step: reviewing your notes as soon as possible after class. Any review of your notes is helpful (reading them, copying them into your computer, or even recasting them using another note-taking method). But THINK! Make your review of notes a thoughtful activity, not a mindless process.

When you review your notes:

Think about questions you still have and determine how you will get the answers. (From the next class? Studying with a friend? Looking up material in your text or online?)

- Examine how the material applies to the course
- Make connections with notes from other class sessions, with material in your text, and with concepts covered in class discussions.
- How the material in your notes applies to real life or your career goals.

General Tips on Note-Taking

Regardless of what note-taking method you choose, there are some note-taking habits you should get into for all circumstances and all courses:

- **Be prepared.**
 - Make sure you have the tools you need to do the job. If you are using a notebook, be sure you have it with you and that you have enough paper. Also, be sure to have your pen (as well as a spare) and perhaps a pen with different-coloured ink to use for emphasis. If you are taking notes on your laptop, make sure the battery is charged! Select the application that lends itself best to your style of note-taking.
- **Write on only one side of the paper.**
 - This will allow you to integrate your reading notes with your class notes.
- **Label, number, and date all notes at the top of each page.**
 - You might also want to add other details that will help you identify the notes later. For notes on reading, you might want to add details on WHAT you are taking notes on (author name, title of source, etc.). For lecture notes, you may want to add the class name, the professor's name, and the unit or week you are in. This will help you keep organized.
- **Don't try to capture everything that is said or what you read.**

- Listen for the big ideas and write them down. Make sure you can recognize the instructor's emphasis cues and write down all ideas and keywords the instructor emphasizes. Listen for clues like "the four causes were..." or "to sum up..." For notes on reading, look back at some of the key ideas we covered in Chapter 1!
- **Leave space between ideas.**
 - This allows you to add additional notes later, such as connections to other work or further notes as you learn more.
- **Use some method for identifying your own thoughts and questions to keep them separate from what the instructor or text author is saying.**
 - Some students use different coloured ink; others box or underline their own thoughts. Do whatever works for you.
- **Review your notes as soon after class as possible (the same day is best).**
 - This is the secret to making your notes work. Fill in any gaps in your notes and clean up or redraw hastily drawn diagrams.
- **Write a summary of the main ideas of the class or text in your own words.**
 - This process is a great aid to recall. Be sure to include any conclusions from the lecture or discussion.
- **Use notes when preparing for a test or doing an assignment.**
 - Your notes usually have a summary of the most important points and are useful for making sure you incorporate important concepts in your assignments and for focusing on the main concepts when studying for tests and exams.

Before you continue, be sure to watch the video "[How to Take Great Notes](#)" (5 mins) for some more great tips on note-taking.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=87#oembed-1>

Video source: watchwellcast. (2012, October 26). [How to take great notes](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Note-taking for Reading Texts

If you do not take notes as you read, you are wasting time and energy. Without notes, you will almost certainly have to reread substantial parts of the text to find passages that are important, and you will almost certainly lose track of the ideas you had as you were reading. While note-taking does slow down your reading, it greatly increases your overall reading efficiency and helps you remember and comprehend what you've read.

You want to make sure you are capturing the main ideas in a text, but you also want to record your reactions to the text, particularly where they relate to your purpose for reading.

Consider the ideas we covered in [Chapter 1](#) around pre-reading strategies, critiquing a text, synthesizing, analysis and reflection! This is the information you may want to include in your notes, but of course, always consider the overall purpose of your reading. For example, if it is to reflect on what you've read, then notes surrounding that should be the main goal, but if it is to summarize/detail the main ideas of the text, then your notes would be covering that.

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Critical Thinking Exercise

Look back at the article "[The Power of Pets](#)" we studied in Chapter 1. Your task is to "re-make" your notes using the techniques we discussed in this section. Make a conscious effort to use ONE of the styles of note-taking we've described (list, outline, concept mapping or Cornell notes). Follow as many steps listed previously as possible.

Now compare these notes with those you took previously.

- Are your new notes more useful?
- What did you like about taking notes this way?

- What are some of the things you need to work on improving?

Remember, this will get much easier with more practice. Write your thoughts down as a reflection.

References

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Attributions

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3.3 THE WRITING PROCESS

This text does not presume that you are a beginner at writing. After all, you have probably been writing for most of your life at this point. This would put you at least at the intermediate level. However, if you are reading this book as part of a preparatory course, you probably aren't at the expert level yet. At the very least, you probably don't have much experience with writing at the college level.

Because you are not a beginner, you probably have strategies that have worked for you in the past, and some of those will continue to work for you in college. Others, however, may not serve you quite so well. For example, pulling an all-nighter (which we've all done at one time or another) will not work for many of the longer and more involved writing assignments you are likely to see in college.

This section is intended to guide you in thinking about your own writing process. While much of the advice here will apply in other venues—including workplace writing—the focus in this section is to help you develop a strong process for your college writing assignments.

Thinking about the Writing Process

THE WRITING PROCESS IN 6 STEPS

1. Prewriting

Brainstorming, mind-mapping, researching, questioning, and thinking are the first steps in the writing process. These are referred to as prewriting techniques or methods. Also, make sure you understand the assignment.

2. Outlining and Organizing

After ideas are generated, they can be organized to create an outline for a written assignment

like an essay or research paper. A thesis can start to be developed, and paragraph topics can be selected. Research can be done if necessary.

3. First Draft

Next, a first draft can be started. This is the first version of the written piece. It can be done with pen and paper, but usually the computer is ideal since changes can be made easily, and it can be shared if needed.

4. Revision

Once the first version is drafted, major revisions can take place. This may involve subtracting substantial sections, reordering paragraphs, or adding more content. After the revision, the second draft is created.

5. Proofreading and Editing

The second draft needs to be fine-tuned by checking for spelling and grammar errors as well as structural problems or formatting issues. Double-check that you have followed the instructions and included all the required elements.

6. Submission

Finally, submit your writing for evaluation or prepare it for publishing. Give yourself a pat on the back for completing the process of writing. It is a lot of work, but very satisfying to finish a good piece of writing.

This infographic presents a relatively neat process, and it implies that if you just follow the steps, you'll come out with a finished project. But the process is rarely this neat—or even neat at all.

The trajectory stays the same (assignment to final version), but there can be a lot of variation as we move through the “stages” in between:

- Some writers like to get their ideas out on paper or screen quickly, collapsing prewriting into writing and revising.

- Some writers like to think long and hard about what they are going to write before ever touching the keyboard.
- Some writers like to write the perfect introduction before they do anything else.
- Some like to skip the introduction until the end of the first draft.
- Some want to read everything they will write about first; some want to read as they go.

None of these approaches is “right” or “wrong.”

When working on an assignment, focus more on what you are trying to accomplish by writing instead of the order of the stages. While it is important to keep making progress on an assignment, it is actually more important to recognize, for example, whether you are ready to revise or whether you need to go back to the assignment itself to focus on your purpose.

With each of the strategies we suggest, your experience might be different. Our recommendation is that you try them with an open mind, particularly the ones that your instructor recommends. Be ready to consider approaches that have not worked for you in the past or that you have never tried. You might find something new that will help you write more successfully.

Protip Icon Some writers like to wait until the last minute, cramming all of the stages into one draft done quickly, declaring, “I do my best work under pressure!” This is called **procrastination**. Here’s a secret: If this describes you, consider changing your habits. One-night wonders (the results of such procrastination) may be enough to get by, but they will never be your best work. Particularly in your chosen area of study, you want your best work to shine.

Attributions

“3.3: The Writing Process” remixes and revises [Why Writing Process in College?](#) and [Thinking about Writing Process](#) in [Reading and Writing Successfully in College: A Guide for Students \[Revised Edition\]](#) by Patricia Lynne, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

Figure 3.1: Writing Process in 6 Steps is adapted from [“Writing Process in 7 Steps”](#) by [Joanne Pineda](#), licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#), published in [English for Degree Entrance Preparation](#) by Carrie Molinski and Sue Slessor, licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

3.3.1 STAGES OF THE WRITING PROCESS

Applying Pre-writing Strategies

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 five strategies are best used when initially getting started on a project.

- Identifying the purpose and the audience of your writing task
- Brainstorming and/or idea mapping
- Reading and researching
- Freewriting
- Asking questions

Identifying Purpose and Audience of Writing

The first important step in any project is for you to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, to summarize, to reflect or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. For the purpose, be specific; it cannot just be to write a paper for my teacher. Consider what the paper is supposed to accomplish. For the audience, write down who will read this work and then consider the following: “What tone should I use, what knowledge do they have already, and what point of view should I use?”

My purpose:

My audience:

Protip Icon Look for the learning objective tied to the project or the unit. This will often tell you the overall purpose of an assignment.

Brainstorming and Idea Mapping

Brainstorming is similar to list-making. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic or assignment details across the top. Underneath this, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic/assignment goal 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 topic or a more specific structure for your assignment.

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. 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.

Reading and Researching

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas. This is particularly useful if you are asked to choose a topic to write on. For instance, if you've been asked to build an essay or a research report, you may have to choose a topic. Researching and reading beforehand can spark your interest in a topic, which will help you choose a topic of interest. It can also help you narrow down your **scope**, as you can know what research/reading has already been done about a topic.

Protip Icon 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.

Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about your project 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, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

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. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

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

Last semester my favourite class was about mass media. We got to study streaming services and social media. People say we watch too much TV (like Netflix), 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 with something like the news because it's too scary now (my husband watches clips on his phone, and I can hear them). Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. News sites I don't read as much anymore. I can find out about the most important things happening on TikTok or Instagram. When I was younger, there weren't as many streaming sites, so you didn't have to go searching around as much for what you wanted. Now there are so many options, but it sometimes feels like there's nothing worth watching! My husband thinks I'm crazy, but sometimes I like to watch old black-and-whites on from the 1950s or even before. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use colour on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of colour. Some of those shows even show you how

to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me – or my husband. I’m handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us!

Asking Questions

As you begin on a project, asking and answering questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your project. You may also discover aspects of the project that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. You may also discover that you don’t quite understand what is being asked of you, and now can reach out to your teacher for support with specific questions.

Table 3.2: Asking Questions

Questions	Answers
Who?	I use media. Students, teachers, parents, employers and employees – everyone uses media.
What?	The media can be a lot of things. Websites, videos, podcasts, tik toks, other social media apps and even older things like TV news, magazines, newspapers
Where?	It feels like media is everywhere now. We all carry a media viewing device in our pockets, the college hallways have TV displays, and there are even large screens in gas station pumps now!
When?	Media has been around for a long time, but current forms (like social media) are more recent, since the early 2000s
Why?	Hmm. This is a good question. We have the technology to make it easier now. And people live far away from their families, and they have to stay in touch.
How?	Well, media we have now is possible because of the internet, but I don’t know how it all works!

Protip Icon Prewriting is very purpose-driven; it does not follow a set of hard-and-fast rules. The purpose of prewriting is to find and explore ideas so that you will be prepared to write. A prewriting technique like asking questions can help you both find a topic and explore it. 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 fit your personal style.

Critical Thinking Exercise – Note Taking

The best way to practice the writing process is to practice writing! This work will take place in parts in this Critical Thinking Exercises and the next three. Your overall task is to write a short reflection piece on an article in which you reflect on your thoughts on that article, how it connects/applies to your life, and any other ideas we covered from [Chapter 1.2: Reading Critically](#). Remember to refer to [Chapter 1.5: Reflection and Drawing Conclusions](#) for how to write a reflection for school.

In this reflection, we want you to use the tasks laid out in each section to help you through the writing process.

The first step will be the pre-writing process.

Choose ONE of the following articles to read:

- [Why a Quebec food can maker reshored its supply chain back to Canada from the U.S. | CBC News](#)
- [How Indigenous-Led Efforts are Restoring Wildfire-Impacted Forests – Macleans.ca](#)
- [Businesses put at risk when employees use unauthorized AI tools at work](#)
- [Social media ban: Canadian parent group calls for kids' digital safety](#)
- [Mine Canada's E-Waste for Metals – Macleans.ca](#)
- [AI music creators spark debate on industry's future](#)

Then first identify the purpose and audience of your writing task.

My purpose:

My audience:

Afterwards, your task is to **use the Cornell note-taking strategy** as explained above and create some notes for yourself.

Connect with your instructor for specific instructions before completing this work.

Outlining and Organizing

Your prewriting activities and research have helped you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you found, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. But 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. An outline is a point-form list of your ideas.

When you write, you need to organize your ideas in an order that makes sense, as this helps you accurately show the purpose of your writing. For instance, a well-organized research essay that clearly informs the reader on a topic will likely score better marks than one that is disorganized.

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. 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 paper work together to consistently develop your main point.

The structure of your outline will vary depending on what kind of writing you do. We will look at different forms of outlining for different writing assignments as we get into later units. Please see one example of an essay outline below, remembering that outlines can take different forms and do not need match this one.

Sample Outline

I. Introduction

- a. Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

II. E-book readers and the way that people read – Information from (Baron, 2015)

- a. Books easy to access and carry around
 - i. Electronic downloads
 - ii. Storage in memory for hundreds of books
- b. An expanding market

- i. E-book readers from booksellers
 - ii. E-book readers from electronics and computer companies
- c. Limitations of current e-book readers
 - i. Incompatible features from one brand to the next
 - ii. Borrowing and sharing e-books
- III. Film cameras replaced by digital cameras – Information from (It takes a camera, 2011)
 - a. Three types of digital cameras
 - i. Compact digital cameras
 - ii. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs
 - iii. Cameras that combine the best features of both
 - b. The confusing “megapixel wars.”
 - c. The zoom lens battle
- IV. The confusing choice among televisions – Information from (Hall & Waniata, 2018)
 - a. Resolution
 - b. Backlighting and High Dynamic Range
 - c. Home media centers
- V. Conclusion
 - a. How to be a wise consumer

References

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<https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-buy-the-right-tv/>
- It takes a camera. (2011). *Consumer reports*, 76(8), 38-47.

Critical Thinking Exercise – Outline

Using the article you chose above, and your pre-writing strategies notes, create an outline to organize your thoughts for your reflection piece. Share your outline with your instructor.

Drafting

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

Even professional writers admit that an empty page scares them because they feel they need to come up with something fresh and original every time they open a blank document on their computers. Because you have completed the first two steps in the writing process, you have already recovered from empty page syndrome. You have prewriting and planning already done. You know what will go on that blank page: what you wrote in your outline.

What makes the writing process so beneficial to writers is that 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 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. One helpful technique is to set a word count, such as "write 100 words." Then once you get there, you can stop. Once

you do get there, though, you'll likely find you can continue to at least finish whatever thought you are on and may even finish a full paragraph.

- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are 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.
- **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 want to 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 that they are totally clear, and your communication is effective?

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

Protip Icon

When submitting assignments, it can be important to have evidence of the work you did so you are not accused of plagiarism. Make sure you save your multiple drafts, your notes, and outlines, so you can refer back to them when needed. Another strategy is to use version history in Word or Google Docs to show how your work evolved.

Reflection

Before you begin drafting your reflection piece to submit to your instructor. Reflect on the drafting strategies listed above. Consider which ones will be most useful to you to keep in mind. Write this down in your notes, so you can refer back to it as needed.

Critical Thinking Exercise – Reflection Draft

Using your article, the pre-writing strategies, and your outline, draft a first copy of your reflection piece. Keep in mind that a first draft does not need to be perfect, and in fact, it shouldn't be!

Please share your first draft with your instructor.

Revising and Editing

Revising and editing are the two tasks you undertake to significantly improve your writing/ assignments. 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 during 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.

Protip Icon

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 support is located and use the assistance they provide online and in person.

You will be using this writing process framework to help you in the later units as we start tackling various forms of writing.

Critical Thinking Exercise – Revisions

Now that you have a first draft, it is time to go back and edit your work. Use the strategies above to make adjustments to your reflection piece.

Note: This is a good opportunity to use Grammarly Pro to support you with grammar and mechanics, but remember that you should not accept every suggestion without careful review. You want to make sure that your writing is still from your point of view and voice!

Attributions

“3.3.1 Stages of the Writing Process” remixes and revises and [3.2 – Apply Prewriting Models](#),

[3.3 – Outlining](#), [3.4 – Drafting](#), and [3.5 – Revising and Editing](#) in [Communication Essentials for College](#) by Jen Booth, Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, Georgian College, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

3.1: **Define** academic writing and **discuss** its purpose.

- Academic writing is a specific form of communication where you cannot interact with the reader. You must work towards making your writing as clear as possible.
- Building your academic writing skills will help you communicate effectively and support you in professional opportunities and in college.

3.2: **Describe** various approaches to academic note-taking

- Taking notes can support your learning
- Note-taking involves active engagement where you are not just taking down word for word what was said aloud or what you read. Find connections and identify your opinions.
- There are multiple forms of note-taking. Find the style that works for you. You may have to adapt your style depending on the course, the material or the project involved.

3.3: **Utilize** the writing process plan for college writing assignments

- Strong writers use the writing process to help them stay focused on their purpose.
- The six stages include pre-writing, outlining and organizing, drafting, revision, editing, and submitting.
- Pre-writing includes tasks such as identifying purpose and audience, brainstorming and idea mapping, reading and researching, freewriting, and asking questions.
- Outlining is the process of organizing your ideas, drafting is the first step of writing, revision is the work of improving the draft, editing is making corrections; once the assignment is complete, the last stage is submission.
- Each project will require a different amount of time spent on each stage. There is no perfect formula. Use your purpose and audience to help identify how long to spend on each stage in

the writing process.

CHAPTER 4 - SUMMARY WRITING

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, we looked at the writing process and note-taking. In this chapter, we are going to be putting these skills to use and looking at a specific form of writing: summary writing. You can see a form of summary writing on the back of a book cover or when scrolling on a streaming platform. In both cases, each provides a brief **synopsis** of the plot to encourage you to read or watch it. You might also see it in reviews or at work through meeting minutes. In academic writing, summary writing can be used to support your personal learning, but it is also a style of writing you may be asked to do.

You may have noticed in [3.2 The Importance of Note-taking and Different Methods of Note-taking](#) that one of the Pro Tips suggested that you add a summary to your notes to help with review, and summaries are also a part of the Cornell Method. This is one way you may use summary in your college career, as summarizing key details of your notes can help you understand and memorize those details. You may also be asked to write a summary for an assignment to demonstrate your understanding of a text. You can also use it in other forms of writing to help support your points.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Describe** the characteristics and purpose of a summary.
2. **Create** a summary.
3. **Explain** and **create** paraphrases.
4. **Identify** strategies for proofreading their own work.

4.1 WHAT IS A SUMMARY?

A summary is a short overview of the main points of a text. The purpose of a summary is to quickly give the reader or listener an idea of what the material is saying. You may find it helpful to create summaries of your own work, but more often, you will create summaries of material by other authors, such as articles, plays, films, lectures, stories, or presentations.

Why Summarize?

At some point in your classes, you will likely be given an assignment to summarize a specific text, an assignment in which summary is the sole intent. You will also use summaries in more holistic ways, though, incorporating them along with paraphrases, quotations, and your own opinions into more complex pieces of writing. You might summarize for several reasons, both in your time as a student and in your life outside of education.

Here are some common reasons for writing summaries:

- A summary can show your understanding of the main points of an assigned reading or viewing, so your instructor might ask you to summarize in order to know that you've understood the material.
- You might summarize a section from a source, or even the whole source, when the ideas in that source are critical to an assignment you are working on and you feel they need to be included, but they would take up too much space in their original form.
- Summarizing is also an excellent way to double-check that you understand a text. If you can summarize the ideas in it, you likely have a good grasp of the information it is presenting. This can be helpful for school-related work, such as studying for an exam or researching a topic for a paper, but it is also useful in daily life when you encounter texts on topics that are personally or professionally interesting to you.

What Makes Something a Summary?

When you ask yourself, after reading an article (and maybe even reading it two or three times), “What was that article about?” and you end up jotting down—from memory, without returning to

the original article to use its language or phrases—three things that stood out as the author’s main points, you are summarizing. Summaries have several key characteristics.

You’re summarizing well when you

- use your own words.
- significantly condense the original text.
- provide accurate representations of the main points of the text they summarize.
- avoid personal opinion.

Summaries are much shorter than the original material—a general rule is that they should be no more than 10% to 15% the length of the original, and they are often even shorter than this.

It can be easy and feel natural to summarize an article by including our own opinions. We may agree or disagree strongly with what this author is saying, or we may want to compare their information with the information presented in another source, or we may want to share our own opinion on the topic. Often, our opinions slip into summaries even when we work diligently to keep them separate. These opinions are not the job of a summary, though. **A summary should *only* highlight the main points of the article and should not include our opinions on them.**

Pro tip icon

Focusing on just the ideas that best support a point we want to make or ignoring ideas that don’t support that point can be tempting. This approach has two significant problems, though:

First, it no longer correctly represents the original text, so it misleads your reader about the ideas presented in that text. A summary should give your reader an accurate idea of what they can expect if they pick up the original article to read.

Second, it undermines your own credibility as an author to not represent this information accurately. If readers cannot trust an author to accurately represent source information, they may not be as likely to trust that author to thoroughly and accurately present a reasonable point.

Check Your Understanding: Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=99#h5p-22>

Attributions

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4.2 PRINCIPLES OF SUMMARY WRITING

How Should I Organize a Summary?

Like traditional essays, summaries have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. What these components look like will vary somewhat based on the purpose of the summary you're writing and the length of the summary. The introduction, body, and conclusion of the work focus specifically on summarizing something, which is going to be a little different than in the work where summary is not the primary goal.

For this unit, we are looking at writing where the sole focus is summarizing, but keep in mind you may need to use these types of skills in other types of writing as well!

Introducing a Summary

One of the trickier parts of creating a summary is making it clear that this is a summary of someone else's work; these ideas are not your original ideas. You will almost always begin a summary with an introduction to the author, article, and publication, so the reader knows what they are about to read. This information will appear again in your reference list, but it is also useful at the beginning of your text, so the reader can follow the conversation happening in your summary. You will need to provide this detail in both places.

In summary-focused work, this introduction should accomplish a few things:

- Introduce the name of the author whose work you are summarizing.
- Introduce the title of the text being summarized.
- Introduce where this text was presented. (If it's an art installation, where is it being shown? If it's an article, where was that article published? Not all texts will have this component—for example, when summarizing a book written by one author, the title of the book and name of that author are sufficient information for your readers to easily locate the work you are summarizing.)
- Introduce when the text was presented or published.
- State the main ideas of the text you are summarizing—just the big-picture components.
- Give context when necessary. Is this text responding to a current event? That might be important to know. Does this author have specific qualifications that make them an expert on this topic? This might also be relevant information.

Protip Icon Depending on the length of your summary, this introduction may be just one sentence (in a summary paragraph) or it might be a full, short introductory paragraph (in a multi-paragraph summary).

So, for example, if you were to get an assignment asking you to summarize Matthew Hutson's Atlantic article, "[Beyond the Five Senses](http://www.theatlantic.com)" (found at www.theatlantic.com), an introduction for that summary might look something like one of the following, depending on the length of your summary:

In his July 2017 article in *The Atlantic*, "Beyond the Five Senses," Matthew Hutson explores ways in which potential technologies might expand our sensory perception of the world, paying particular attention to accessing sensory perception outside of the five senses. *This would be used for a summary paragraph assignment.*

In his July 2017 article in *The Atlantic*, "Beyond the Five Senses," Matthew Hutson explores ways in which potential technologies might expand our sensory perception of the world. He notes that some technologies, such as cochlear implants, are already accomplishing a version of this for people who do not have full access to one of the five senses. In much of the article, though, he seems more interested in how technology might expand the ways in which we sense things. Some of these technologies are based in senses that can be seen in nature, such as echolocation, and others seem more deeply rooted in science fiction. However, all of the examples he gives consider how adding new senses to the ones we already experience might change how we perceive the world around us. *This would be used for a multi-paragraph summary assignment.*

Outside of a summary assignment, you will probably find yourself more frequently using summary as just one component of work with a wide range of goals (not just a goal to "summarize X").

Summary introductions in these situations still generally need to

- Name the author.
- Name the text being summarized.
- State just the relevant context, if there is any (maybe the author has a specific credential that makes their work on this topic carry more weight than it would otherwise, or maybe the study they generated is now being used as a benchmark for additional research).
- Introduce the author's full name (first and last names) the first time you summarize part of their text. If you summarize pieces of the same text more than once in a work you are

writing, each time you use their text after the initial introduction of the source, you will only use the author's last name as you introduce that next summary component.

- This summarized material will just be nestled within your other writing to add supporting detail to a point in a paragraph or essay. Here is an example:

Fibre intake can also support physical health. The article, "Benefits of Fibre," written by Dr. Madeupguy, describes various health benefits of increasing fibre intake. One such finding detailed there was an increase in metabolic health when participants increased their fibre intake to 40 g per day (p. 5).

Note: This is a made-up example; while there are many studies that prove fibre intake is good for your health, the information in this specific article is fictional!

Critical Thinking Exercise: Building a Summary Introduction

As this is a preparatory course for degree programs, we are going to be looking at summary skills with more academic texts. This means you will be reading an academic journal article and using it for the next few exercises within this section.

Read through this article: ["Transition Experiences of Mature Students at Ontario Colleges" by Hayfa F. Jafar](#). Note this resource is external and may not meet accessibility standards.

Note: It is a good idea to create notes while you go to support you with later steps in this chapter! Refer back to [Chapter 3 on note-taking](#) for further support.

Once you have read the article, please create and share with your instructor the following:

1. A summary introductory sentence
2. A summary introductory paragraph

In this section, we will be providing a quick look at the other sections in a summary, but each of these main ideas will be broken down even further below.

Presenting the “Meat” (or Body) of a Summary

Again, this will look a little different depending on the purpose of the summary work you are doing. Regardless of how you are using a summary, you will introduce the main ideas throughout your text with transitional phrasing, such as “One of [Author’s] biggest points is...,” or “[Author’s] primary concern about this solution is...”

Protip Icon In academic writing, when we are using an author’s name, we use the full name the first time it appears in writing, but then any subsequent mention of that author should just include the author’s last name.

If you are responding to a “write a summary of X” assignment, the body of that summary will expand on the main ideas you stated in the introduction of the summary, although this will all still be very condensed compared to the original. You will want to focus on key points the author makes about each of those big-picture main ideas you mention in the summary. Depending on the kind of text you are summarizing, you may want to note how the main ideas are supported (although, again, be careful to avoid making your own opinion about those supporting sources).

In the next section, we will look more closely at techniques for breaking down the text and identifying the main points you will need to include when you summarize a text. Then we will look at how to conclude a summary.

Attributions

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4.2.1 FINDING THE MAIN POINT(S) FOR A SUMMARY

When creating a summary, it is important to find the main point of the text and the details that help support it. No matter what you are reading or why you are reading it, you want to make sure that you understand the main point.

The techniques below apply best to nonfiction work, including scholarly articles, informational texts, textbooks, and arguments. While they can also be used for fiction, strategies for reading literature often work better for these types of texts because literary texts don't always have a clear main point.

The techniques in this section can be used separately, but they can also be used together.

Break the Reading into Sections

Read more

Just like chapters in a novel, informative and other nonfiction texts are often made up of sections. A section of a text has a point of its own. You can think of sections in a text like building blocks, each adding to the structure and content of the whole. In this fashion, each section should contribute at least one key idea to the main point.

Keep in mind that it often takes several paragraphs to work through the explanation of a single point. A section might be as short as a single paragraph, but it also might be much longer—six, eight, ten paragraphs long.

ProTip Icon You can treat each section as its own little mini-text and work to find the main point of that section. If you understand the point of each section, you can often piece together the main point by combining the points of the sections.

It is usually helpful to try to summarize each section of text in one or two sentences. When you

read those sentences together, you can often more easily see the main point. This approach can also get you started on a full summary of the text.

Texts with Obvious Section Breaks

Sometimes sections will be obvious because they will be labelled with headings. You'll see this in textbooks, for example. These headings work like titles in that they can give you clues about the contents of that section.

For example, in scholarly research essays in many fields, headings such as “**method**,” “**results**,” and “**discussion**” tell an experienced reader what kind of information to expect in each of those sections. those sections.

Texts Without Obvious Section Breaks

Sometimes, there are no headings or spacing to guide you in dividing up a text. That doesn't mean that there aren't sections. You just have to look harder for them.

Look first for changes in topics. In some texts, authors will talk about a series of topics that are related but are clearly distinct from one another. For example, a text that describes harms caused by climate change might discuss different kinds of harm—harm to plants, harm to animals, and harm to people—and each of those could be considered a different section.

Other times, however, the changes in topics aren't obvious. In these cases, your best approach is to look at the opening sentences of paragraphs for the transitions:

- Transitions that show similarity (e.g., “also,” “likewise”) or example (e.g., “for instance,” “specifically”) usually do not indicate a section change. These signal that the author is continuing the same point.
- Transitions that show contrast (e.g., “however,” “on the other hand”) or sequence (e.g., “first,” “second,” “next”) frequently do indicate a section change. These signal a change in perspective or topic.

Other types of transitions, such as those dealing with time (e.g., “before,” “recently”) or consequence (e.g., “therefore,” “accordingly”), may or may not signal a section change. You'll have to read further or look for other clues.

Transitions are not always just single words, so you may have to look at the structure and meaning of those opening sentences to see how they are setting up the topic of the current paragraph.

Once you have identified sections, you can start working on understanding the point in each one and how that point contributes to the main point of the text.

Example: Transitional Ideas

Let's take the following sentence and assume that it appears at the beginning of a paragraph: "While some may agree with Jones, others disagree." Technically, there is no transition word in that sentence, but there is a transition idea. The first part of the sentence ("Some may agree with Jones") gestures backward to what has already been discussed (Jones's ideas). The second part ("others disagree") signals that disagreement with Jones will be the subject of at least this paragraph, and maybe more.

Focus on the Ending and the Beginning

Read more

When we read, we remember best what we read last. Authors know this, so they often make sure that they provide some kind of clarity about their main point at the end of a text. If a text is intended to be read through to the end, you are very likely to find the main point there.

We remember best what we read last, but we also tend to remember what we read first. If you don't see a main point at the end of a text, look back at the beginning to see if it's there. It may also be in both places, and a repeated idea is usually a pretty big signal that you have found the central idea.

Exceptions to the Rule

Not all genres put their main points at the end.

Some, like newspaper articles, put their main point up front—usually in the first sentence.

Newspaper articles are written with the expectation that most readers will read the headline

and a few paragraphs of the story, so the main point is put right at the beginning (in what is called the “lead,” sometimes spelled “lede”).

This is also true for articles that use IMRD structure. IMRD stands for introduction, method, results, and discussion, and this structure is very common in scholarly research articles in the natural and social sciences. In those articles, the main point can be found in the **(which is itself a concise summary of a larger work), within the first couple of paragraphs of the discussion section, and sometimes in the introduction.**

Follow the Topic Sentences

Read more

Topic sentences are the sentences that sum up the main idea in a paragraph. In longer paragraphs, they help readers (and writers) remain focused on the key point. However, topic sentences can also be read together to get a clearer idea of the main point of an article, chapter, or even a section of a text.

When you string topic sentences together, you get the gist of the author’s point in a text. You can highlight those sentences in your text, but it might also help to copy those sentences into a separate document and read them together. They won’t sound coherent, but if you focus on the ways in which the ideas develop, you should be able to identify the main point of the article.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Finding the Main Point

Refer back to the article: [Transition Experiences of Mature Students at Ontario Colleges \[PDF\]](#).

Since you’ve already taken notes, now is the time to start reviewing your notes and the text to identify what the main ideas are based on the **sections** of the text.

Try to also **review the end and beginning** of the **WHOLE text** and of **each section of the text**; this includes looking at **topic sentences**.

You should end up with one summary sentence for each major section of the article to show your instructor.

Eliminate the Examples

Read more

Some texts use a lot of examples. While examples help us understand the point, they will never actually contain the main point of a text. If you find yourself getting caught up in the details or the stories in an article, you can temporarily get those out of the way.

Try printing out a hard copy or copying the article (or the difficult part of it) into a word processor. Then cross out or black out everything that is an example. What you are left with will be the author's explanations, and while what's left won't give you a coherent explanation, it should help you find the main point.

Identify Who Is Talking

Read more

Most authors include viewpoints other than their own in their writing, and if you are going to understand an author's point, you must know when the author is speaking in their own voice and when they are using the words and ideas of others. Most of the time, this can be seen through citation or attribution, which is when credit is given to a source even when no citation is provided.

To determine when the author is speaking and when the author is using the voices of others, look for the following:

- Quotation marks and the attributive tags that go with them: *Jones says, "The sky is gray today."*
- References to specific people or organizations in the same sentence or in the sentences immediately around the point, even without the quotation marks: *United Airlines has made a point of saying that the sky is gray.*
- Vague references to groups of people, with or without sources provided: *Some say that the gray has a yellow tint.*
- Citations or links to other sources for the information: *The yellow tint to the gray can be caused by the sun (Jones & Smith, 2016).*

You might find it helpful to identify in your annotations or notes how the author is using these voices, either as supporting or opposing voices.

Supporting Voices

Frequently, these viewpoints support the author's position or provide authority for their claims. In effect, the author is saying, "See? These other important and knowledgeable people agree with me!"

While these supporting viewpoints are helpful and even necessary, they are not the same as the author's viewpoint, and so you won't find the main point in these supporting voices.

Opposing Voices

Sometimes it can seem like an author is contradicting themselves. While sometimes this is true, instead the author is usually presenting someone else's viewpoint as part of their argument. This is called a **counterargument**.

In a counterargument, an author will present an opposing idea in order to respond, usually in a way that explains why the author's idea is better. For example, an author who wants to argue against the use of facial recognition technology might explain what others see as the benefits before making the case that this technology is too racially biased. You want to make sure that you understand when you are reading the author's point and when you are reading the point of a source.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Summary Notes

Now it's time to bring it all together and create strong notes for a summary.

Article: [Transition Experiences of Mature Students at Ontario Colleges \[PDF\]](#).

Use the information above to create notes that will help you build a summary. As a reminder, notes should typically be in YOUR words. If you have put any quotations in your notes from the text, please make sure to identify that for yourself!

Protip Icon

In the next section, we are going to be learning about paraphrasing as summaries are typically just paraphrasing details from the original text rather than quoting. It is important to know in your notes when you have already rewritten the information or if you still need to paraphrase the quoted detail.

Your summary notes should make sure you include the following:

- Identify the main ideas
 - The main idea of the text (thesis statement)
 - The supporting main ideas—what are the section breaks, and do the topic sentences tell you some of the main arguments of the text
- Remember, you don't want to include the examples
- Identify supporting and opposing voices

Share your notes with your instructor. Keep in mind your notes should be made FOR you at this stage; don't worry about grammar/mechanics. Just get the ideas down on paper, so you can refer to them later.

Note: We will be using these notes to build a practice summary after section 4.3.

Concluding a Summary

Similar to other forms of academic writing, the conclusion of a summary should contain specific elements.

First, you want to restate the main idea of the text (the thesis statement) in your conclusion, whether that be a conclusion paragraph or a conclusion sentence. If you are doing a longer summary, which would include a conclusion paragraph, you may also want to include any loose ends or connections that may help the reader fully understand your summary of the text. In other words, synthesize! (Refer to [Chapter 1.2 Reading Critically](#) for a refresher on synthesis.) Finally, if you have had to summarize quite a long text, you may also want to offer a summary within a summary to restate the main ideas you presented in your paragraphs. A summary conclusion paragraph should also be concise, so it is roughly around 5 sentences.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Building a Summary Conclusion

Article: [Transition Experiences of Mature Students at Ontario Colleges \[PDF\]](#).

Now that you have read the article and made some notes, **please create and share the following with your instructor:**

1. A summary conclusion sentence
2. A summary conclusion paragraph

Attributions

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4.3 PARAPHRASING SOURCES

When creating a summary, you are going to be using **paraphrasing** a lot. As a reminder, paraphrasing is taking the ideas from a source and putting them in your own words. Paraphrasing is a way to relay the author's ideas to your audience without relying on their actual language.

Normally, when you use paraphrases in your writing, you would include an in-text citation at the end of the sentence to indicate where the original idea came from. For a summary, though, this is not necessary, as you would be repeating the in-text citation again and again and again and again. Instead, as long as you include an introductory summary sentence and a reference list and use transition words to note that these are the ideas of the article, you do not include in-text citations.

A Note on Patchwriting

When a writer paraphrases by relying too heavily on the existing sentence structure and vocabulary of the original, this is called "patchwriting." Patchwriting can be considered a form of plagiarism because the writer takes the wording of someone else and claims it as their own.

Patchwriting most commonly occurs when writers keep their sources open in front of them as they write a paraphrase. It can also happen when writers memorize passages or try to write paraphrases too soon after they have put away the text. Readers are influenced not just by the ideas of writers, but also by the words that authors use to explain those ideas.

As you practice paraphrasing, you will get better at it, and it can become an excellent way to improve your understanding of difficult material. In the meantime, put your sources away, and if you find yourself patchwriting anyway, try paraphrasing your patchwriting. Every time you do it, you should find yourself a little further away from the original text.

Note: While we are looking at paraphrasing in the context of summarizing, this skill will come up again and again in other forms of writing we cover. Keep in mind HOW to paraphrase and that when you are not doing a summary, you will need to include in-text citations!

How to Paraphrase Using a Two-Part Process

First, you need to understand the passage. Of course, you need to understand the text as a whole, but to paraphrase well, you also have to make sure that you understand more precisely the ideas in the passage you want to reference. Careful reading will help you do this.

The second part—and frequently the more difficult one—is putting the passage in your own words. It is not enough to substitute a few synonyms—even really good ones—to paraphrase well. Instead, you have to both alter the vocabulary where possible and avoid using the same sentence structure.

Let's unpack that a bit.

- **Alter the vocabulary.** To alter the vocabulary, you need to use different words to describe the author's point, except where the specific words are necessary. Specific words to hang onto would mostly be technical language: the word itself is the most appropriate word because it is the most accurate.
- **Change the sentence structure.** Ultimately, your sentence should not look like the original, even when you are using some of the technical language. If your reader were to read the two sentences side-by-side, they should be able to see the same idea, but not the same way of phrasing that idea.

How to do this? Complete the Writing a Paraphrase exercise to try one method.

Writing a Paraphrase

To write a strong paraphrase, try the following steps:

1. Make sure that you understand the passage.
2. Close the book or put away the article.
3. Do something else for five or ten minutes—perhaps work on the rest of the paragraph.
4. Without looking back at the original text, write your paraphrase. Go ahead and add it directly to the paragraph you are working on. But DON'T look at the text again until you are ready to check your paraphrase.
5. Check your paraphrase against the original both to make sure your paraphrase is accurate and to make sure that you haven't written a paraphrase that is too close to the origi-

nal.

Example

Below, you will find a quoted passage from the article we examined in the summary section.

“In addition to the reasons mentioned earlier, the search for greater job security was also a trigger for pursuing college education. As one domestic student expressed, “I was just tired of the contracts being shortened.” For some participants, the lack of job opportunities, even with a previous degree or diploma, was a trigger for them to decide to go back to college.” (Jafar, 2023, p. 140).

Paraphrased passage:

Haya Jafar (2023) details that many adult learners choose to pursue education for stronger job security. Other adult learners, even those with previous degrees or diplomas, returned to schooling to open up more job opportunities (p. 140).

Source:

Jafar, F. (2022). [Transition experiences of mature students at Ontario Colleges \[PDF\]](https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/cjhe/2022-v52-n4-cjhe08358/1102555ar.pdf). *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 52(4). <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/cjhe/2022-v52-n4-cjhe08358/1102555ar.pdf>

Another trick you can use is to imagine that you are having to explain the idea in the passage to someone you care about (sibling, friend, a parent, etc.). These people are smart people, but none of them have read the text or has the kind of detailed knowledge of the topics you are writing about. This means that you will have to put it in relatively plain language to explain it. That explanation in plain language can produce some pretty solid paraphrases because you are not bogged down in worrying about the original text’s writing, and, as an added benefit, this also helps to confirm your OWN understanding of the passage.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Please try to paraphrase the examples below on your own. Then open the example to see a potential paraphrase; as a note, this is just one example of a paraphrase. Yours may look different and still be a great paraphrase! If you are unsure of your paraphrase, send to your instructor for feedback.

1. “Generally, participants stated that their mature status affected their overall experience positively. They felt confident because of their previous education and work experience, as well as because of the new skills they acquired from their current program. They reported developing both technical and social skills, such as communication and intercultural skills, as well as a more positive attitude. Most of the students mentioned that their program also made a positive impact on their personal development.” (Jafar, 2023, p. 142).

Jafar, F. (2022). [Transition experiences of mature students at Ontario Colleges \[PDF\]](https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/cjhe/2022-v52-n4-cjhe08358/1102555ar.pdf). *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 52(4). <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/cjhe/2022-v52-n4-cjhe08358/1102555ar.pdf>

Answer

Participants in this study explained that being a ‘mature student’ resulted in an overall positive experience during their post-secondary education. Participants stated that they were more confident because of their past experience and the new skills they acquired, both technical and social skills. They also mentioned a positive impact to their personal development (Jafar, 2023, p. 142).

2. “Another challenge is the land itself. When a fire burns too hot and deep, it can create a glass-like layer that repels water, which Kane says cannot be replanted even with human help. “It’s just a dead moonscape,” says Kane” (Halek, 2025, para. 24).

Halek, M. (2025, August 18). [Replanting forests after wildfires comes with complex challenges, but there are opportunities in the ashes](https://www.cbc.ca/news/climate/trees-forest-wildfires-planting-seeds-1.7606076). CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/climate/trees-forest-wildfires-planting-seeds-1.7606076>

Answer

One challenge to replanting after a forest fire mentioned in “Replanting forests after wildfires

comes with complex challenges, but there are opportunities in the ashes”, by Martin Halak (2025) is the soil itself as a too hot fire creates a soil layer that repels water (para. 24).

3. “Sports betting has been legal in Canada since 2021, but there are no rules around how it can be advertised. So in June 2023, Deacon had proposed legislation to create a national framework to regulate sports betting advertising, introducing Bill S-211 to the Senate” (Shetty, 2025, para. 5).

Shetty, A. (2025, September 10). [Senator for Waterloo region wants to ban sports betting ads that lead to “addictive behaviour” in youth](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/sports-betting-marty-deacon-1.7629047). CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/sports-betting-marty-deacon-1.7629047>

Answer

Since 2021 in Canada, sports betting has been legal, but no legislation has been created on its advertising. Marty Deacon, a senator for Waterloo region, has proposed legislation to regulate sports betting: Bill S-211 (Shetty, 2025, para. 5).

Protip Icon

AI tools can be useful for building paraphrases, but they should only be used as a tool. Do not just blindly trust what any generative AI tool produces. You must check it closely to make sure the output accurately represents the author and the text. You should also revise the paraphrase to add YOUR voice to the writing. AI tools produce text without grammar and **mechanics** errors, but the tone and style lack personality, and the details included may not match your audience or purpose. **You must always check with your instructor to determine what is permissible.**

Example: Good Paraphrasing

Here’s an example of a paraphrase that keeps the ideas in the original source, but not the language. Notice that the paraphrase also includes a citation.

Original Text

“The average cost in 2017 to install solar systems ranged from a little over \$2,000 per kilowatt (kilowatts are a measure of power capacity) for large-scale systems to almost \$3,700 for residential systems. A new natural gas plant might have costs around \$1,000/kW. Wind comes in around \$1,200 to \$1,700/kw.”

Paraphrase

Though ultimately making the case that long-term savings outweigh initial costs, the Union of Concerned Scientists points out that it costs between \$2000 and \$3700 per kilowatt to install different types of solar systems and between \$1200 and \$1700 to install wind systems. Solar and wind systems might be better environmentally, but big companies think about the money spent, especially when natural gas plants are only \$1000 per kilowatt (Union, 2017).

Source

Union of Concerned Scientists. (2017, December 20). [Barriers to renewable energy technologies](http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/barriers-renewable-energy-technologies). <http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/barriers-renewable-energy-technologies>

Example: From Block Quote to Paraphrase

Here is a long quotation from an academic writing guide (note there are a few minor changes in the quote, represented by square brackets):

Students frequently overuse direct quotation [when] taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. (Lester, 1976, pp. 46-47)

An accurate paraphrase of this passage can reduce a five-line passage to three lines without losing or distorting any of the original points.

Paraphrase

Lester (1976) advises against exceeding 10% quotation in your written work. Since students

writing research reports often quote excessively because of copy-cut-and-paste note-taking, try to minimize using sources word-for-word (pp. 46-47).

Source

Lester, J. D. (1976). Writing research papers: A complete guide (2nd ed.). University of Michigan.

Additional Resources

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab, better known as the [Purdue OWL](#), has many resources to support academic writers. The [Purdue OWL module on Paraphrasing](#) includes an [exercise](#) with [example answers](#).

Critical Thinking Exercise: Summarizing a Text

Putting It All Together and Summarizing a Text

Refer back to the notes you made in [4.2: Principles of Summary Writing](#) and to the article, [Transition Experiences of Mature Students at Ontario Colleges \[PDF\]](#).

Write a summary of this text using the notes you've created above. Your summary should include a summary introduction paragraph, three (3) to five (5) main body paragraphs, and a summary conclusion paragraph.

Remember to follow the APA style guide rules discussed in [Chapter 2](#) and include a reference list.

At this time, **please do not use any generative AI tools**. This is an opportunity to practice your summary writing skills. We will explore editing in the next section, where some use of Generative AI or Grammarly Pro will be allowed.

Once you've created your summary, please share with your instructor.

References

- Halek, M. (2025, August 18). [Replanting forests after wildfires comes with complex challenges, but there are opportunities in the ashes](https://www.cbc.ca/news/climate/trees-forest-wildfires-planting-seeds-1.7606076). CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/climate/trees-forest-wildfires-planting-seeds-1.7606076>
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“Example: From Blockquote to Paraphrase” is adapted from [3.4: Using Source Text: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing](#) in [Essential Communication Skills: Mohawk College](#) by John Corr, Grant Coleman, Betti Sheldrick, and Scott Bunyan, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

4.4 PROOFREADING

In [Chapter 3](#), we learned about the writing process. One of the final steps in the writing process is the revising stage. This section provides more detail on that process through the idea of proofreading.

When asked about proofreading strategies, students often say they “read over” their assignments before they submit, but how well does just “reading over” work? Have you ever gotten an assignment back only to find typos and other errors? The problem is usually a lack of real proofreading strategies.

This section outlines several strategies that other students have shared. Not all of them will work for everyone, but we recommend that you try them all to see what works best for you. You might be able to find more errors than you have in the past.

Proofreading vs. Editing

Editing and proofreading require different work, but both require attention to detail. Proofreading is about finding small errors, like typos or missing commas, while editing often involves more substantial work on organization, word choice, and sentence structure.

Below are some strategies to get you started on proofreading.

Hearing the Text: Strategies for Good Ears

Some people can hear problems in their writing much more easily than they can see them, so these variations all rely on you being able to hear what you have written. The strategies below tend to work better when you are able to make marks on a hard copy of your paper, so it is best if you print your paper out, no matter which one you try.

- **You can try reading out loud to yourself**— This is helpful if you are good at reading out loud exactly what you have written, mistakes and all. This can help you ‘hear’ the mis-

takes, and then you can make corrections as you go, or leave marks (highlighting, underlines, circles) to make corrections later.

- **You can ask a friend to read your text out loud to you**—This will work best with someone who hasn't worked with you on other revisions, so they don't know in advance what you mean. This time, you want to mark places where your reader stumbles or has to back up to read a sentence, as well as places where one or the other of you sees errors. This strategy often works best with two hard copies, one for you and one for your partner.
- **You can have your computer read the text out loud to you**—Keep in mind that a computer won't stumble or back up. It also won't stop until you tell it to. You'll need to be ready to use some quick-marking techniques if you use this strategy.

Seeing the Text: Strategies for Good Eyes

Some people see errors better than they can hear them. However, finding errors this way works better when we change the way the text looks. You can then proofread using your screen or a hard copy, whichever works better for you.

- **Change the size or typeface of the font you are using.** Changing font types and sizes changes where the beginnings and endings of lines appear, which means that you're more likely to see errors.
 - Most word processors default to using a sans serif font; try a serif font or a different typeface.
 - Make the entire text 18-point or even larger.
- **Shrink your window size so that you can only see a few lines at a time.** This can help you focus on the words in those lines instead of the flow of the paragraph.
- **Make every sentence into a separate paragraph** (see the activity below).
 - This approach can work well in conjunction with shrinking your window size, since each sentence will be separated from the ones around it.
 - For an added bonus, this approach can also help you see when you have sentences that begin the same way or too many sentences of the same length in a row.
 - It can also help you find **dropped quotations** (quotations that stand alone without any of your writing to introduce them).

Example: Changing Font Size

Compare these two versions:

The same text in two different fonts and sizes to show how it is easier to see errors in the larger font; the misspelled word “proofreeding” is highlighted in yellow in the larger font.

The first sample is in Calibri, 14 point. The second sample is 20-point Comic Sans, which makes the error more obvious.

Moving Strategies

Some people think better when they are moving around or when they are moving things around. If this describes you, try these strategies.

- **Pace.** Get a clipboard, print out your paper, and walk around while you read. Make notes or marks for later changes as you go.
- **Print out your paper and cut it up so that you only have one paragraph to work with at a time.** Tape together paragraphs that bridge pages. Then pick a paragraph, and start marking it up. For some added benefit, choose paragraphs at random so that the ideas are always moving around, too.

Checking Details

Sometimes, we know where the trouble spots are. We know that we have particular problems with commas, an author’s name, or there/their/they’re. It can be helpful to create a checklist of specific things to look for. For many of these, you can leverage your word processor’s search function to locate the problem spots more efficiently.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Proofread Your Previous Work

Now that you've gotten some feedback on your summary, it is time to proofread your work for errors.

At this time, you may use a generative AI tool or Grammarly Pro to support your proofreading.

Before you do, we recommend you first try using the proofreading strategies above! This will help you build your skills, so that AI can be just another tool in your toolbox, rather than something you have to rely on.

Remember as well, that while AI can create perfect grammar and mechanics, it lacks personality and YOUR voice. Try to build your prompt, so that generative AI does not suggest full sentence rewrites, but instead, catches grammatical and mechanical errors in your writing. Good writing allows your voice to shine through.

Here is a potential prompt you could use with AI:

Please proofread the following text for **grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanical errors only**.

Do not suggest changes to tone, sentence structure, word choice, or style.

I want to preserve the original voice and phrasing.

Note: If you use a generative AI tool or Grammarly Pro, please include a reference to this in your reference list and the prompt you used. Additionally, please make sure to include your original draft edited without AI, so we can provide feedback on both.

Learn more with this guide on how to build a reference for generative AI: [Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools – APA @ Conestoga Reference List – Library & Learning Services at Conestoga College.](#)

Attributions

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4.5 CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

4.1 **Describe** the characteristics and purpose of a summary

- A summary details the main points of a text in your own words, but should NOT include YOUR opinion on the text.
- A summary should include an introduction, a body part and a conclusion
- We can test our understanding of a text by summarizing it
- Summaries can be used to collect ideas and information for an assignment

4.2 **Create** a summary

- The introduction should include the following: author name, title of article, where it was published, when it was published and the main idea.
- The summary introduction can be one sentence (for a summary paragraph) or a full paragraph (for a summary essay)
- The body section should include the main ideas of the text, and the conclusion should restate the main idea of the article.
- A reference for the source should be included at the bottom of your summary.
- There are several ways to identify the author's main idea
 - Break the reading into sections and identify each section's main idea, then put them together
 - Look at the beginning and ending of the text, especially the ending.
 - Look at the topic sentences of each paragraph, especially long paragraphs
 - Identify examples and focus on what the author writes in between them
 - Identify which viewpoints are the author's and which are the ideas of others (often presented in quotations and with some type of credit.

4.3 **Explain** and **create** paraphrases

- When including the main ideas of the text in your own words, you are paraphrasing
- Paraphrasing keeps the author's idea, but changes both the words used by the author and the sentence structure
- The best way to do this is to read a text, make sure you understand it, put it aside and then try to write out what the text was saying from memory.
- Always check a paraphrase to ensure it is accurate but does not rely too heavily on the language and sentence structure of the original.
- Patchwriting, which is paraphrasing that sticks too close to the original text, can be considered a form of plagiarism.

4.4 **Identify** strategies for proofreading your work

- Proofreading and editing are both important parts of the writing process, but editing focuses on revising your work.
- Proofreading focuses on correcting the smaller details like spelling, grammar, and other mechanics errors, or errors in formatting and referencing.
- Do not just “read over” your writing. Choose a proofreading technique that works for you, such as reading aloud or using a screen reader function, changing the font size or style, or moving around while you proofread.
- Use checklists to review specific aspects of the text, such as common errors like there/they're/their.

CHAPTER 5 – PERSUASIVE WRITING

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had to write a cover letter, an email dealing with customer support, or a text to convince friends to choose a certain restaurant? These are all forms of persuasive writing. Persuasive writing is about how you form arguments and how you support those arguments. As such, persuasive writing is used every day in every part of life: work, personal and school. In academic writing, persuasive writing is used to support the writer's opinion or point of view through a specific format, most often an essay. In this unit, we will be looking at persuasive writing and persuasive essays.

Learning Objectives

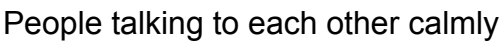
By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Describe** the purpose of persuasive writing.
2. **Analyze** persuasive writing in action
3. **Explain and create** a persuasive essay.
4. **Incorporate** quotations into their own writing.

5.1 WHAT IS 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 that there is more than one opinion on the subject.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In academic writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in academic writing is to advance knowledge and ideas using logic and objectivity. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning. Think back to Chapter 1, when we discussed rhetorical devices and how arguments can be strengthened or hurt by HOW they are presented.

For example, most people have strong  views on **controversial topics** (ones that inspire extreme points of view or opinions) and are often very willing to share those strong views. However, imagine you are having a discussion with someone who is only willing to share a particular point of view, ignoring yours, which may be in opposition. The ideas presented by that person would be very narrow, almost as if the person has tunnel vision and is merely expressing a personal opinion. If that person does provide you with facts, they may often be skewed or not from a credible source. After the discussion, there is only a slight chance you would be convinced of the other person's point of view. You may have new ideas you had not considered before or a new perspective, but you would probably not be thoroughly convinced because that person has not made any attempt to present a well-rounded, fact-based point of view. This is why it is essential for you to not only provide your reader with strong, substantiated evidence but also to ensure you present an argument that looks at the topic from multiple angles. Essentially, you want to leave space for opposing viewpoints in your argument.

Now, you may be asking yourself, "How can my argument be convincing if I present ideas contrary to my main point of view?" Well, you need to concede there are other views different from your own as it is very important to show your reader you have thought about different angles and that the conclusions you have come to have been critically developed. This evidence of critical thinking will elevate your argument to a level so that your reader cannot really have any objections to it.

Check Your Understanding: Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=117#h5p-23>

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5.2 ANALYZING PERSUASIVE WRITING

You are already a skilled argument evaluator, even if you don't realize it. We take apart arguments all the time in our lives. You likely have a good intuitive sense for the difference between good arguments and bad ones, and our goal is to sharpen these existing skills by taking a closer look at this process.

Note, we are taking the ideas around critical reading and understanding the rhetorical devices we covered in [Chapter 1.2](#) and [Chapter 1.3](#) and expanding on them.

Evaluating Arguments

You've found an argument. The first thing you need to do is identify its **premise** and **conclusion**. In other words, what is the writer arguing (the points/evidence they use in their argument) and what side are they taking? Once you have that, it is time to evaluate: is it a good argument or a poor one? Normally, we evaluate arguments in fairly general terms. We might think "yep, that argument makes sense" or "nope, I don't buy it." However, let's walk through the process of making this judgment in more detail.

When we discuss the strength of an argument in academia, the argument is usually called **sound** or **unsound**. In a sound argument, the premises are true and strongly support the truth of the conclusion. Consequently, a person can rationally believe the conclusion of a sound argument on the basis of the premises. In an unsound argument, on the other hand, we cannot rationally believe the conclusion on the basis of the premises.

Factual Correctness

Given these definitions, there are two ways that an argument can fall short. First, an argument goes wrong if one (or more) of its premises is false. After all, a false claim can't serve as evidence for anything. Thus, a sound argument cannot have any false premises. We have a term for this: **factual correctness**. An argument is factually correct when all its premises are true, and factually incorrect otherwise.

When you are analyzing an argument for factual correctness, you should be using your critical reading skills ([Chapter 1.2](#)), as you want to analyze how likely their claims are to be true based on the evidence they provide. When in doubt, do some research to double-check the

information provided. Research the claim and/or look at other texts on the same topic to see if they align. Make sure to look for the whole picture to see opposing claims.

Logical Strength

The second way an argument can fall short is when the premises do not offer enough support for the truth of the conclusion. An irrelevant claim, for example, even if true, is no reason to believe the conclusion. In a sound argument, the premises have to offer strong support for the conclusion. Again, we have a special term for this characteristic: **logical strength**. An argument is logically strong when the premises—if true—provide strong support for the truth of the conclusion, and it is logically weak otherwise.

When it comes to logical strength, we need to ask, “Is the conclusion probable assuming the truth of the premises?” If your answer to all these questions is ‘yes,’ then you should deem the argument sound. If your answer to one is ‘no,’ then the argument is unsound.

For the most part, when analyzing an argument, it will be very hard to come across anything that argues a viewpoint to a 100 % logical strength, as the topics you will read about in academics will often have multiple viewpoints. This is also true in your own writing! When forming arguments, you will want to reasonably convince the reader that YOUR point of view (argument) is reasonably sound, but that does not mean that there are not OTHER arguments that could also be reasonably sound too.

Protip icon

When building **arguments**, you want to leave space for the ‘grey’ or the other side of an argument. Try not to use terms that are absolute. Instead, use what we like to call qualifier words that take your argument from something you have to prove 100% to something you just have to prove COULD be true. Qualifier terms include words like can, may, might, could, etc.

Example: Dogs make the best pets. Vs. Dogs can be a great pet for many people.

On one side, you have to prove without 100% doubt that dogs are the best pets. On the other, you just have to prove that they are good pets for many people.

Rhetorical devices are another way that an argument can fall short, depending on HOW they are being used. Refer back to Chapter 1.3 if you need a refresher on this.

Protip icon Sometimes, based on your knowledge level, you may not be in a good position to say something one way or the other if an argument is sound or unsound. That is okay and, in fact, shows you are a critical reader. When this happens, you can only step back, admit you don't know, and seek more information.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Analyzing Persuasive Writing

Please read through this short persuasive essay. This essay has been intentionally created to include persuasive writing errors.

The Emotional Benefits of Pet Ownership¹

Pets are really good for your emotions. If you're feeling sad or stressed, having a pet can fix that. Everyone should get a pet because they help you feel better and less lonely. Pets are always there and they don't talk back, which is nice when you're upset.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (2025), "81% of pet owners say their pets have a positive impact on their mental health." That's a lot of people, so it must be true. Also, pets help reduce stress and anxiety, which is important because stress is bad. Dogs wag their tails and cats purr, and that makes people happy. It's obvious that pets are better than not having pets.

Some people say pets are expensive or hard to take care of, but that doesn't matter because they make you feel good. If you're lonely, just get a pet and you won't be lonely anymore. The APA also said that "65% of pet owners say their pets help reduce stress/

1. "The Emotional Benefits of Pet Ownership" sample essay generated by CoPilot, licensed [CC 0](#); see prompt in [Appendix B](#).

anxiety” (American Psychiatric Association, 2025). So pets are basically like therapists, but cuter.

In conclusion, pets are emotionally helpful and everyone should have one. They make you happy and less lonely, and they’re always there for you. People who don’t have pets are missing out on all the emotional benefits. So, if you want to feel better, get a pet.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2025). [Pets and mental health: 2025 social media toolkit](https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/pets-and-mental-health-2025-social-media-toolkit).
<https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/pets-and-mental-health-2025-social-media-toolkit>

Part 1: Answer the following questions about the essay above.

- What is the thesis statement of the essay? Is it clear and specific? Why or why not?
- Identify two vague or unsupported claims made in the essay.
- Please identify any logical fallacies (e.g., oversimplification, false cause) in the essay. Refer back to chapter 1.4 as a refresher on these.
- Does the essay follow a logical structure (introduction, body, conclusion)?
- Are transitions between ideas effective?

Part 2: Evaluating Source Credibility Review the reference: American Psychiatric Association. (2025). Pets and mental health: 2025 social media toolkit. <https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/pets-and-mental-health-2025-social-media-toolkit> Answer the following: –

- Is this source peer-reviewed or scholarly?
- What type of publication is it (e.g., blog, social media toolkit)?
- Why might this source be considered weak in an academic context?
- What kind of sources would be stronger for supporting emotional benefits of pet ownership?

Attributions

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5.3 PERSUASIVE ESSAY WRITING

When thinking about persuasive essays, you first want to 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.

A persuasive essay follows the basic structure of an essay: introduction paragraph(s) with thesis included, body paragraphs, and conclusion paragraph(s), but there are certain new elements to be aware of.

- You should both include evidence to support your thesis and acknowledge and explain points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience.
- You should state the limits of your argument. This 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.
- You should write in a style and tone that is appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.

Structuring a Persuasive Essay

The formula below for organizing a persuasive essay may be one with which you are familiar. It will present a convincing argument to your reader because your discussion is well-rounded and thorough, and you leave your audience with your point of view at the end.

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

- Introduction paragraph(s) including thesis statement
- Body paragraphs
 - Opposing and qualifying ideas
 - Strong evidence in support of claim
- A compelling conclusion paragraph(s)

Developing a Strong, Clear Introduction and Thesis Statement

Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following their train of thought. Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body. The thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

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. You must form a specific opinion and then articulate that into a **controlling idea**—the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

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 can 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.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=121#oembed-1>

Video source: Ariel Bisset. (2018, March 30). [How to write an essay: Thesis statements](https://youtu.be/TotaRoYh60Y) [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/TotaRoYh60Y>

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities:

- **Specificity.** A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic rather than a broad 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 individuals without employment benefits, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that all employers should be obligated to provide certain benefits.
- **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.

Protip Icon Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, “The hourly minimum wage is not high enough.” 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: “The hourly minimum wage is insufficient for the average worker to live on.”

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the requirements above.

1. Educating newcomers to Canada about historical Indigenous treaties is an important way to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action.
2. Shakespeare’s use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
3. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.

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 Canada 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 or vague.
 - **Weak thesis statement:** The life of Sir John A. Macdonald was long and challenging.

Check Your Understanding: Thesis Statements

Below, you will find some examples of the thesis statements above reworked into stronger statements. Choose the one that you feel best improves on the original.

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=121#h5p-24>

Critical Thinking Exercise: Writing Thesis Statements

On a separate sheet of paper or a Word document, 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 Canada
- Steroid use among professional athletes
- Free speech
- Racism

Share these with your instructor for feedback.

Note: Please refrain from using Copilot or other gen AI tools for this exercise. Being able to recognize a strong thesis statement and create one on your own is an important skill to learn for academic writing. Once you can create strong thesis statements, it becomes easier to structure your essays.

Writing Body Paragraphs

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

The body paragraphs in a persuasive essay present the evidence you have gathered to support your thesis and identify opposing viewpoints. These two things often happen simultaneously within a paragraph. For instance, you may present one key idea for your argument in one body paragraph; within that paragraph, you could both present your support and identify the opposing viewpoints to that. Alternatively, you may present the opposing viewpoints in their own paragraph.

Before you continue, please watch the video “Paragraph Structure” to learn more about writing body paragraphs.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=121#oembed-2>

Source: Smrt English. (2012, November 15). [Paragraph structure](#) [Video]. YouTube.

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.

Here is an example of a how a writer can acknowledge the opposing view:

Although adopting a vegan diet can present nutritional deficiencies, these can be overcome with meal planning and nutritional supplements, and the practice comes with its own health benefits.

Building Supporting Detail

To build supporting detail in your essay, consider the key areas of your argument (or your main ideas). You might remember the five-paragraph essay from high school. In the five-paragraph essay, which is used to teach students how to organize their writing, there is an introduction,

three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. This can certainly be a starting point when thinking about essay writing, but in academic writing, there is no set guide on how many body paragraphs you need. You will usually have more than three body paragraphs to establish your argument. On the other hand, though, try not to have TOO many key ideas, as your argument can become hard to follow. Often, what happens is you may still have three key ideas, BUT each key idea may have multiple paragraphs to it.

To start, once you've established your thesis statement, brainstorm and complete some pre-reading on the subject to help you identify the key areas of your argument. Once you have a list of key areas, try to find ways to group them into main ideas; these will become your body sections. Then, once you've figured out your main ideas, it is time to start building supporting details for them. Below, you will find ways to strengthen your arguments.

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 in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. In other words, include **authoritative opinions**. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience.

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. 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.

Remember, these supporting details should be included as quotes or paraphrases within the body of your paragraphs. As a reminder, you cannot just include quotes and paraphrased evidence. You want to make sure you are establishing your points before introducing the evidence to back them up. This will help the reader follow your argument. In the following example, sentences 1, 3, and 4 (highlighted in bold) represent the argument or point of view of the writer.¹

1. Bolded sentences include: 1. Globalization has shifted the economy into what is known as a “knowledge economy.” 3. Within

Globalization has shifted the economy into what is known as a “knowledge economy.”

Due to globalization, corporations can now move to any country to avoid tax cost, increase production through automation, and/or reduce labour cost (Unger, 2019, p. 10). **Within this economic structure, one area that can promote economic growth is the strength of a country’s workforce. By increasing human capital through education and training, a country can cause economic growth:** “conventional wisdom has emerged wherein ‘better’ education or training is assumed to lead automatically to improved economic performance” (Ashton & Green, 1996, p. 11).²

Protip Icon

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.

Critical Thinking Exercises: Supporting a Thesis

Types of Evidence

Take one of the thesis statements you wrote in the **Critical Thinking Exercise: Writing Thesis Statements** earlier in this section and create a short list (4-5 items) of evidence you might use in support of that thesis statement.

This evidence should include facts and/or credible opinions. Please make sure to include the in-

this economic structure, one area that can promote economic growth is the strength of a country’s workforce. 4. By increasing human capital through education and training, a country can cause economic growth.

2. This example uses APA @ Conestoga style, which recommends the use of page numbers for all citations, not just direct quotations.

text citation for the paraphrase or quote on your list. Do not forget to include the reference underneath as well!

Example

Thesis: Rather than banning social media for youth, we should be supporting their emotional regulation so they can still experience its benefits.

Fact: Young people can practice preventing negative emotions by avoiding content that will bring about such responses, and they can seek out content that leads to positive emotions (McAlister et al., 2024, para. 6).

Reference: McAlister, K. L., Beatty, C. C., Smith-Caswell, J. E., Yourell, J. L., & Huberty, J. L. (2024). Social media use in adolescents: Bans, benefits, and emotion regulation behaviors. *JMIR Mental Health*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.2196/64626>

Note: You can use Copilot to support you in finding evidence for your thesis for this exercise. If you do use Copilot, double-check that the source AND information provided is real and accurate. Many gen AI tools will build fake citations and quotes/paraphrases.

If you do use Copilot, **please make sure to include a reference and your prompt.**

Counterarguments

Using the evidence you provided in support of the thesis statement in the **Types of Evidence** exercise above, come up with at least one counterargument to each. Then write a concession statement expressing the limits to your arguments based on that counterargument.

Note: You can use Copilot to help you brainstorm counterargument ideas for this exercise. Please do not use Copilot or other gen AI tools to build your concession statement; the writing should be your own!

If you do use Copilot, **please make sure to include a reference and your prompt.**

Building an Outline

Using the thesis statement, evidence and concession statements you built in the first two exercises. Build an outline that has your clear thesis, body paragraph ideas that include evidence and opposing arguments, and a conclusion structure. (See the [Sample Outline in Chapter 3.3.1.](#))

Note: Please refrain from using Copilot or other gen AI tools for this exercise. Being able

to structure an outline/argument is an important skill to learn for academic writing. Once you can create strong outlines, it becomes easier and easier to build strong essays! Again, it is a great skill to practice first and understand how to do this on your own BEFORE using gen AI tools.

References

- Ashton, D. N., & Green, F. (1996). *Education, training and the global economy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- McAlister, K. L., Beatty, C. C., Smith-Caswell, J. E., Yourell, J. L., & Huberty, J. L. (2024). Social media use in adolescents: Bans, benefits, and emotion regulation behaviors. *JMIR Mental Health*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.2196/64626>
- Unger, R. M. (2019). *The knowledge economy*. Verso.

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5.4 QUOTING SKILLS

As you are building an essay, you will be doing research to find credible facts and authoritative opinions. Remember to use the [C.R.A.A.P. test from Chapter 2](#) to support finding credible sources. Once you have a collection of credible evidence you want to use in your argument, your next step is to build an essay, using your sources as anchors of evidence around your own arguments. For instance, if you are identifying a key premise within your argument, you will use the sources as evidence to support it, or if you are identifying opposing views, you will use the sources as evidence to refute them.

You have three main ways of using source material available to you:

- **Paraphrasing text:** representing the source's ideas in your own words (without quotation marks). This was discussed in both [Chapter 2](#) and [Chapter 4](#).
- **Summarizing text:** representing the source's main ideas in your own words (without quotation marks). This was discussed in [Chapter 2](#) and [Chapter 4](#).
- **Quoting text:** copying the source's exact words and marking them off with quotation marks. This is what we will be focusing on in this chapter, but it has also been discussed in [Chapter 2](#).

In each case, acknowledging your source with a citation at the point of use and a follow-up reference at the end of your document is essential for academic integrity.

Rules Around Quoting

You quote when you need the exact language rather than just the idea of a passage. Quoting seems easy, but there are some rules and guidelines that you need to follow. Failure to follow them can land you in trouble.

Quote Exactly

Quotations must be exact. When your reader sees quotation marks, they are assuming that everything between the quotation marks is exactly what is in the original. This means that you can't change anything in the text between your quotation marks, except what's explained in the section below on **altering quotations**.

Quote Minimally

You should only quote the parts of a sentence that you absolutely need to make your point. Sometimes you need an entire sentence, but more often, you really only need to quote a few words, and the rest of the sentence could be paraphrased. Don't quote more than you need.

Connect Quotations to Your Own Sentences

If you stick a quotation into a paragraph without connecting it to one of your own sentences, you have what's called a "dropped quotation." **Dropped quotations** confuse your reader. Without some connection to what you are saying, your reader doesn't know why this source has suddenly appeared in your paragraph. Even when you need to quote an entire sentence, be sure to begin with something like the following:

Smith claims that "[insert quotation here]."

As Jones makes clear, "[insert quotation here]."

Even better, though, would be to paraphrase and include a minimal quotation if at all possible:

Smith claims that all students would do better in school if "[insert quotation here]."

As Jones makes clear, students who "[insert quotation here]" do far better academically than those who don't.

Altering Quotations

There are four types of changes that you can make to the words between sets of quotation marks:

- Changing the punctuation to fit your sentence
- Changing the capitalization on the first word
- Removing information and inserting an ellipsis
- Using square brackets to insert or change a word for clarity

Learn more about [making changes to direct quotations on the APA @ Conestoga website](#).

Choosing Between Quotations and Paraphrases

You should paraphrase when you need the ideas from the text, but not the exact words. Note that when you quote, you usually need to paraphrase that quotation, too, so you should take every opportunity to practice your paraphrasing skills.

You should quote when you need both the ideas and the specific language from the text.

The Dangers of Too Much Quotation

If you quote more than you need to, you may find it easier to reach the word count, but your professor may not count those words. They aren't your words, after all.

In general, your writing should stand on its own without the quotations. You still need to include quotations when the assignment, genre, or discipline calls for them, but your analysis or other use of what you are quoting is more important than the quoted words.

Try reading your paragraphs while skipping over any long quotations. Grammatically and stylistically, this may be awkward, but does your point still make sense? If not, you may need to provide more explanation of that quoted material.

Quoting for a Reason

There are four conditions under which you will normally choose a quotation over a paraphrase:

Memorable Language

We quote when the specific wording is so strong and so remarkable that we want our reader to see that exact language. Note that this does not mean that you are quoting the material because the author said it better than you could. Memorable language should be quoted because the language is special in some identifiable way. Think about language like “I have a dream” (Martin Luther King, Jr.) and “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country” (President John F. Kennedy).

Technical Language

We quote when the source has explained a difficult or technical concept clearly, and trying to paraphrase it would only make that explanation confusing. We often do this when we need to explain the definition of a key term used by a source or when we want to clarify a technical concept or process.

Authoritative Language

We quote when we need to use the exact words from the source to point out that an expert makes a particular point. We often do this when we want to use the source to support our own points or as examples of opposing positions. Note, however, that a paraphrase often works just as well if all we are trying to do is include information from an expert or demonstrate that an expert shares our position.

Language for Analysis

We quote when explaining how specific language works in a particular passage, and we need to refer to the author's exact words to demonstrate or provide an example. You've probably done this frequently in analyses of literature, and you will also do it when you do rhetorical analyses.

Paraphrasing Instead

If the part you want to quote doesn't meet one of these conditions, you should be paraphrasing instead.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Integrating Quotes

Based on your outline, create 1 body paragraph from your persuasive essay. Please use the evidence from your outline (at least 1 quote and around 2-3 paraphrases). Be sure to practice how to incorporate both paraphrases and quotations correctly with in-text citations.

Then make sure to include references for any sources you used.

Share this with your instructor.

Note: Please refrain from using Copilot or other gen AI tools for this exercise. Again, knowing how to integrate quotes and paraphrases properly is a great skill to practice first and understand how to do this on your own BEFORE utilizing gen AI tools.

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5.5 CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

5.1: **Describe** 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.
- Persuasive writing should include supporting details for your argument as well as identify and refute opposing ideas.

5.2: **Analyze** persuasive writing in action

- To analyze the argument in persuasive writing, begin by identifying the **premise** and **conclusion**.
- Evaluate the argument by looking for false claims, insufficient support and logical strength.

5.3: **Describe** how to write a persuasive essay.

- Persuasive essay writing has the following structure: introduction and thesis; body paragraphs, and conclusion.
- A thesis statement should tell the reader what the essay will examine; it should be specific, precise, can be argued, can be demonstrated with evidence and shows a clear argument.
- Body paragraphs should identify opposing and qualifying ideas and provide strong evidence for your premise.
- Body paragraphs should include supporting detail that supports your thesis statement. An essay will typically include three main ideas, but this can be through three paragraphs or MORE paragraphs.
- Supporting evidence in a body paragraph should include both fact (something that is quantifiably provable such as data, statistics, etc,) and credible opinion (opinions from an expert in the field of interest for your essay).

5.4 Describe how to incorporate quotations into your own writing.

- Quoting is one way to incorporate evidence into your writing.
- Quotations need to be in the exact language of the original text with quotation marks around them, including in-text citations and a corresponding reference in your reference list.
- Quotations should be used sparingly; four reasons to use quotes instead of paraphrasing include memorable language, technical language, authoritative language, and language we intend to analyze.

CHAPTER 6 – CONDUCTING RESEARCH

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Why was the Great Wall of China built? What have scientists learned about the possibility of life on Mars? How does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories? Who invented the game of hockey, and how has it changed over the years?

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting the library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

You probably perform research in your everyday life. When your boss, your instructor, or a family member asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, you locate relevant information, analyze your sources, and share your results. Locating, analyzing, and sharing information are key steps in the research process, and in this chapter, you will learn more about each step. By developing your research skills, you will prepare yourself to develop and answer any question, no matter how challenging.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Describe** the purpose and process of academic research.
2. **Explain** how to create a research question.
3. **Outline** strategies for completing academic research.
4. **Synthesize** information that supports a research question.
5. **Organize** research and outline a research paper.

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6.1 WHAT IS ACADEMIC RESEARCH?

Research Writing as Conversation

Academic writing is a conversation, during which ideas are exchanged, debates and discussions take place and consensus is reached. A writer always enters a conversation in progress, as there are those who have written about the topic before them, and there will be those who write about it after them.

This continuing conversation is especially true in research, in which — while reading and participating in the larger dialogue of a field — a researcher finds what the latest focuses are and what needs to be researched next to move the field or topic research forward as a whole. The intent of academic research is to offer something **novel (new)** to the conversation already taking place. This interaction between the members of intellectual communities never ends. No piece of writing, no argument, no theory or discovery is ever final. Instead, they are all subject to discussion, questioning, and improvement. Case in point, Einstein's theories — and the implications of his theories — are still being researched and tested to this day.

Now, as a college student, you are not necessarily going to conduct cutting-edge primary research to move your field of study forward. However, practicing research provides you with the opportunity to find out the latest in a field you might be interested in, as well as learn more about a subject or the world generally.

Therefore, the purpose of research is not to look for evidence that would fit the author's pre-existing theories, **but to start with a research question, and then examine that question holistically to learn about the subject of the investigation as much as possible. From there, you would synthesize to form theories, opinions, and arguments that allow you to answer your research question. We will look at how to develop strong research questions in 6.2, as this is a key idea in academic research.**

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Library with different books

Research Writing and the Academic Paper

Researching and writing a long paper requires time, effort, and organization. However, writing a research paper can also be a great opportunity to explore a topic that is particularly interesting to you. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice, and the writing process helps you remember what you have learned and understand it on a deeper level.

Steps of the Research Writing Process

How does a research paper grow from a folder of brainstormed notes to a polished final draft? No two projects are identical, but most projects follow a series of six basic steps.

These are the steps in the research writing process:

1. Choose a topic and develop a research question.
2. Plan and schedule time to research and write notes.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research and ideas.
5. Draft your paper.
6. Revise and edit your paper.

Steps 1 through 4 will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Steps 5 and 6 will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Check Your Understanding: Academic Research

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6.2 CREATING A RESEARCH QUESTION

Many classes provide students with research topic choices or research questions before starting an assignment. This helps students stay within the scope of the course and area of study. For other assignments or classes, though, you may just be asked to write a research paper on an area of study of YOUR choosing within the course. This means you are starting from scratch and having to choose both the topic and then build your research question.

Whenever you are given this as your task, start with a broad topic, brainstorm some areas of potential focus and then narrow it down into a research question. We look at this process throughout this chapter.

Developing a Research Topic

The following videos outline what to keep in mind at the start of any research assignment.

First, you want to start with developing a general research topic. Illustration of a funnel
Start with a broad category and then narrow the focus down.

Think of it like a funnel. You start with a generalized idea such as “Compassion fatigue in nursing” and then narrow that down into more specific topics. From there, you can start making connections and finding one area of focus that YOU are interested in exploring further.

To do this, you always want to brainstorm/free write anything and everything that comes to your head when it comes to your topic. Below you will find some pertinent videos to get you started thinking about a topic. From there, the section below outlines techniques and tips for brainstorming a topic and another section on how to narrow down your topic.

Once you have chosen a topic, you then would create it into a research question.

Before you continue, please watch the video “[Developing a Research Topic – Research Process Overview](#)” (1:18 mins).

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Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, February 13). [Developing a research topic – Research process overview](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Before you continue, please watch the video “[Developing a Research Topic – Goals](#)” (0:45 min).

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Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, February 13). [Developing a research topic – Goals](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Brainstorming a Research Topic

As explained before, always start with a broad topic idea and then brainstorm all possible ideas that come to your mind around it. From there, consider what ideas stand out to you as interesting to research and that have enough information about them to research. You want to be able to develop a question that can have an open-ended answer. In other words, avoid yes or no topics.

Choosing a research topic is a bit like being “Goldilocks.” You want something with enough research and depth that you can synthesize information together into a cohesive research question that will become a strong **thesis** and paper. If you go too broad, though, then your paper cannot have much substance, as you can only tackle the topic at a surface level, and/

or you may be overwhelmed with HOW much research there is on a topic. If you go too narrow, then you may have not enough research to synthesize or not enough to say on about the research question. You want to build a research topic that is “just right” and is not too broad and not too narrow.

Before you continue, please watch the video “[Developing a Research Topic – Brainstorming for Ideas](#)” (0:30 mins).

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Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, February 13). [Developing a research topic – Brainstorming for ideas](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Before you continue, please watch the video [Developing a Research Topic – Brainstorming Approaches](#) (0:45 mins).

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Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, February 14). [Developing a research topic – Brainstorming approaches](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Before you continue, please watch the video [Choosing a Manageable Research Topic](#) (3:45 mins).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=135#oembed-5>

Video source: PfauLibrary. (2012, September 19). [Choosing a manageable research topic](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Before you continue, please watch the video [Developing a Research Topic – Broadening/Narrowing](#) (0:45 mins)

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Video source: nc Libraries. (2018, February 13). [Developing a research topic – Brainstorming/narrowing](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Creating a Research Question

The goal of college-level research assignments is never going to be to simply “go find sources” on your topic. Instead, think of sources as helping you to answer a research question or a series of research questions about your chosen topic. **These should not be simple questions with simple answers**, but rather complex questions about which **there is no easy or obvious answer**.

Research Question Guidelines

- Your research question meets the assignment requirements
- Your research question is based on a topic that genuinely interests you. Try to choose a topic that fits within the subject of your course or within your career goal.
- Your question is not a simple “yes/no” question
- Your research question does not have an easy, obvious answer (a quick Google check of your research question should reveal whether there is an easy, obvious answer. If so, this means that you need to revise and refine your question)
- The research question asks “how?” or “in what ways,” or “what”?
- The research question is focused, specific, and narrow (enough)
- The research question is researchable. It is not asking about the future or about areas of faith, where we cannot find hard evidence about what *is*.
- Your research question has credible sources/evidence on this topic. Make sure to check the sources using the C.R.A.A.P. test ([See Chapter 2.5](#)).

Pro tip icon

Often when narrowing your research question, you will want to do some early research to see what is already said about this topic, and to see that your question is researchable. When doing some early research, you don't have to read all of it; instead, use your scanning/skimming reading skills to identify credible sources. You can also save these to read later on in the research writing process.

Before you continue, please watch the video [“Creating a Good Research Question”](#) (6 mins).

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Video source: CII GSU. (2013, July 26). [Creating a good research question](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Bringing It All Together and Developing a Research Question

Watch the video [Developing a Research Question](#) (6:30 mins).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=135#oembed-8>

Video source: Laurier Libraries. (2017, December 20). [Developing a research question](#) [Video]. YouTube.

Additional Resources

For further information on developing your research topics, check out these online resources.

- [The Writing Hub – Choose a Topic](#) from The Learning Portal by College Libraries Ontario.
- [Develop a Research Question | Writing and Communication Centre | University of Waterloo](#)
- Always remember that you can contact your college library for help!

Critical Thinking Exercise: Research Question

1. Develop 3-5 topic ideas that you are potentially interested in exploring as a research topic. In order to make sure your topic is academically robust, try to choose a topic that is within your chosen area of study or overall career goal.
2. Choose 1 or 2 to further develop, brainstorm and do some pre-research on.
3. Then build your research question. This will be the question you will want to have answered by the end of your research project.
4. Write down any key areas you want to explore in order to answer your research question. Typically, this would be 3 key areas, but you may have more depending on your topic.
5. Download and use the worksheet to complete this exercise and share it with your instructor for feedback. **Please consult with your instructor to ensure you are using the most updated worksheet.**

[Download the Worksheet: Conducting Research – Choosing a Topic and Research Question \[docx\]](#)

Note: You may use Copilot to help you brainstorm some topic ideas. We encourage you to practice narrowing and further developing your topic on your own, so you can practice your skills discussed above. As always, if you choose to use Copilot, please provide a prompt and reference.

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6.3 FINDING YOUR RESEARCH

Before you start researching your topic and research question, take time to plan your research and writing schedule. Research projects can take days or weeks to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches.

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews.

Your sources may include both **primary sources** and **secondary sources**. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, and historical documents are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or magazine articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you will also want to take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You will need to evaluate the reliability of each source you find ([C.R.A.A.P test](#)). Often, your evaluation may be done mentally before choosing a source, but you need to always consider WHY you find this source credible.

Coming Up With Research Strategies

You have chosen a topic. You have taken that topic and developed it into a research question. Now it is time to begin your research, but before diving deep into Google, it can be helpful to think about what kinds of information you want and/or need.

As discussed above, you will want to begin by asking yourself smaller questions that will help you answer your research question. This will help you create areas of focus for your research and will help you begin sifting through and perusing sources that you will use to further your understanding of the topic. When you begin the research phase of your essay, you will come across an array of sources that look helpful in the beginning, but once you have a clearer idea of your research question, you might see that the research you were once considering using in your essay is now irrelevant. To make your research efficient, start with a research strategy.

A research strategy involves deciding what you need to know in order to answer your research question.

- What data or information do you need?
- What can different *kinds* of sources – popular or academic, primary/secondary/tertiary –

offer you?

- Whose perspectives could help you to answer your research question?
- What kinds of professionals/scholars will be able to give you the information you seek?
- What kinds of keywords should you be using to get the information that you want?

Where should I look?

As you seek sources that can help you to answer your research question, think about the types of “voices” you need to hear from.

- Scientists/researchers who have conducted their own research studies on your topic
- Scholars/thinkers/writers who have also looked at your topic and offered their own analyses of it
- Journalists who are reporting on what they have observed
- Journalists/newspaper or magazine authors who are providing their educated opinions on your topic
- Critics, commentators or others who offer opinions on your topic
- Tertiary sources/fact books that offer statistics or data (usually without analysis)
- Personal stories of individuals who have lived through an event
- Bloggers/YouTubers/other social media personalities

Any of these perspectives (and more) could be useful in helping you to answer your research question.

Can I use Wikipedia?

Wikipedia can help you identify key terms, people, events, arguments, or other elements that are essential to understanding your topic. The information that you find on Wikipedia can also offer ideas for keywords that you can use to search in academic databases. Spending a bit of time on Wikipedia can help you to answer essential questions such as:

- Do you fully understand the history of your topic?
- Do you understand the current situation/most recent information on your topic?

In general, Wikipedia can give you some wonderful access to the context surrounding your topic and help you get started. It is also a great start to finding some potential sources as each Wikipedia page includes references at the bottom.

Should you cite Wikipedia? Well, Wikipedia itself says it is not a reliable source, as it is written and edited by volunteer contributors.¹ Having said that, it really depends on what information you plan to use from Wikipedia and whether your instructor allows it. As always, use your critical thinking and reading skills to determine if it makes sense to cite Wikipedia or another source. If you can't use Wikipedia directly, you can still use it to find some other sources.

[APA @ Conestoga](#) outlines how to include Wikipedia in your references list, under the Dictionaries & Encyclopedias section. [APA 7th edition style](#) also outlines a method for citing and referencing Wikipedia.

Protip Icon

Wikipedia can be a great place to get ideas for a research strategy. It may also be a great source for a research paper, but check with your instructor to confirm that it is acceptable.

Critical Thinking Questions: Research Planning

Based on your research question from [Chapter 6.2](#), complete the following.

Note: You do not need to use full sentences. Instead, you can write your answers in point form.

1. Answer the following research planning questions.

- What data or information do you need to answer your research question?
- Whose voices do I need to hear from for this research question?
- Whose perspectives could help you to answer your research question?
- What kinds of credible professionals/scholars will be able to give you the information you

1. See [Reliability of Wikipedia](#).

seek?

- What kind of credible websites could you use?
- What kinds of keywords should you be using to get the information that you want?
- How many sources do you think you should use?

2. Plan out the research timeline. In other words, consider how you will tackle your research.

- Start with a two-week timeline and work backwards.
- Create a timeline that allows you to find sources, read them, and take notes.
- Set yourself some due dates to check in with your instructor on when you will update them on your project progress.

Share the answers to your research questions and your research timeline with your instructor.

Common Errors When Finding Research

After you've built a research strategy, it is time to start finding research. Depending on your answers above, you may be looking online, in libraries, or in academic databases. **Always keep in mind that no matter where you find information, you have to double-check that it is a credible source.** (See [Chapter 2 to review the C.R.A.A.P. method](#) of evaluating sources for credibility.)

Below are some errors that we often see students make. Before revealing the answer, consider WHY these can be errors.

When “Googling” something, students choose the first source listed without evaluating using the C.R.A.A.P method.

Details

Google will often list sources based on paid advertising. You want to double-check that this would be a good source to use. Also, just because it tells you the answer YOU want to hear does not make it correct.

Students may use Google itself as a source.

Details

Google is not a source; it is a search engine. Even when it provides an answer at the top of the page, it is coming from another SOURCE; you need to go to that source if you want to

use it or find an alternative one that discusses similar research. Often the Google AI overview is factually incorrect, so it is not considered a reliable source!

Students use the AI tool in search engines as a source.

Details

As we've talked about before, AI can create hallucinations (fake information). It is not a credible source. A search engine can also not be a source, so it cannot be what you reference in your work.

Students used AI to find their sources.

Details

While this can be a strategy that works, you absolutely have to check that they are real sources with real links that you can read. Like the point above, AI can create fake information that looks real. **Note:** This is also true if it provides you with a quote. Often, AI will just make up this information too.

Students are looking for one source that can help them answer every single part of their question.

Details

With complex topics, many sources may only look at a single area of your question, so you will have to look at more than one source to find information that you can synthesize together. More information on synthesizing in 6.4.

Students only read the first page, find some detail to use, and move on.

Details

This strategy means you could misrepresent the research you found, as you didn't read the text fully. It also means you might be using faulty information in your paper, which would then affect YOUR credibility. In academic research, you may also come across information in the **abstract**. This information can give you an overview of the content in the source, but it should not be used for your paper. Instead, look within the article to find further details.

Students find something that states their point of view and want to use it as their evidence.

Details

If the evidence is just repeating what your point of view is, it is not really evidence. Instead, your evidence should elaborate on or provide support to the point YOU are making.

Students find a source that looks great, but don't double-check for publishing information.

Details

One element of the C.R.A.A.P evaluation is accuracy; most topics will have information that changes over time as research progresses, and, therefore, outdated sources may no longer be accurate. The general rule is that your source should be published within the last five to ten years unless you are doing a paper that calls for historical sources.

Student uses too many non-academic sources in their paper.

Details

In general, academic sources are more credible and reliable because they go through a peer-review process and cite sources, and they have more depth and quality of information as they are providing detailed analysis. Furthermore, while ALL sources can have bias, academic sources are meant to be written through an objective and balanced point of view. Non-academic sources may be biased or skew information. Depending on your topic, you may have to use some non-academic sources, but you should have more academic than non-academic.

Protip Icon

As you dive into research, make sure to keep yourself organized. We will discuss this more in 6.5, but here are some basic guidelines to help get you started:

- Save your sources by bookmarking them and/or writing them down in your notes
Note: If you are using a source from an academic database, make sure to copy the permalink or DOI.
- Choose a notetaking strategy that works for you. Cornell note-taking is a great strategy to use.
- When taking notes, make sure to be specific and structured. If you are writing a note in your own words from a source, write down the source and the page or paragraph number it comes from. If you are writing a quotation down, make sure to add quotation

marks, and write down the source and the page or paragraph number from which it comes. *This will help you when you have to WRITE your paper later and include in-text citations.*

Basic Guidelines for Research in Academic Databases and Google Scholar

Many of your professors will expect you to use academic research databases for research papers in college. Getting used to doing research in an academic database can be challenging, especially if you have only used Google for research. Becoming familiar with the way that research databases work can take some time. However, with some understanding of what academic research databases can do for you, and with some practice and tinkering around, you will soon be more comfortable doing your research in these databases instead of Google.

How Can You Use an Academic Research Database Effectively?

- Avoid typing your whole research question into the search field. Use only keywords, in various combinations.
- Use several keywords at once, and be willing to change each word for a synonym if you hit a dead end with one set of words.
- Use “AND” or “OR” to retrieve more results or to limit your results.
- Use the database’s own Subject Terms to help you refine your searches within that database.

The videos below outline the practical steps for doing online research.

- **Watch** [Tracking Down Articles](#) (3 mins)
- **Watch** [Part 1: Research and Referencing Skills \(NURS8015\) Intro and Keywords](#) (4 mins)
- **Watch** [Preparing: Getting Started Searching](#) (3 min)
- **Watch** [Advanced Searching: Searching with Phrases](#) (1 min)
- **Watch** [Refining Your Results Using Search Filters](#) (3 min)

A Note about Google Scholar vs Academic Search Complete

[Google Scholar](#) is one tool you can use to track down scholarly sources online, but it doesn't always allow you to access the full article because you do not have a paid subscription to the journal in which the article is published.

[Academic Search Complete](#), and the many, many other academic research databases, will give you access to most articles listed by Google Scholar. If you find a title via Google Scholar that you cannot access, try to find it in Academic Search Complete or another database.

Note: You have access to Academic Search Complete through Conestoga College.

Learn more about using [Academic Search Complete on the Library & Learning Services](#) website. If you attend a different school, ask your instructor about what academic databases you have access to.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Finding Sources

Find two online sources that you think will be useful in answering your research question.

Find two to three sources from an academic database that you think will be useful in answering your research question.

Outline your reasoning for HOW you think these sources will be useful and HOW you know the sources are credible.

Use the worksheet for this exercise and share with your instructor when completed.

Please consult with your instructor to ensure you are using the most updated worksheet.

[Download the Worksheet: Conducting Research – Finding Research \[docx\]](#)

Attributions

“6.3: Finding Your Research” remixes and revises the following:

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[9.2 Coming Up With Research Strategies](#) by Rashida Mustafa and Emilie Zickel, and [9.3 Basic Guidelines for Research in Academic Databases and Google Scholar](#) by Emilie Zickel, in [A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing \(The Interactive 2nd Edition\)](#) by Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

6.4 SYNTHESIZING INFORMATION

To **synthesize** is to combine ideas and create a completely *new* idea. That new idea becomes the conclusion you have drawn from your reading. This is the true beauty of reading: it causes us to weigh ideas, to compare, judge, think, and explore—and then to arrive at a moment that we hadn't known before. We begin with a simple **summary**, work through **analysis**, evaluate using **critique**, and then move on to **synthesis**.

A tower made with legos In academic research, synthesis involves bringing together your research to develop a cohesive argument/point of view that allows you to answer your research question. In other words, it allows you to defend your thesis. Think of each topic in your research project as a discrete Lego block. You want each part of your paper, be that a supporting detail within a paragraph or from paragraph to paragraph, to build upon the Lego block before. This involves synthesizing the ideas you read from your research and bringing them together.

Another way to develop relationships between ideas is to provide an additional sentence where you elaborate on your supporting detail. This can help you show the reader how your supporting detail (paraphrase or quote) ties to your thesis or how it ties to the next point going forward.

Here is an example:

Social media has significantly impacted how young people form and maintain relationships. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center study, 81% of teens said that social media makes them feel more connected to their friends and what is going on in their lives (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Therefore, digital platforms can enhance social bonds, especially among adolescents who rely on constant communication.¹

1. Example generated using Copilot, licensed [CC 0](#).

Check Your Understanding: Synthesizing Information

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=140#h5p-26>

References

Anderson, M. & Jiang, J. (2018, November 28). [Teens and their experiences on social media](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/11/28/teens-and-their-experiences-on-social-media/). Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/11/28/teens-and-their-experiences-on-social-media/>

Attributions

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6.5 ORGANIZING YOUR RESEARCH

Keeping Track of Your Sources

Through the process of research, it is easy to get lost in a sea of information. Here are some tips and tools that you can use throughout the stages of your research process to keep sources organized.

Pro tip icon

Always keep a working digital reference list of the sources that you are considering or using.

As you find articles, keep them! Here are some ways that you can store articles that you find:

- **Create a Word file** to keep track of the sources that you want to read. Copy and paste the full citation (many academic databases create a Works Cited reference for you) and copy and paste the permalink or the DOI hyperlink from the source. If you are using a source that you found via Google, copy and paste the URL of the source (it will need to be cited properly by author name, article title, source, etc., if you use it in a paper, so you may want to include that information right away).
- If you are searching in the library's academic database, **create a "Folder"** to save the articles that look interesting. Note: If you are using this strategy, make sure to LOGIN to your student account first.
- **Emailing hyperlinks** of web sources to yourself often seems like the easiest idea. However, be aware that if you email URLs of articles that you find in the library's research databases, they will not open if you are not logged in to the library. Instead, email the citation (with article title, author name and permalink) to yourself so that you can go back and find the article later.

Keeping Track of Source Information Using Notes

As you save sources, you may read them as you go, or you may go back to read them once you've collected a number of sources you THINK you want to use. Either strategy works! Once you've saved your sources, you want to make sure you are keeping track of the information you read from each source.

Think back to the note-taking strategies from Chapter 3 and choose a strategy that works for you. The two that work well for most people if you aren't sure where to start are the outline or Cornell notes structure.

Here are some common strategies to keep in mind while building your notes:

- Make sure to document where the information is coming from by including the reference or link before you include your notes.
- As you take notes, document where this information is coming from (page or paragraph detail). This will make referencing easier.
- Keep track of what you've paraphrased and what you are quoting. You can do this by changing the font colour or adding quotation marks. This will help you when you are writing.
- Add your own opinion and ideas as you go. This can help you synthesize later. **NOTE:** make sure to make it clear to yourself when it is YOUR idea/opinion versus what you've read.

Once you have strong notes, you can then start organizing them into the structure of a paper. This last step is called outlining. Refer to [Chapter 3](#) for more details on outlining.

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure:

- An introduction section includes the thesis statement
- A body section that includes multiple paragraphs
 - Should include supporting detail and evidence from research
 - Depending on length, you may include a literature review of research that has come before. **Note:** this is not necessary for the scope of this project.
- A conclusion section that repeats the thesis and closes out your paper.

Pro tip icon This style may look familiar to you as it is very similar to ideas we covered in [Chapter 5](#), but with some minor changes. In general, any academic essay should have the three key elements of introduction + thesis, body section + supporting evidence, and a conclusion + closing thoughts/restatement of thesis. We just adjust from this base structure depending on the PURPOSE of writing. With persuasive writing, we add some opposing claims in the body section to refute, and with a more extensive research report, we may add a literature review of what's come before in the body section.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Organizing Your Notes

1. Make notes as you research. These notes should provide evidence/support to help you answer your research question.
2. Ensure that your notes include 8 to 10 sources, with a primary focus on scholarly sources.

Use the Organizing Your Notes worksheet based on the Cornell method to complete this step.

Please consult with your instructor to ensure you are using the most updated worksheet.

[Download the Worksheet: Conducting Research – Organizing Your Notes \[docx\]](#)

Note: You do not need to share this with your instructor, but your instructor may request this information if there are any academic integrity concerns.

Going from Research Notes to an Outline

At this point, you've found a lot of research and created notes that help you examine your research question, but where do you go next? The next step is to organize your notes and build an outline. To start, you may want to re-read your notes and identify main ideas, supporting detail and common areas or themes.

Here is a basic starting point to consider as you outline:

Introduction Section

- What information do you need to include for your audience before diving into your topic? This is called background information.
- What is your thesis? Think of your thesis as one sentence that provides the answer to your research question.
- How are you organizing the body section of your report?
- Will you need more than one paragraph to introduce your topic? If so, why and how will you organize this?

Body Section

- What are the main areas you are going to use to support your thesis?
- How will you break that down into paragraphs or into sections?
- What will be the supporting details within EACH paragraph that you will use to support your main ideas? This can be a great time to incorporate your research through quotes or paraphrases.
- Be sure to connect your paragraphs/sections back to your thesis.
- Consider how you have synthesized or added ideas that will be YOUR own voice rather than just repeating what the research is saying

Conclusion Section

- How will you restate your thesis?
- How will you summarize the key details from your body section?
- Are there any closing ideas you want to leave the reader with? Consider, why does the information they just read matter?

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Critical Thinking Exercise: Creating an Outline

Develop an outline for your paper using the **Creating an Outline worksheet** and **share this**

with your instructor. Please consult with your instructor to ensure you are using the most updated worksheet.

[Download the Worksheet: Conducting Research – Creating an Outline \[docx\]](#)

Note: Do not use Copilot or other gen AI tools for this exercise. Outlining is an important skill to develop on your own as it helps you develop critical thinking skills, writing skills and organization skills. This exercise will not be graded for grammar and mechanics, so we want to see how YOU write and how YOU organize your ideas.

Attributions

“6.5: Organizing your Research” remixes and revises [9.5 Keeping Track of Your Sources and Writing an Annotated Bibliography](#) in [A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing \(The Interactive 2nd Edition\)](#) by Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

6.1: **Describe** the purpose and process of academic research

- People undertake research projects throughout their academic and professional careers to answer specific questions, share their findings with others, increase their understanding of challenging topics, and strengthen their research, writing, and analytical skills.
- The research writing process generally comprises six steps: choosing a topic, scheduling and planning time for research and writing, conducting research, organizing research and ideas, drafting a paper, and revising and editing the paper.

6.2: **Explain** how to create a research question.

- A research question should be academically minded, which means open-ended and narrow enough to tackle within the scope of a paper.
- To develop a research question, start with a general topic and brainstorm ideas to narrow down from there.
- Research questions should meet the assignment requirements, avoid yes/no or obvious answers, be focused, specific, and narrow
- Research questions should be based on a topic that interests you and be researchable with information you have access to.

6.3: **Outline** strategies for completing academic research.

- **A research strategy** identifies what you need to answer your research questions: what data, types of sources, perspectives, experts, and keywords for searching.
- Use the work of researchers and writers to help generate ideas.
- Consider sources such as scientists/researchers, scholars/thinkers/writers, journalists, critics, commentators, people with lived experiences, and sources of factual information or raw

data.

- Use a mix of primary and secondary sources, but most of your academic sources should come from academic databases.
- All sources of research should pass the C.R.A.A.P test (currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose)
- Use keywords when using an academic database. Make sure to grab the permalink or DOI.
- There are many common errors to avoid when doing academic research, such as using Google as a source, relying on AI output, misrepresenting a source, or trying to rely on a single source.

6.4 **Synthesize** information that supports a research question.

- To synthesize is to combine ideas to create a new idea.
- Begin by summarizing and analyzing information, evaluating the information to critique, and then you can synthesize the information.
- Academic research involves synthesizing (or taking points/evidence) from multiple sources and bringing them together to defend YOUR thesis.

6.5 **Organize** research and outline a research paper.

- Keep track of sources by recording information into a references list and retaining copies of articles.
- Use a consistent system for recording the source information, page or paragraph numbers, quotes vs. paragraphs, and your own ideas and opinions.
- Review your notes to identify main ideas and supporting research, then develop an outline of the ideas and information to answer the research question.
- An outline should have an introduction section, body section, and conclusion section.

CHAPTER 7 – RESEARCH REPORT

7.0 INTRODUCTION

You've built your research question, and you've done your research to help you answer this question. Now what? Now comes the part where you must present your findings. In academics, this can be done in several ways, such as presentations or through conversational debate, but the most common will likely be a written report or essay. This chapter will take a look at research report writing.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Describe** the process of writing a research report.
2. **Outline** how to write an initial draft of a report.
3. **Identify** types of revision for finalizing a report.

7.1 WHAT IS A RESEARCH REPORT?

Like we discussed in Chapter 6, the ideal reason for research writing in academics is to allow you to add your voice to the ongoing conversation around your chosen topic. Writing a research report is one way to organize thoughts, craft narratives, or make arguments based on research, as well as share your newfound knowledge with the world. Like with many forms of academic writing, developing a research report follows a distinct structure and process. Like with many forms of academic writing, developing a research report follows a distinct structure and process.

The Process of Writing a Research Report

The process of writing a research report can be a journey, one that can be difficult at times and perhaps overwhelming, but breaking down the process into parts can make it feel manageable. The main piece of advice any instructor can give you is do not put off the work. The sooner you begin your exploration, research, and writing, the better.

Remember, before you start writing your report, you should have already completed or have made a good effort towards the steps listed in Chapter 6:

- Choose a topic.
- Planned and scheduled time to research and write.
- Conducted research.
- Organized research and ideas.

Remember, a strong writer will use the **writing process** to help keep themselves organized and focused on the task at hand! ([See Chapter 3.3.](#)) Once you have finished the steps above, you will then begin with the next two steps:

- Draft your report
- Revise and edit your report

Pro tip icon As you become more comfortable in the process of writing and research, you may be able to adjust your writing process and complete some tasks together. For example, you may have to go back and forth more between reading and writing, and the order in which you do your work may be even less linear. This is a skill to build towards, but it is not something to do right away, as this process can make the task feel overwhelming. In the following sections, we will take a look at how to break down the last two steps in this process into more manageable steps.

Check Your Understanding

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=150#h5p-27>

Attributions

“7.1 What Is a Research Report?” remixes and revises [10.1: The Purpose of Research Writing](#) and [10.2: The Process of Writing a Research Paper](#) in [Writing, Reading, and College Success: A First-Year Composition Course for All Learners](#) authored, remixed, and/or curated by Athena Kashyap & Erika Dyquisto ([ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative](#)), licensed [CC BY-SA](#) on LibreText.

7.2 GOING FROM OUTLINES TO DRAFTS

Now that you've done some initial organizing and built an outline ([see Chapter 6](#)), you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results into a rough **draft**. In other words, it is time to create a report that will incorporate the source materials (research you found) and discuss these sources in relation to your research question.

As a reminder, research reports generally follow the same basic structure:

- An introduction section includes the thesis statement
- A body section that includes multiple paragraphs
 - Should include supporting detail and evidence from research
 - Depending on length, you may include a literature review of research that has come before (*note this is not necessary for the scope of this project*).
- A conclusion section that repeats the thesis and closes out your report.

In [Chapter 6.5](#), during the organizing your research and ideas stage, you learned about and built an outline to a report using that basic structure. It is now time to draft out your report. In other words, it is time to take your outline and begin to develop it into full paragraphs.

Pro tip icon

Keep in mind that a rough draft is the first go at writing. It does not have to be perfect! In fact, when building a rough draft, it is better to get the ideas out in writing than worry too much about grammar/mechanics. Once you have built a rough draft, you would then go back to revise and edit your report, which we will cover in Chapter 7.3.

As you work through these next sections, you will be looking at the work of a student named Jorge and his process of drafting, revising, and editing.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals.

The introduction should get readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's thesis.

Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers' experiences

Then the next few sentences of an introduction place the opening in context by presenting background information. Try to think of background information as details the reader may need to know to understand the rest of the report and your findings. For instance, you might include a definition or information on previous research. This background information may also need to be cited depending on if the information came from another source. From there, the writer builds a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know in what direction the report is headed.

Jorge decided to begin his research report by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the first draft of his introduction. The thesis is in **boldface font**.¹ Note how Jorge progresses from the opening sentences to background information to his thesis.

Pro tip icon

Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research report. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your report first (though you will want to have a thesis statement, so you know the report's direction). Writing the body sections first will help you clarify your main points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You may have a better sense of how to introduce the report after you have drafted some or all of the body.

1. The boldface font is the final sentence: "Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health."

Jorge's Introduction

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, increasing numbers of dieters have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about 20 percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates (Sanders & Katz, 2004; Hirsch, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight, but they also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. **Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.**

Critical Thinking Exercise

Write a draft of your introductory paragraph of your research report. Try using one of the techniques listed in this section to write an engaging introduction. Be sure to include background information about the topic that leads to your thesis. Use your outline and information from Chapter 6 to support you. If you are having trouble with drafting your introduction, please skip to the next section and then come back to write this after writing your body paragraphs.

Share this with your instructor.

Note: Refrain from using Copilot, Grammarly Pro, or other gen AI for this exercise. A first draft should be in your voice. A first draft should not care about grammar/mechanics errors. This means you want to see what you build on your own. Additionally, understanding how to write these elements on your own will make it much easier for you to analyze gen AI output in the future.

Protip Icon

When you can't think of a word, think of the best word you can and then put question marks around it so you can revisit it later. Don't let not being able to think of the right word keep you from getting your other thoughts down.²

Writing Your Conclusion

In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the report, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should sum up the main ideas from your body section and revisit your thesis. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as “In this report, I have demonstrated that...” In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers. An effective writer might conclude a report by asking a new question the research inspired, revisiting an **anecdote** presented earlier in the introduction, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives.

2. The content of this box is licensed CC BY-SA; see attribution.

Below you will find Jorge's conclusion. The restated thesis has been **bolded**.³ Notice that Jorge takes the bulk of his conclusion to summarize the main body sections of his paper.

Jorge's Conclusion

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

I. Conclusion

Low-carb diets have garnered a great deal of positive attention, and it isn't entirely undeserved. These diets do lead to rapid weight loss, and they often result in greater weight loss over a period of months than other diet plans. Significantly overweight or obese people may find low-carb eating plans the most effective for losing weight and reducing the risks associated with carrying excess body fat. However, because these diets are difficult for some people to adhere to and because their potential long-term health effects are still being debated, they are not necessarily the ideal choice for anyone who wants to lose weight. A moderately overweight person who wants to lose only a few pounds is best advised to choose whatever plan will help him stay active and consume fewer calories consistently—whether or not it involves eating low-carb ketchup.

3. The first sentence is bolded: Low-carb diets have garnered a great deal of positive attention, and it isn't entirely undeserved.

Check Your Understanding

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=153#h5p-28>

Writing Your Body Sections

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

You have already taken a step in the right direction by writing your introduction. The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context.

In the body paragraphs of your report, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. You will use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. You might also need to elaborate or explain information that you've included from your research. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material.

A body paragraph in research reports should generally follow this structure:

- Topic sentence which tells the reader what your paragraph will cover.
- Main point sentences which tell the reader what YOUR point is.
- Supporting detail through paraphrasing, quoting or summarizing.
- Optional clarification sentence that helps connect the supporting detail and main point to

the thesis idea.

- Conclusion sentence where you wrap up the ideas covered in the paragraph.

Please see below to see an example of a research paragraph.

One of Jorge's Body Paragraphs

A number of clinical studies have found that low-carbohydrate diet plans are indeed highly effective for weight loss. Gardner et al. (2007) compared outcomes among overweight and obese women who followed one of four popular diet plans: Atkins, The Zone, LEARN, or Ornish. After 12 months, the group that had followed the low-carb Atkins plan had lost significantly more weight than those in the other three groups (p. 5). This finding also was evident in young adults. McMillan-Price et al. (2006) compared results among overweight and obese young adults who followed one of four plans, all of which were low in fat but had varying proportions of proteins and carbohydrates. They found that, over a 12-week period, the most significant body-fat loss occurred on plans that were high in protein and/or low in “high glycemic index” foods (p. 34). More recently, the American Heart Association (2010) reported on an Israeli study that found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet lost more weight than those who followed a low-fat plan or a Mediterranean plan based on vegetables, grains, and minimal consumption of meats and healthy fats (para. 24). Other researchers have also found that low-carbohydrates diets resulted in increased weight loss (Ebbeling et al., 2007; Bell, 2006; HealthDay, 2010). In conclusion, studies have shown that low-carbohydrate diets that included high protein led to weight loss.

In earlier chapters, you learned about citing, paraphrasing ([Chapter 4](#)), and quoting ([Chapter](#)

5). In the next few sections, you will see some examples of how to incorporate research in the body of your report to support your ideas.

Summarizing Sources

As a reminder, when you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your report or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers.

Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as concisely as you can—preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two, condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

In his draft, Jorge summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and Jorge's summary of the article.

Source: Trade Magazine

Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets

Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms, respectively. Two 2010 studies that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

Jorge's Summary with Parenthetical In-text Citation

In three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time (Howell, 2010, p. 47).

Pro tip icon

A summary restates ideas in your own words—but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Jorge used the term obese in his summary because related words such as heavy or overweight have a different clinical meaning.

Paraphrasing Sources

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them.

Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Refer to Chapter 4 for a review of paraphrasing rules.

In his draft, Jorge frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Read the passage from a website. Then read Jorge's initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

Source: Webpage Information

Dieters nearly always get great results soon after they begin following a low-carbohydrate diet, but these results tend to taper off after the first few months, particularly because many dieters find it difficult to follow a low-carbohydrate diet plan consistently.

Jorge's Paraphrase

People usually see encouraging outcomes shortly after they go on a low-carbohydrate diet, but their progress slows down after a short while, especially because most discover that it is a challenge to adhere to the diet strictly (Heinz, 2009).

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Jorge realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

Jorge's Revised Paraphrase

Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009).

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colourful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research report because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a report that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources.

Use quotations sparingly for greater impact. You also may need to elaborate on a quote in a sentence before or afterwards to illustrate how that quote connects to your main ideas.

When you do choose to quote directly from a source, remember to follow the guidelines discussed in Chapter 5 .

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

Source: Interview (Personal communication)

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

Jorge's Summary – with Narrative In-text Citation

Registered dietitian D. Kwon (personal communication, August 10, 2010) admits, "Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype.... Sure, for some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well."

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

Learn more about how to make changes to direct quotations like Jorge did on the [APA @ Conestoga – Quoting and Paraphrasing](#) section of the Library & Learning Services website.

Critical Thinking Exercise

After you've built your introduction, move on and write the first 2 body paragraphs of your report. Try to make sure your paragraphs have the following:

- A clear topic sentence AND concluding sentence
- Paraphrases or quotations. Remember to use quotes sparingly and to build your in-text citation and references.
- Point or clarification sentences that tell the reader WHY you've included this research and how it relates back to your thesis.

Share this with your instructor.

Please note: Refrain from using gen AI or Grammarly Pro for this exercise. A first draft should be in your voice. A first draft should not care about grammar/mechanics errors. This means you want to see what you build on your own. Additionally, understanding how to write these elements on your own will make it much easier for you to analyze gen AI output in the future.

Reminder About Citations

When to Cite

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

In-text Citations

In-text citations document your sources within the body of your report. Refer to [Chapter 2](#) for details on these rules. **The big thing to remember is that you need to include in-text citations within your report whenever you are summarizing, paraphrasing or quoting outside sources as either parenthetical in-text citations or as narrative in-text citations.**

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite will appear in a references list at the end of your report. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your references section will include additional publication details. Refer to [Chapter 2](#) for more details on these rules .

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7.3 FINALIZING YOUR DRAFT

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research project, you will want to make sure that your final draft, or what is known as your good copy, represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your rough draft carefully to finalize a good copy of your report.

You may feel like you need a break from your report before you revise and edit it. This can be a good thing to do as it can provide you with a chance to tackle your report with a fresh eye, so make sure to leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research report:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

Revising Your Report: Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research report, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for reference entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the report.

A good research report is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your report work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research report, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the report as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your report moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, that each section reinforces your thesis, and that each body paragraph flows between supporting ideas.

Use the following checklist to help you.

Checklist: Revising for Organization

At the Essay Level

- Try to revise with the READER'S perspective and knowledge level in mind. Remember, you are now well-versed in this topic and research after all your hard work, so what may feel clear to you may not be for your reader!
- Does my introduction start with some sort of hook, provide background information and flow smoothly into the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Does my report have clear section titles that help organize my body paragraphs into groups?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences, conclusion sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

At the Paragraph Level

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow of sentences?

If you're not sure, continue to revise your work or contact your professor for help.

Jorge reread his draft paragraph by paragraph. As he read, he highlighted the main idea of each paragraph so he could see whether his ideas proceeded in a logical order. For the most part, the flow of ideas was clear. However, he did notice that one paragraph did not have a clear main idea. It interrupted the flow of the writing. During revision, Jorge added a topic sentence that clearly connected the paragraph to the one that had preceded it. He also added transitions to improve the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence.

Read the following paragraphs, first the original, and then the revised version with Jorge's changes.

Jorge's Draft Paragraph

Original Version

Some researchers have found that low-carbohydrate diets raise levels of HDL, or “good” cholesterol (Ebbeling et al., 2007; Seppa, 2008). They may also raise levels of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease (Ebbeling et al., 2007; Reuters Health, 2010). A particular concern is that as dieters on a low-carbohydrate plan increase their intake of meats and dairy products—foods that are high in protein and fat—they are also likely to consume increased amounts of saturated fats, resulting in clogged arteries and again increasing the risk of heart disease. Studies of humans (Bradley et al., 2009) and mice (Foo et al., 2009) have identified possible risks to cardiovascular health associated with low-carb diets. The American Heart Association (2010) and the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) caution that doctors cannot assess how following a low-carbohydrate diet affects patients’ health over a long-term period.

Revised Version

[Research on how low-carbohydrate diets affect cholesterol levels is inconclusive.](#)

Some researchers have found that low-carbohydrate diets raise levels of HDL, or “good” cholesterol (Ebbeling et al., 2007; Seppa, 2008). [Unfortunately](#), they may also raise levels of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease (Ebbeling et al., 2007; Reuters Health, 2010). A particular concern is that as dieters on a low-carbohydrate plan increase their intake of meats and dairy products—foods that are high in protein and fat—they are also likely to consume increased amounts of saturated fats, resulting in clogged arteries and again increasing the risk of heart disease. Studies of humans (Bradley et al., 2009) and mice (Foo et al., 2009) have identified possible risks to cardiovascular health

associated with low-carb diets. The American Heart Association (2010) and the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) caution that doctors cannot **yet** assess how following a low-carbohydrate diet affects patients' health over a long-term period.

Summary of Revisions

- Add “Research on how low-carbohydrate diets affect cholesterol levels is inconclusive” as a first sentence.
- Add “Unfortunately” to the start of sentence 2.
- Add “yet” to the final sentence.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Revising Your Draft

Follow these steps to begin revising your report's overall organization.

1. Print out a hard copy of your report or use track changes in Word to revise digitally. As a reminder, it is good to make sure you have history of your work, so making a copy of your draft first before making changes can be helpful. This way, you have evidence of your original and then evidence of your editing. If you do work by hand, keep your hard copy with your revision notes until the end of the course. If you want to only use one word document, make sure Track Changes is on.
2. Read your report paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis, the topic sentence and the conclusion sentence of each paragraph. Make note if you need to add or revise these sections.
3. Next, reread your report more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or rewriting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically.
4. Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where

you may need to reorganize ideas.

5. Begin to revise your report to improve organization. Start with any major issues, such as needing to move an entire paragraph. Then proceed to minor revisions, such as adding a transitional phrase or tweaking a topic sentence so it connects ideas more clearly.

Submit this to your instructor.

Note: You may use Copilot or Grammarly Pro for this exercise. Ask Copilot to only suggest possible ways to improve your organization, and do not blindly accept all of Grammarly Pro's suggestions. Do not let gen AI tools rewrite your work for you. It is essential to develop these skills independently first. This technique treats a gen AI tool like Copilot like an advisor, offering feedback.

Prompt example: I've written the first draft of my research report. I've included it below. I'm not asking you to rewrite it—I'd just like your advice on how well my ideas are organized. Can you suggest ways I might improve the structure or flow of my report?¹

As always, make sure to include the reference and prompt if you do choose to use it.

Protip Icon

Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas; for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose and avoid overusing the same ones.

Revise to Improve Cohesion

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your report work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the report so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly.

In a research report, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble inte-

1. Prompt created by Copilot, licensed [CC 0](#), see [Appendix B](#).

grating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect. Use the Checklist below to review your essay for cohesion.

Checklist: Revising for Cohesion

- Does the opening of the report clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose.
- Have I included support from research for each supporting point in the body of my report?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the report to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the report? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

If you're not sure, continue to revise your work or contact your professor for help.

As Jorge reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully and decided to omit some details entirely. Read the following paragraph first without Jorge's revisions and then with them.

Jorge's Paragraph with Source Integration & Revisions

Original Version

One likely reason for these lacklustre long-term results is that a low-carbohydrate

diet – like any restrictive diet – is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, in to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate into their lives in the long term (Mayo Clinic, 2008). “For some people, (low-carbohydrate diets) are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well” (Kwon, 2010).

Revised Version

One likely reason for these lacklustre long-term results is that a low-carbohydrate diet – like any restrictive diet – is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, in to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate into their lives in the long term (Mayo Clinic, 2008). [Registered dietician D. Kwon \(personal communication, August 10, 2010\) comments](#), “For some people, (low-carbohydrate diets) are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.”

Summary of Revisions

- Remove 2nd sentence “Most people enjoy...”.

- Add a signal phrase with a personal communication citation to the last sentence.
- Delete the parenthetical citation from the end of the paragraph.

Jorge decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that the quotation at the end of the paragraph was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding an introductory phrase helped Jorge integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

Critical Thinking Exercise: Revising for Cohesion

Follow these steps to begin revising your report to improve cohesion.

1. Print out a hard copy of your report or make a copy that you can track changes on digitally.
2. Read the body paragraphs of your report first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support your point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.
3. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.
4. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.
5. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with the ideas in the body of the report.
6. Revise the places you identified in your report to improve cohesion.

Submit this to your instructor.

Note: You may use Copilot or Grammarly Pro for this exercise. Ask Copilot to only suggest possible ways to improve your organization, and do not blindly accept all of Grammarly Pro's suggestions. Do not let gen AI tools rewrite your work for you. It is essential to develop these skills

independently first. This technique treats a gen AI tool like Copilot like an advisor, offering feedback.

Prompt example: I've written the first draft of my research report. I've included it below. I'm not asking you to rewrite it—I'd just like your advice on how well my ideas are organized. Can you suggest ways I might improve the cohesion of my argument for my report?²

As always, make sure to include the reference and prompt if you do choose to use it.

Revise for Style

Once you are certain that the content of your report fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your report, or how you come across to readers. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

Checklist: Revising for Style

- My report avoids excessive wordiness.
- My sentences are varied in length and structure.
- I have avoided using first-person pronouns such as *I* and *we*.
- I have defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.
- I have used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon.
- My report states my point of view using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful.

On reviewing his report, Jorge found that he had generally used an appropriately academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse,

2. Prompt created by Copilot, licensed [CC 0](#), see [Appendix B](#).

disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped Jorge maintain a consistent tone. Read his revisions.

Jorge's First Paragraph with Academic Style Revisions

Original Version

I. Introduction

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

Revised Version

I. Introduction

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see **an overweight man** nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

Summary of Revisions

- Replace "a chubby guy" in sentence 1 with "an overweight man".
- Remove 3rd sentence.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Use the Style Checklist to revise your report. You may use either of these techniques:

1. Print out a hard copy of your report. Read it paragraph by paragraph. Check for the issues noted on the Style Checklist, as well as any other aspects of your writing style you have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone and then take time to rework those sections.
2. If you prefer to work with an electronic document, use the menu options in your word-processing program to enlarge the text to 150 or 200 percent of the original size. Make sure the type is large enough that you can focus on only one paragraph at a time. Highlight any areas where you notice problems in style or tone and then take time to rework those sections.

Protip Icon

Each stage has its own revision process. If you try to focus on more than one, you will inevitably miss things. It is best to break revision down into multiple stages.

Proofreading Your Report

After revising your report to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final proofreading review. Perhaps you have already caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final proofread to make sure it is error-free. Your final review should focus on two broad areas:

- Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling
- Errors in citing and formatting sources

When proofreading a research report, it is also important to check that you have cited sources properly and formatted your document according to the specified guidelines. Refer back to chapter 2 for details on this.

Keep in mind that the APA Style and other styles are not just concerned with citations and referencing, but also with formatting conventions.

[APA @ Conestoga](#) includes a [guide on paper format with templates](#). Review the guide before completing your assignments.

Copilot or Grammarly Pro can be a great proofreading tool. **Before you do, though, we recommend you first try out the proofreading strategies on your own!** This will help you build your skills, so AI is just another tool in your toolbox to use rather than something you feel you have to rely on.

Note: If you use a Copilot, Grammarly Pro or other generative AI tool for proofreading, please remember to include a reference to this in your reference list, and the prompt you used.

Remember, as well, while AI can create perfect grammar and mechanics, it lacks personality and YOUR voice. Try to build your prompt so that it does not suggest full sentence rewrites, but instead, just catches grammatical and mechanical errors in your writing. Good writing allows your voice to shine through.

Here is a potential prompt you could use with AI:

Please proofread the following text for **grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanical errors only**.

Do **not** suggest changes to tone, sentence structure, word choice, or style.

I want to preserve the original voice and phrasing.

Checklist: Citations and Formatting

- Within the body of my report, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source. This includes paraphrases and quotes.
- Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, where applicable, the organization name or source title) and year of publication. I have used the correct format of in-text and parenthetical citations.
- Each source cited in the body of my report has a corresponding entry in the references section of my report.
- My references section includes a heading and double-spaced, alphabetized entries.
- Each entry in my references section is indented on the second line and all subsequent lines. This is called a **hanging indent**.
- Each entry in my references section includes all the necessary information for that source

type in the correct sequence and format.

- My report includes a title page.
- The margins of my report are set at one inch. Text is double-spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

Review [Chapter 2](#) for more details on APA citation and formatting, and use [APA @ Conestoga](#) when completing your assignments.

Attributions

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[“person holding on red pen while writing on book”](#) by lilartsy, used under the [Unsplash License](#).

7.4 CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

7.1: **Describe** the process of writing a research report.

- An effective research report focuses on the writer's ideas.
- After choosing a topic, completing research, and creating an outline, the next steps are to draft the report, then revise and edit to finalize the report.
- The introduction and conclusion present and revisit the writer's thesis. The body of the report develops the thesis and related points with information from research.

7.2: **Outline** how to write an initial draft of a report.

- Drafting takes the outline and builds it into full paragraph form.
- An introduction should introduce your reader to the topic of your report, provide background information and include a thesis statement.
- A conclusion should recap the ideas from your report including restating the thesis, summarizing your main ideas from the body paragraphs, and adding any closing thoughts.
- Material taken from sources should be used to develop the writer's ideas. Summarizing and paraphrasing are usually most effective for this purpose.
- Ideas and information taken from outside sources must be cited in the body of the report and in the references section.

7.3: **Identify** types of revision for finalizing a report.

- Evaluate the organization of the report as a whole and the organization of individual paragraphs. Argument should proceed logically from the introduction to the body to the conclusion and logically from one point to the next.
- Evaluate its cohesion by checking that information from research is smoothly integrated with your ideas with appropriate in-text citations.

- Check that the style and tone are consistent throughout and appropriately academic and serious.
- Proofreading includes checking for errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, usage, spelling, citations, and formatting.

CHAPTER 8 - RESEARCH PRESENTATION

8.0 INTRODUCTION

Many of us have come across the idea that people today have shorter attention spans and don't want to read as much. Instead, many people focus on social media content (YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook videos). All of that content is basically other people presenting – or speaking in public. Tons of people are doing it, and in super engaging ways. Because we see so many engaging presentations every day, being able to present well is becoming an expectation – not just on social media, but in real life. Reading and writing still count, but many situations – including video applications and online interviews – require strong presentation skills.

Learning to present effectively has many benefits that will positively affect your career, education and personal life. These benefits include:

A phone with different apps.

- Communicating clearly with others
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Managing stress
- Improved polish and professionalism
- Being able to “think on your feet”

Presentation skills—the ability to communicate clearly, professionally and confidently—are crucial to compete in today's job market and progress in your career. This chapter will look at presenting in academic spaces, but many of these skills can be applied to any career.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to

1. **Outline** the planning process for presentations.
2. **Describe** the process of outlining, drafting, and creating a presentation.
3. **Identify** best practices for delivering a presentation.
4. **Outline** how to incorporate visuals using APA @ Conestoga rules in a presentation.

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8.1 PLANNING PROCESS FOR PRESENTATIONS

Before you think about the *presentation* part of a presentation, you should take a step back and, just like in report writing, consider planning and organizing what you want to say and how you will create your slides (sometimes referred to as a **slide deck**). This chapter will focus on PowerPoint, but Google Slides, Canva, or Sway are all other tools for creating presentation slides.

Just like if you were writing a paper, a presentation should include a clear overarching main idea (thesis) and supporting details to support that main idea, which will likely involve incorporating research.

Similar to research reports, your planning process would follow the same pattern:

1. Choose a topic and develop a research question.
2. Plan and schedule time to research and write notes.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research and ideas.
5. Draft your notes for your presentation and draft your PowerPoint.
6. Revise, edit and **practice** your presentation.

Now, for this course, you are going to use the work you've done already from chapters 6 and 7 as the material for your presentation, so you already have steps 1-4 done. For other courses, you might be starting from a brand-new topic that will require you to start at step 1.

In the next few sections, we will look at steps 5 and 6.

8.2 CREATING A PRESENTATION

A presentation is not only your slide deck, but it is also what you say while you present. To help you while you present, you want to build notes or an outline of talking points, so you can stay focused and as stress-free as possible while you present.

Drafting Your Notes

The fastest way to create a successful presentation is to start with an outline.

Use an outline, not a script, as this will allow you to be more natural and let you look at the audience or camera. Reading is a guaranteed way to make your presentation boring. Note many professional speakers do use scripts, but they always have a **teleprompter** guiding them. This will not be something you can expect while in school or in most professions.

The easiest way to create your outline is to work in this order:

1. Determine your thesis and write this as a full sentence.
2. Determine your key main points.
3. Add key supporting points for each of your main points which includes your researched evidence.
4. Complete the other parts – introduction and attention grabber, conclusion and call to action, etc.

Working in this order is fast because it's easier to create the conclusion and grabber when you've already decided on the content. Also, after you have the main structure, it's easy to add details, examples and stories that make your presentation interesting and convincing.

Another benefit of outlining is that you can use the outline as your presentation notes.

Protip icon

Break down your outline by timing. The introduction and conclusion should be shorter than the main points section. Make sure to break down the main points by timing as

well. Then it is important to practice this once you have your slide deck ready to make sure your estimated timing on your outline matches with the assignment parameters. If it doesn't, then you would want to make changes to your outline.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Create an outline for a 10- to 12-minute presentation.

Use the structure above, your notes from [Chapter 6](#), and your report from [Chapter 7](#) to guide you. You may also use the **Research Presentation Outline worksheet**. **Please consult with your instructor to ensure you are using the most updated worksheet.**

[Download the Worksheet: Conducting Research – Presentation Outline \[docx\]](#)

Share your drafted outline with your teacher for feedback.

Note: Do not use Copilot or other gen AI tool for this exercise. Outlining is an important skill to develop on your own as it helps you develop critical thinking skills, writing skills and organization skills. This exercise will not be graded for grammar and mechanics, so we want to see how YOU write and how YOU organize your ideas.

Drafting Your Slide Deck

Presentation structure refers not only to how you present (what you say), but also to your slide deck.

There are lots of ways to structure a presentation, but we like this one best. It's clear, simple and fits most presentations. This structure has 10 parts:

1. Grabber/hook: A very brief and interesting statement or question that grabs the audience's attention
2. Self-introduction, including full name & credentials: Who you are and why you're qualified

to present this content

3. Thesis: What you're going to speak about
4. Overview of main points
5. Key point 1
6. Key point 2
7. Key point 3
8. Conclusion: Restate the thesis
9. Summary of main points: Restate the overview
10. Call to action: What you want the audience to do
11. Reference list (you don't typically talk about this in your presentation, but you should have reference list slide.

Beginning

In this part of your presentation, you'll capture the audience's attention, tell them who you are, and give them a preview of your presentation.

- **Grabber/hook:** (Goes before or after the self-introduction) A very brief and interesting statement or question that grabs the audience's attention. See Grabber Types in the appendix for more details.

Protip icon

A presentation can be more informal, so you can use a personal anecdote or more informal language as you speak. This can be a great way to hook the audience.

- **Self-introduction:** (Goes before or after the grabber) Tell the audience your name and credentials. For example: *I'm Minh and I've been a professional presenter for 10 years.*
- **Thesis:** The main point or argument of your presentation. Be brief and precise, not general or vague. For example: *I'm going to show you how practicing your presentation 10 times will improve your grade by 20%.*
- **Overview of main points:** Briefly outline the main points that you'll cover in your presentation. To help your audience, list these in the same order that you'll deliver them later on. For example: *First, we'll talk about what makes presentations great, then I'll share*

some data on how practice affects your confidence and performance, and finally, we'll look at how to practice.

Body

In this part of your presentation, you'll deliver the detailed information.

- **Key point 1:** A major point that supports your thesis and may have supporting sub-points
- **Key point 2:** Another major point that supports your thesis and may have supporting sub-points
- **Key point 3:** The final major point that supports your thesis and may have supporting sub-points

You could have more than three key points, but you want to be careful about having too many. Make sure to consider the size of your presentation and what you can reasonably fit in that time frame.

Ending

In this part, you'll remind the audience of what you told them and tell them what to do next.

- **Summary of main points** (Can be merged with your conclusion): Clearly restate your main points in the same order you delivered them. It's the same as your overview, but in the past tense. *First, I described what makes presentations great, then I shared data on how practice affects confidence and performance, and finally, we looked at how to practice.*
- **Conclusion:** Restate your thesis in the past tense. For example: *I showed you that practicing your presentation 10 times will improve your grade by 20%.*
- **Call to action:** Give your audience clear, active, and compelling direction, based on what you told them. For example: *Practice your presentations ten times and start collecting those A-plusses!*

Need Help Making Slides?

Check with your instructor. They won't create your presentation for you, but they can help you get started and answer specific questions.

Conestoga's [Teach Me Tech desk](#) can help you with using PowerPoint, or you can check out the [PowerPoint section of the Digital Skills Toolkit](#). The Digital Skills Toolkit is available to anyone, not just Conestoga students.

The Teach Me Tech page also provides access to [LinkedIn Learning courses](#), but users must be logged in to a Conestoga account. Several courses are available on how to use the PowerPoint software and enhance your presentation content and design. For non-Conestoga students, check with your own school to see if they provide access to LinkedIn Learning.

General Guidelines for Creating Slides

When making slides, make sure to consider content and organization, titles and text, animations and transitions, and visual design.

Content and Organization

- Use the outline you built and the structure we discussed above to develop the content of your slides.
- Your slide deck should match the order from your outline (see above).

Titles and Text

- **Be Consistent:** Throughout your slide deck, titles and text should be consistent in title & text size, shape, placement, bullet & heading hierarchy, and formatting.
- **Be Brief:** Your slides are not a script. If you include too much information on them, your audience will be reading, not listening to you. Slides should reinforce your key points, highlighting only the most important information. Share the rest verbally – anecdotes, smaller details, and extra information.

Protip icon

There are two great ways to help you keep slides brief: The 1-6-6 Method recommends that each slide have a maximum of 1 idea, 6 bullet points, and 6 words per bullet. The 1-3-5 Method is similar: it suggests 1 idea, 3 bullet points and 5 words per bullet, per slide.

- **Font Type, Size, and Colour Matter:** Your audience might have less than perfect vision or a small device, so make type easy to read. Make sure to use a sans-serif font. Use high-contrast colours for text, such as black on white, or white on navy blue. If you're placing text on an image, use a solid background colour in the text box. Try to use at least size 24 or larger for your body text and size 32 for titles. If you're using a font size smaller than 32, test your slides to make sure text is visible from the back of the room or on a small device.

Animations and Transitions

- Limit the number of animations you use and avoid whimsical or unnecessary ones – they can make your slides annoying and unprofessional. Animations are useful when you want to gradually reveal information.
- You can use transitions, like fade-in or fade-out, when you're moving from one slide to the next. To avoid distracting your audience, don't use too many different types of transitions, and avoid overly dramatic transitions. Just like animations, a little goes a long way.

Visual Design

- All slides should have a consistent design as though they were created by one person, not cobbled together from multiple sources. If any of this does change, it should be an intentional design choice that reflects the presentation.
- Human brains love images! Include images in your slides to add interest and explain key points. Charts and graphs are fantastic ways to show data, describe relationships, and help your audience understand a key point.
- **There are copyright and citation rules around using images in your work. We will cover this in 8.4.**

Check Your Understanding

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=167#h5p-29>

Attributions

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8.3 PRESENTATION BEST PRACTICES

What makes good presenters engaging? What makes you want to watch and listen? Great delivery includes:

- Confidence
- Passion
- Proficient body language
- Eye contact
- Speaking clearly, being easy to understand
- Effective pauses
- Few hesitations or filler words
- Using words and phrases that are appropriate for the audience
- Accurate timing: not going overtime or ending too early
- Smooth transitions between sentences and sections

Above all, these skills come with practice and feeling confident. You build confidence by knowing your material and practicing the presentation! Practice, Practice, and then practice again before upcoming presentations. If you are doing a presentation online, make sure to practice with that tool. If you are doing a presentation in person, make sure to practice like you are there (stand up and present). It can also be a great idea to practice in front of someone, even if it is just your pet!

Delivery Skills

Excellent presenters use many delivery skills. Don't worry about being perfect at all of them; start by working on a few of them. When those skills feel improved, choose three more to work on.

Below you will see a list of delivery skills to consider while you present:

Voice

- **Volume:** Speak loudly enough so that we can hear you. Good volume also makes you sound confident.

- **Clarity:** Enunciate your words and avoid mumbling, so the audience can easily understand what you're saying. If you have difficult words in your presentation, make sure to practice pronouncing them ahead of time.
- **Pace:** Speak slowly enough to be understood, and vary your pace to add interest.
- **Vocal variety:** Vary your tone, pace, and volume to add interest, emphasis, and clarity. For example, speak a little faster to add excitement or anticipation, or speak a little louder to show emphasis. Some cultures and languages tend to be more monotone, so some students may have to work a little bit harder to ensure they vary their tone.

Body Language

- **Professional posture:** Good posture supports your voice and makes you look professional and confident (when we're nervous, we tend to hunch and cross our arms). Face the audience most of the time, and if presenting in person, avoid turning your back on them to look at your slides.
- **Manage your movement:** Repetitive body movements, such as tapping your foot or swaying, can also distract the audience. If you're presenting in person, slowly move around the physical space, such as moving towards the audience, or from one part of the room to another. If presenting online, consider hand gestures for emphasis.
- **Use gestures:** Use gestures to add interest and emphasis, and help explain what you're saying, such as indicating part of a slide or demonstrating an action.

Eye Contact

- **Make eye contact most of the time:** Eye contact shows confidence and helps everyone in the audience feel included. Secret tip for shy presenters: look at people's foreheads – it has the same effect as eye contact. If you're presenting online, this means looking at the camera. If you're using notes, they should be point form – not full sentences – that you can quickly glance at, not read.

Words

- **Filler words:** Fillers distract the audience and make you seem nervous, unprepared, or unprofessional. These include *uhh*, *umm*, *like*, *you know*, and any other words or noises that are not actual content. Real words like *and* and *so* can also be used as filler words. Try to pause when you need a moment to think without saying the filler word. This takes practice!

- **Vocabulary:** Use words and phrases your audience understands; language that is appropriate for them. Will they understand abbreviations, acronyms, slang, and jargon? Also, make sure to practice any difficult pronunciation ahead of time!

Check Your Understanding

Watch each of these videos and check your understanding of the presenter's skills.

Watch [Why 1.5 billion people eat with chopsticks on the TED Website \(3 mins\)](#)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=169#oembed-1>

Source: Lee, J. (2020, January). [Jennifer 8. Lee: Why 1.5 billion people eat with chopsticks](#) [Video]. Ted Conferences.

Jennifer 8. Lee – What Did You Notice?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=169#h5p-30>

Jennifer 8. Lee – What Did You Notice? (Text version)

1. Complete the sentences by filling in the blanks with the following words: confident, hesitations, clearly, and practiced

The speaker has obviously (a) _____ until she knows the content well. She seems (b) _____ and speaks (c) _____ without (d) _____.

2. Complete the sentences by filling in the blanks with the following words: eye contact, passion, varies
The speaker shows (a)_____ for the topic. She makes frequent (b) _____ with the camera, and (c)_____ her tone, pace, and volume to add interest.
3. Complete the sentences by filling in the blanks with the following words: high quality, easy
The visuals are (a) _____ and (b) _____ to see and understand.

Check Your Answers

1

Bad Presentation Example

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

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsofacademicwriting/?p=169#h5p-31>

Bad Presentation Example (Text version)

1. True or false? This video starts with a grabber.
2. How's the camera angle?
 1. Too low
 2. Too high
 3. Perfect
3. What would make the speaker look more confident? Select all that apply.
 1. Looking at the camera
 2. Better posture – not hunching
 3. Not reading
 4. Smiling occasionally
 5. Keeping hands off face

6. Few filler words
4. What else would improve this presentation? Select all that apply.
 1. Tidy the background
 2. Show passion for her topic
 3. Practice until she doesn't have to read
 4. Turn her body to the camera
 5. Use some gestures
5. True or false? The presentation ended with a conclusion and call to action

Check Your Answers

2

Attributions

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-
2. Bad presentation example: 1. False.
 2. a
 3. a, b, c, d, e.
 4. All of the above.
 5. False.

8.4 USING VISUALS WITH APA

Just like in a report, you will want to cite any sources you use in your PowerPoint. This means you need to include in-text citations and a reference list. Refer to [Chapter 2.3](#) or [APA @ Conestoga](#) for support on citations and references. In presentation slides, your cited information can correspond to one point or for the whole slide.

With presentations, however, images and other graphical elements are strongly encouraged as they create visual interest! **Remember that if someone else created it, you must give them credit.** The NEW part of the APA guidelines that you must consult with presentations is how to cite images and other graphical elements.

Use the [APA @ Conestoga PowerPoint template](#) to help you format your slides and cite different types of images.

Using Other People's Images

You can use your own images in your presentations. You can also use downloaded images if they are under particular licenses. Images created by other people are **copyrighted**. This means you can't use them without the creator's permission. Some creators make their work available to others under certain terms and conditions. Some items may come with a fee, like images on Shutterstock. Other images may be free to use, like those on sites like [Unsplash](#) or [Pexels](#). Some creator apply a **Creative Commons** license to their work.¹ No matter what the source of the image, you should always credit the creator of the image.

Websites that sell images for use add watermarks to the images. It is possible to save these images (rather than paying to download a version without a watermark). However, the purpose of the watermark is to show that it is not free to use. Do not use watermarked images in your work—it's illegal and unethical. A watermark looks like this:

image with a watermark

A watermark often states the name of the photography collection or the word Copyright and is layered on top of the image to create a visual cue that the image is not free. Image courtesy of Lucinda Atwood

1. Learn more on the [Creative Commons](#) website.

Learn more about image copyright and Creative Commons images on the [APA @ Conestoga Visuals and Appendices: About Copyright page](#).

Where to Find Images

Many high-quality images are freely available online on stock photo websites. Carefully check your image to ensure it is marked as *free to use*, as many of these stock photo collections offer images for purchase! There are also some databases of images available for educational use or via subscription through the library, and sites such as Wikimedia Commons have countless images published with Creative Commons licenses.

Here are three ways to find images.

- **Library Image Databases:** Library & Learning Services at Conestoga College has a [list of image databases available to students](#) that you can use to find rights-cleared or licensed images that are free to use. This list includes library subscriptions for educational use as well as popular online sources of openly licensed images.
- **Google Image Search:** Enter your search words and click *Search*. Then click *Images*, and *Tools* (underneath the search bar). Then click *Usage Rights* and select *Creative Commons Licenses*. This will filter a general image search to show you only the images that have been published by creators with an open license.
- **PowerPoint Stock Image Bank:** Microsoft provides stock images within its PowerPoint software that you can use within your presentation. To locate these, go to the Insert tab in PowerPoint. Then click on images and stock images to pull up the image bank. These images do not need to be cited as long as you have a licensed version of PowerPoint, but you may not use them outside of PowerPoint. As a Conestoga student, you have free access to PowerPoint using your student login information through Office 365.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Now that you've learned about building slide decks in 8.2 and 8.3 and learned about citations in this section, it is time to practice by building your own slide deck.

Using your outline, your notes from chapter 6 and your report from chapter 7, build a slide deck for your presentation. Refer back to the basic structure provided using 8.2.

Share this with your instructor.

How to Give Credit

Just as you should include source information for information, ideas, quotations, and paraphrases, you should always give credit to the creators of anything you didn't create – including images, charts, graphs, video, audio, and gifs.

1. While you do not have to credit anything you personally made, you might want to include a note, so your instructor knows it's your creation.
2. Provide the credit on the slide where the image appears.
3. Include a final slide with a reference list of all the sources in the presentation.
4. Just like images by others, you also have to cite images created with generative AI tools.

Learn more about citing visuals in your slides on the APA @ Conestoga [APA @ Conestoga Citing Figures and Tables in PowerPoint page](#). The Sample PowerPoint with Citations available on the page provides examples of how the citations should look on the content slide and reference list slide.

Critical Thinking Questions

Now that you've built your slide deck, you want to do a final revision which includes double checking your citations.

1. Double-check that you have cited all required images. Add any citations you might be missing.
2. Double-check your reference list. Add any citations you might be missing. Remember, you have to add a reference for any AI use and image use.

Share with instructor for final feedback.

Attributions

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8.5 CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

8.1 **Outline** the planning process for presentations.

- The planning process of presentations follows a similar pattern to the writing process and research reports: topic selection, scheduling time, researching, organizing, drafting, revising, editing and practicing.

8.2 **Describe** the process of outlining, drafting, and creating a presentation.

- When creating a presentation, you should begin with an outline before creating a slide deck.
- Your outline should include a thesis, main points, supporting details, and any other pertinent information.
- Your slide deck should follow your outline structure and include a beginning, a body section, and a conclusion.
- When making slides, make sure to consider content and organization, titles and text, animations and transitions, and visual design.

8.3 **Identify** best practices for delivering a presentation.

- Good delivery requires confidence, passion, as well as good timing and smooth transitions.
- Specific delivery skills include voice, body language, eye contact, and word choice, which can be developed with practice.

8.4 **Outline** how to incorporate visuals using APA @ Conestoga rules in a presentation.

- Use both in-text citations on slides and a reference slide for information, quotes, and paraphrases, just like in a report.
- Use citations and references for any visual elements included in your PowerPoint
- Images on the internet are copyrighted — make sure the images you use are available for educational use, made “free to use” by the software license (such as within PowerPoint), or have a Creative Commons license.

APPENDIX A: PRESENTATION GRABBERS

Remember that the grabber's job is *grabbing* the audience's attention, so it must be surprising, fascinating, or intriguing. It must also be related to your presentation's topic. Here are some descriptions and examples:

Bold Statement

- An opinion or view that may be extreme, perhaps even shocking.

"Gambling in all forms should be completely banned!"

Strong Statistic

- A strong statistic is a *fact* from a reputable source.

"In 2023, just over 31,000 Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with lung cancer and it will kill more than 20,000 Canadians." Source: [The Canadian Lung Association](#)

Story

- A story is a great way to capture your audience's imagination and get them to "project" themselves into your presentation. Powerful stories are often emotional. They could be about you or someone else, or may be allegorical.

In 1964, I was a little girl sitting on the linoleum floor of my mother's house in Milwaukee, watching Anne Bancroft present the Oscar for best actor at the 36th Academy Awards. She opened the envelope and said five words that literally made history: "The winner is Sidney Poitier." Up to the stage came the most elegant man I had ever seen. I remember his tie was white, and of course, his skin was black. I'd never seen a black man being celebrated like that. And I've tried many, many, many times to explain what a moment like that means to a little girl — a kid watching from the cheap seats, as my mom came through the door bone-tired from cleaning other people's houses. ... In 1982, Sidney received the Cecil B. DeMille Award right here at the Golden Globes, and it is not lost on me that at this moment, there are some little girls watching as I become the first black woman to be given this same award!

~ Oprah Winfrey accepting the Cecil B. DeMille Award at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards

Question

- Questions can be powerful because they prompt the audience to think and interact. There are different types of questions:
 - Rhetorical: you ask a question without expecting an answer. For example: *Have you ever wondered how electricity works?*
 - Closed-ended: you ask the audience to respond. For example: *Raise your hand if you've ever wondered how electricity works.*
 - Open-ended: where you don't give options to the audience and they can answer freely. For example: *What's your favourite candy?*
- It's important to consider that the audience might not respond exactly as you expect. So, prepare responses for what you'll do based on a variety of responses.

Invitation to Imagine Something

- Similar to a story, an invitation to imagine something is powerful because it gets the audience to use their imaginations and can transport them “into” your presentation. You could ask the audience to imagine something extremely positive, or you could have them imagine something very negative. Example: *“I want to invite you all to close your eyes and imagine that the term is over. You earned an A+ in 1500, Covid is over, and you're on vacation on a lovely tropical beach. You can hear the soft ocean waves and feel the warm breeze as you sip an ice-cold drink. You're in paradise, and think to yourself... I don't have a care in the world... everything is perfect.”*

Quote

- A quote is something that a famous person said. The person should be credible/well-known.
- Example: *“Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans.” John Lennon*
Example: *“You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take.” Wayne Gretzky*

Proverb

- A proverb is a common saying. These can be somewhat cliché and less than exciting because we've heard them a lot. To keep things interesting, you could consider introducing a foreign proverb to the audience: Example: *"the first pancake is always ruined"* (Russian proverb conveying that things might not be perfect at first, but will improve as you continue to practice. Used in a presentation designed to convey that you should never give up)
- Alternatively, you could "twist" a common proverb and contradict it: Example: *"I'm here to tell you that an apple a day doesn't keep the doctor away!"* (Used in a presentation on diabetes and being mindful of sugar intake)

Prop

- A prop is a physical item that you can show to the audience. Make sure the item is large enough to be easily seen. Example: *Wearing a jersey and showing a basketball for a presentation on Michael Jordan*

Media

- In presentations that include slides or other media, you can briefly show or play video, audio, or images. Make sure the media isn't too long – remember the audience is here to see *you* speak. Example: *A short drone video of beautiful Thai beaches for a presentation designed to convince people to visit Thailand.*

Humour

- You can use humour or a joke as a grabber, but be sure it's a joke that everyone will get and avoid jokes that may offend the audience.

Other Creative Ideas

- Some presenters have done other unexpected and creative things for their grabbers.

- Example: *Playing a guitar and singing (for a presentation on the mental health benefits of music).*
- Example: *Beatboxing (for a presentation on the basics of beatboxing)*
- Example: *Describing a lovely scene, then making a shocking noise (at the start of a presentation on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster)*

You can also mix and match grabbers. For example, you could show an image and ask the audience to guess what it is.

The length of your grabber is relative to your total presentation time. For a 2-minute presentation, it should be quite brief – maybe one sentence. For a 16-minute team presentation, a 45-60 second grabber would be appropriate.

Attributions

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APPENDIX B: GEN AI PROMPTS

The following prompts were used by the authors to generate content using Microsoft Copilot in September 2025.

Chapter 5.2

Critical Thinking Exercise: Analyzing Persuasive Writing

Can you create a short 250 word persuasive essay on benefits of pet ownership.

Please make sure the essay fits into the following: This essay should be created for a grade 12 U level. This essay should be written without grammar or mechanics errors. This essay should be an example of a poorly written persuasive essay. This essay should include 1-3 quoted or paraphrased passages.

Before you provide this essay, please ask any clarification questions required to make your understanding of my prompt at 95 % or higher.

Chapter 5.3

Check Your Understanding: Thesis Statements

Can you please create two more thesis statements using this as a baseline: My paper will explain why [Insert Topic].

These thesis statements should be weak examples that use some of the common pitfalls in Grade 12 U level student writing.

Please ask any follow-up questions you require in order to have 95 % or more understanding of the prompt.

Chapter 6.2

Can you develop a 8-10 sentence paragraph that illustrates this idea as an example: Another way to develop relationships between ideas is to provide an additional sentence where you elaborate on your supporting detail. This can help you show the reader how your supporting detail (paraphrase or quote) ties to your thesis or how it ties to the next point going forward.

Note: please make sure sources are real. This example will be used in a grade 12 U level communication class

Please ask any clarification questions required for you to understand this prompt at 95 % or higher.

Chapter 7.3

Critical Thinking Exercise: Revising Your Draft

Can you help me create a prompt example that I can show to students that follows these rules: You may use GenAI or Grammarlypremium for this exercise. Ask GenAI to only suggest possible ways to improve your organization. Do not allow GenAI to rewrite your work for you. It is important to build these skills on your own first. This technique is treating GenAI like an advisor who is just offering some feedback.

Please ask any clarifying questions required to understand the request above to 95 % accuracy

Critical Thinking Exercise: Revising for Cohesion

Can you help me create a prompt example that I can show to students that follows these rules: You may use GenAI or Grammarlypremium for this exercise. Ask GenAI to only suggest possible ways to improve your organization. Do not allow GenAI to rewrite your work for you. It is important to build these skills on your own first. This technique is treating GenAI like an advisor who is just offering some feedback

Please ask any clarifying questions required to understand the request above to 95 % accuracy.

GLOSSARY

Abstract

A section of a research paper or journal article that provides a brief summary of the contents, including the most essential information.

Academic integrity

Being honest and diligent when completing work for marking. Not committing acts of academic misconduct such as cheating.

Academic integrity violations

“An AIV is a general term encompassing any conduct that fails to follow the rules governing conduct in an evaluation, results in an unfair academic advantage, or misrepresents a student’s achievement of learning outcomes.” [Conestoga College Academic Integrity Procedure \[PDF\]](#)

Academic misconduct

An action contrary to academic integrity, such as cheating, plagiarism, or copying.

Analyze

Breaking down the content of a text to better understand and evaluate it.

Anecdote

A brief story that is usually amusing or interesting. In academic texts, most often found in the introduction.

Aristotle

An ancient Greek philosopher (384–322 BCE) whose thinking and work greatly affected many areas of study, including logic, mathematics, politics, and ethics. He is considered the father of rhetoric because his writing on the subject is considered foundational.

Attributive tags

Also called signal phrases, these help the writer clearly identify when information has come from an outside source.

Audience

The people who will read or otherwise engage with a text. Some examples of audience are an instructor, classmates, or co-workers, but there are many more.

Authoritative opinions

The views or insights of an expert within a given field of study. Such opinions are valuable in supporting a thesis statement.

Bias

A prejudice toward or against a particular person or group.

Character

The sum of a person's attributes and personality traits, especially as they are connected to that person's morals and ethics.

Citation style guide

A citation style guide refers to the rules for citing sources of information and ideas, both in-text and reference lists, and may also include rules for how your paper should look, including formatting, margins, title pages, etc.

Cite

To provide information about a source, to both credit the author or creator and allow others to find the source.

Conclusion

Part of an argument, specifically the main claim that the arguer is making. Should be clearly supported by its premises (supporting statements).

Concrete

In the prewriting process, concrete ideas are more settled and specific. They are abstract ideas refined.

Confirmation bias

A tendency individuals have to find evidence that supports their own beliefs, often involving the ignoring or discrediting of opposing evidence.

Controlling idea

The portion of a thesis statement that narrows a general topic into something more specific, and acts as the guiding force of the essay.

Controversial topic

A subject that inspires strong feelings in people, often leading to intense debate and disagreement.

Copyright

The right of a creator to exclusively control their works. Anyone wanting to use copyrighted materials must request permission to do so.

Creative Commons

A nonprofit organization that manages an open licensing program that allows creators to give permission to users to use their work under certain terms and conditions without having to explicitly request permission.

Credibility

The extent to which an author has expertise on the subject of their text.

Critical reading

The process of reading a text for the purpose of deeper understanding. It is an active process involving not only analyzing the work and interpreting its meaning, but also evaluating or questioning what has been written.

Critique

To evaluate a text by reviewing and questioning it thoroughly.

Cultural context

A “big picture” look at the forces around a text. This can include considering factors that are political, social, historical, and more. It requires an understanding that texts do not exist in isolation.

Discussion

A section of a research paper or journal article in which the author(s) interpret and analyze their findings. This generally involves explaining the larger significance of the information and how it fits with other research.

Draft

An initial version of a written work. A place for writers to get their ideas on paper, but the result needs proofreading and often rewriting.

Dropped quotations

A direct quote inserted into text as a standalone sentence without any introduction or explanation.

Ethos

A type of rhetorical appeal that uses the author’s character or credibility in an attempt to persuade.

Factual correctness

An indication that the supporting premises of an argument are true.

Fallacy

A falsehood, particularly as it pertains to an idea being used in support of an argument.

Form

Refers to the way in which a text is structured, or in other words, the techniques used to achieve the goal of the text.

Function

Refers to what the text communicates to the reader, or in other words, what the writer is trying to convey to the reader.

Generative AI (Gen AI)

A model or system that is able to create new content, such as text or images, in response to prompts by users, based on the data and patterns in the model.

Hanging indent

Indentation in which the first line is not indented, but the second and any further lines are. The references page of an APA-style report must have a hanging indent.

In-text citation

A shorter citation that appears in the body of a text. Its purpose is to give credit to a source of information and direct the reader to the References list if they wish to learn more.

Logical strength

An indication that the conclusion of an argument can reasonably be reached through the supporting premises.

Logos

A type of rhetorical appeal that uses logic, reason, and evidence in an attempt to persuade.

Mechanics

The technical rules of writing, which includes spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Method

A section of a research paper or journal article that outlines how the research was completed. This could include procedures, processes, statistical analyses, and more.

Multimodal writing

An approach in which a text uses multiple modes of information delivery, such as text, images, and videos.

Novel

A synonym for "new," indicating ideas or connections that have not been presented before.

Paraphrasing

The act of taking information from a source and presenting it in one's own words. To be done properly, this must include a citation to acknowledge the source of the information.

Patchwriting

An attempt to paraphrase that is too similar to the source material, often taking the text word for word with just a few changes.

Pathos

A type of rhetorical appeal that uses emotion in an attempt to persuade.

Plagiarism

Presenting language or information without acknowledging its source, which, whether intentional or not, makes it appear one is taking credit for someone else's work.

Popular source

A source that is written for the general public. These texts tend to use everyday language and be accessible to anyone. Some examples are newspapers and magazines.

Premise

Part of an argument, specifically a statement that is meant to give the reader reason to support the conclusion.

Primary sources

Sources that involve firsthand evidence or experience. Some examples include interviews and historical documents.

Procrastination

Delaying or postponing something in spite of negative consequences for doing so. In academics, this often involves a student waiting until the last minute to finish an assignment, resulting in more stress and likely work of lesser quality.

Proofreading

The act of reviewing a written piece of work, with the intention of locating and making corrections to any errors.

Purpose

The specific goal or intention of a text. It is what the author hopes to achieve with their writing.

Quoting

The act of taking information from a source exactly as it was originally written. This involves using quotation marks around the information and a citation to acknowledge the source.

Reference list citation

A detailed citation that appears on the References list of a text. Its purpose is to direct the reader to the source material.

Reflection

A piece of writing in which the author responds to a text or lesson, which could involve thinking about the learning process and their own reaction to the material.

Results

A section of a research paper or journal article that indicates the findings of the study. It is factual and does not attempt to interpret the information.

Rhetoric

The art of being persuasive, most commonly as it pertains to speaking or writing.

Schema

The background knowledge one has before reading a text. Having a schema facilitates an easier understanding of material in the text.

Scholarly source

A source that is written for a specialized audience, such as scholars or experts. These texts tend to use formal language and often must undergo review by peers before publication. Some examples are academic journals and scholarly books.

Scope

The boundaries of a topic that will be covered in a text. If a scope is too wide, there will be too much material to cover adequately, but if the scope is too narrow, there may not be enough to say.

Secondary sources

Sources that involve analysis or interpretation, not involving someone directly participating in the researched event. This is a broad category that includes articles and biographies.

Slide deck

A set of digital slides used to provide visual aid for a presentation.

Sound argument

An argument in which the premises (supporting statements) are true and support the conclusion.

Source

A text that being cited and referenced in academic work.

Summarize

Identifying and reproducing the main ideas of a text in one's own words.

Synopsis

A short summary to inform the audience an overview of a text by highlighting the key parts.

Synthesize

The act of combining ideas from multiple sources (i.e., texts) to come up with an original idea. This is quite different from summarizing, in which one reproduces someone else's idea(s).

Teleprompter

A device used to display text of a script or speech used to aid the presenter or speaker.

Text

A term referring to material that conveys meaning, such as written texts, though other formats can also be considered "texts" (e.g., movies).

Thesis statement

In academic writing, the sentence expressing the main idea of a text.

Unsound argument

In contrast to a sound argument, an unsound argument generally either contains false premises or the conclusion is not supported by the premises.