

■ The Writing Process: From Start to Finish

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by a writing project—especially if the form of writing is new to you, the topic is complex, or the paper must be long. However, using the writing process will relieve some of that pressure by breaking down the task into manageable steps. An overview of those steps is shown below, and key principles are addressed on the next page.

Consider the writing process. ■ ■ ■

The following flowchart maps out the basic steps in the writing process. As you work on your writing project, periodically review this diagram to keep yourself on task.



Adapt the process to your project. ■■■

The writing process shown on the previous page is flexible, not rigid. As a writer, you need to adapt the process to your situation and assignment. To do so, consider these essential principles.



Video

Writing tends not to follow a straight path. While writing begins with an assignment or a need and ends with a reader, the journey in between is often indirect. The steps in the flowchart overlap to show that when you write, you sometimes move back and forth between steps, meaning that the process is recursive. For example, during the revision phase, you may discover that you need to draft a new paragraph or do more research.

Each assignment presents distinct challenges. A personal essay may develop best through clustering or freewriting; a literary analysis through close reading of a story; a lab report through the experimental method; and a position paper through reading of books and journal articles, as well as through careful and balanced reasoning.

Writing can involve collaboration. From using your roommate as a sounding board for your topic choice to working with a group to produce a major report, college writing is not solitary writing. In fact, many colleges have a writing center to help you refine your writing assignments. (See pages 89–91 for more.)

Each writer works differently. Some writers do extensive prewriting before drafting, while others do not. You might develop a detailed outline, whereas someone else might draft a brief list of topics. Experiment with the strategies introduced in chapters 2–7, adopting those that help you.

Good writing can't be rushed. Although some students regard pulling an all-nighter as a badge of honor, good writing takes time. A steady, disciplined approach will generally produce the best results. For example, by brainstorming or reading early in a project, you stimulate your subconscious mind to mull over issues, identify problems, and project solutions—even while your conscious mind is working on other things. Similarly, completing a first draft early enough gives you time to revise objectively.

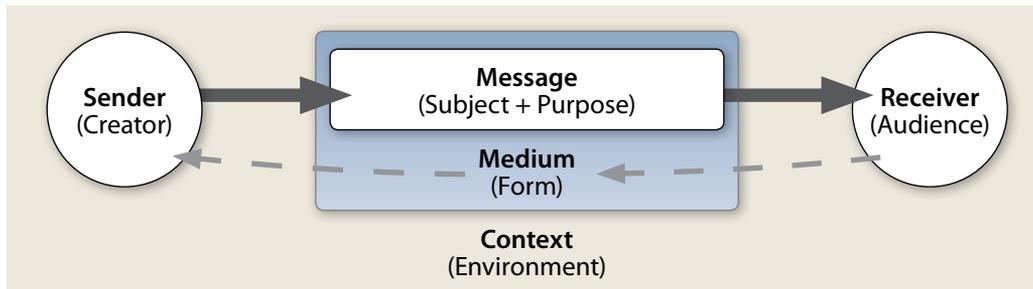
Different steps call for attention to different writing issues. As you use the writing process, at each stage keep your focus where it belongs:

1. While getting started, planning, and drafting, focus on global issues: ideas, structure, voice, format, and design.
2. During revising, fix big content problems by cutting, adding, and thoroughly reworking material. (Our experience is that students benefit the most from revising—but spend the least time doing it!)
3. While editing and proofreading, pay attention to small, local issues—word choice, sentence smoothness, and grammatical correctness. Worrying about these issues early in the writing process interrupts the flow of drafting and wastes time on material that later is deleted.

■ Understand the Rhetorical Situation

Rhetoric is the art of using language effectively. As Aristotle, Quintilian, and others have explained, your language is effective when all aspects of your message fit the rhetorical situation:

Rhetorical Situation



Think of your role as the writer. ■ ■ ■

Are you writing as a concerned citizen, as a student in a class, as a friend relating a story, as a reporter providing news, as a blogger giving an opinion? Your role in writing and otherwise communicating affects the level of language you use, the voice you use, the types of details you include, and so on.

Understand your subject. ■ ■ ■

To truly understand your subject, you need to gather and assimilate all relevant details about it, including its history, makeup, function, and impact on people and culture. Knowing those details will help you narrow your focus to a specific thesis and support it well.

Writing with Sources: As you search for information, think about which types of sources are recommended or expected for the assignment. Which should be avoided?

Understand your purpose. ■ ■ ■

Key words in an assignment—such as *analyze*, *explain*, *defend*, or *describe*—tell you what the purpose of the writing is supposed to be. Understanding why you are writing helps you choose an organizational strategy, such as classification, definition, or process. (See pages 62–66.)

Writing with Sources: Think of the sources that will most help you with your purpose, whether to entertain, compare, inspire, enlighten, and so on.

Understand your audience. ■ ■ ■

For any writing task, you must understand your audience in order to develop writing that meets their needs. To assess your audience, answer questions like these:

Who are my readers: instructor? classmates? web users?

What do they know about my topic, and what do they need to know?

How well do they understand the terminology involved?

What are their attitudes toward the topic and toward me?

How well do they read written English—or visuals such as graphs and charts?

How will they use my writing (as entertainment or to complete a task)?

Note: Answers to such questions will help you develop meaningful sentences (pages 95–101), choose appropriate words (pages 102–106), and select relevant visuals (page 408).

Writing with Sources: Ask yourself what sources your reader will best understand and most respect. What sources will add to your credibility and authority?

Understand the medium (form). ■ ■ ■

Many communication options are available for every message. Academic forms include essays, analyses, reports, proposals, research papers, reviews, and so on. It is important to understand the form of the assignment. What works well in a narrative about a past experience would not work as well in a lab report. Also, each of these forms can contain multiple media: written elements, graphics, photos, drawings, videos, audios, links, and so on. Understanding the overall medium and the media within it will help you succeed.

Writing with Sources: Make sure you understand the way that sources are to be cited in the form of communication you are using. (See 491–558 for MLA and APA styles.)

Think about the context. ■ ■ ■

Think about how this assignment relates to others in the course. Consider these issues:

Weight: Is this an everyday assignment, a weekly or biweekly one, or the *big* one?

Assessment: Find out how the assignment will be graded. What rubric will be used?

Intent: Make certain that you understand the goals of the assignment and understand what your instructor wants you to get out of it.

Note: If the writing you are doing is not in response to an assignment, think about the environment in which the message will be read. What is the history of this issue? What is the current climate like? What might the future be?

Writing with Sources: If you are writing material that will be reviewed and debated by others in your field, think about what sources you would most want your writing to appear in. Make certain you understand the submission guidelines for the source.

■ Understanding the Assignment

Each college instructor has a way of personalizing a writing assignment, but most assignments will spell out (1) the objective, (2) the task, (3) the formal requirements, and (4) suggested approaches and topics. Your first step, therefore, is to read the assignment carefully, noting the options and restrictions that are part of it. The suggestions below will help you do that. (Also see pages 114–117 for one writer’s approach.)

Read the assignment. ■ ■ ■

Certain words in the assignment explain what main action you must perform. Here are some words that signal what you are to do:

■ Key Words

- Analyze:** Break down a topic into subparts, showing how those parts relate.
- Argue:** Defend a claim with logical arguments.
- Classify:** Divide a large group into well-defined subgroups.
- Compare/contrast:** Point out similarities and/or differences.
- Define:** Give a clear, thoughtful definition or meaning of something.
- Describe:** Show in detail what something is like.
- Evaluate:** Weigh the truth, quality, or usefulness of something.
- Explain:** Give reasons, list steps, or discuss the causes of something.
- Interpret:** Tell in your own words what something means.
- Reflect:** Share your well-considered thoughts about a subject.
- Summarize:** Restate someone else’s ideas very briefly in your own words.
- Synthesize:** Connect facts or ideas to create something new.

■ Options and Restrictions

The assignment often gives you some choice of your topic or approach but may restrict your options to suit the instructor’s purpose. Note the options and restrictions in the following short sample assignment:

Reflect on the way a natural disaster or major historical event has altered your understanding of the past, the present, or the future.

- Options:** (1) You may choose any natural disaster or historical event.
(2) You may focus on the past, present, or future.
(3) You may examine any kind of alteration.

- Restrictions:** (1) You must reflect on a change in your understanding.
(2) The disaster must be natural.
(3) The historical event must be major.

Relate the assignment to the goals of the course. ■ ■ ■

1. How much value does the instructor give the assignment? (The value is often expressed as a percentage of the course grade.)
2. What benefit does your instructor want you to receive?
 - Strengthen your comprehension?
 - Improve your research skills?
 - Deepen your ability to explain, prove, or persuade?
 - Expand your style?
 - Increase your creativity?
3. How will this assignment contribute to your overall performance in the course?
What course goals (often listed in the syllabus) does it address?

Relate the assignment to other assignments. ■ ■ ■

1. Does it build on previous assignments?
2. Does it prepare you for the next assignment?

Relate the assignment to your own interests. ■ ■ ■

1. Does it connect with a topic that already interests you?
2. Does it connect with work in your other courses?
3. Does it connect with the work you may do in your chosen field?
4. Does it connect with life outside school?

Reflect on the assignment. ■ ■ ■

1. **First impulses:** How did you feel when you first read the assignment?
2. **Approaches:** What's the usual approach for an assignment like this? What's a better way of tackling it?
3. **Quality of performance:** What would it take to produce an excellent piece of writing?
4. **Benefits:** What are the benefits to your education? to you personally? to the class? to society?
5. **Features:** Reflect further on four key features of any writing assignment.
 - Purpose:** What is the overall purpose of the assignment—to inform, to explain, to analyze, to entertain? What is the desired outcome?
 - Audience:** Should you address your instructor? your classmates? a general reader? How much does the reader already know about the topic? What type of language should you use?
 - Form:** What are the requirements concerning length, format, and due date?
 - Assessment:** How will the assignment be evaluated? How can you be sure that you are completing the assignment correctly?

Selecting a Subject

For some assignments, finding a suitable subject (or topic) may require little thinking on your part. If an instructor asks you to summarize an article in a professional journal, you know what you will write about—the article in question. But suppose the instructor asks you to analyze a feature of popular culture in terms of its impact on society. You won't be sure of a specific writing topic until you explore the possibilities. Keep the following points in mind when you conduct a topic search. Your topic must . . .

- meet the requirements of the assignment.
- be limited in scope.
- seem reasonable (that is, be within your means to research).
- genuinely interest you.

Limit the subject area. ■ ■ ■

Many of your writing assignments may relate to general subject areas you are currently studying. Your task, then, is to select a specific topic related to the general area of study—a topic limited enough that you can treat it with some depth in the length allowed for the assignment. The following examples show the difference between general subjects and limited topics:

- General Subject Area:** Popular culture
 - Limited Topic:** *The Simpsons* TV show
- General Subject Area:** Energy sources
 - Limited Topic:** Using wind power

Conduct your search. ■ ■ ■

Finding a writing idea that meets the requirements of the assignment should not be difficult, if you know how and where to look. Follow these steps:

1. Check your class notes and handouts for ideas related to the assignment.
2. Search the Internet. Type in a keyword or phrase (the general subject stated in the assignment) and see what you can find. You could also follow a subject tree to narrow a subject. (See page 462.)
3. Consult indexes, guides, and other library references. *The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, for example, lists current articles published on specific topics and where to find them. (See pages 452–457.)
4. Discuss the assignment with your instructor or an information specialist.
5. Use one or more of the prewriting strategies described on the following pages to generate possible writing ideas.

Explore for possible topics. ■ ■ ■

You can generate possible writing ideas by using the following strategies. These same strategies can be used when you've chosen a topic and want to develop it further.

■ Journal Writing

Write in a journal on a regular basis. Reflect on your personal feelings, develop your thoughts, and record the happenings of each day. Periodically go back and underline ideas that you would like to explore in writing assignments. In the following journal-writing samples, the writer came up with an idea for a writing assignment about the societal impacts of popular culture.

I read a really disturbing news story this morning. I've been thinking about it all day. In California a little girl was killed when she was struck by a car driven by a man distracted by a billboard ad for lingerie featuring a scantily clothed woman. Not only is it a horrifying thing to happen, but it also seems to me all too symbolic of the way that sexually charged images in the media are putting children, and especially girls, in danger. That reminds me of another news story I read this week about preteen girls wanting to wear the kinds of revealing outfits that they see in music videos, TV shows, and magazines aimed at teenagers. Too many of today's media images give young people the impression that sexuality should begin at an early age. This is definitely a dangerous message.

■ Freewriting

Write nonstop for ten minutes or longer to discover possible writing ideas. Use a key concept related to the assignment as a starting point. You'll soon discover potential writing ideas that might otherwise have never entered your mind. Note in the following example that the writer doesn't stop writing even when he can't think of anything to say. Note also that he doesn't stop to correct typos and other mistakes.

Popular culture. What does that include? Television obviously but that's a pretty boring subject. What else? Movies, pop music, video games. Is there a connection between playing violent video games and acting out violent behavior? Most video players I know would say no but sometimes news reports suggest a connection. Is this something I'd want to write about? Not really. What then? Maybe I could think about this a different way and focus on the positive effects of playing video games. They release tension for one thing and they can really be challenging. Other benefits? They help to kill time, that's for sure, but maybe that's not such a good thing. I would definitely read more if it weren't for video games, tv, etc. Maybe I could write about how all the electronic entertainment that surrounds us today is creating a generation of nonreaders. Or maybe I could focus on whether people aren't getting much physical exercise because of the time they spend with electronic media. Maybe both. At least I have some possibilities to work with.

Quick Guide

■ Freewriting

Freewriting is the writing you do without having a specific outcome in mind. You simply write down whatever pops into your head as you explore your topic. Freewriting can serve as a starting point for your writing, or it can be combined with any of the other prewriting strategies to help you select, explore, focus, or organize your writing. If you get stuck at any point during the composing process, you can return to freewriting as a way of generating new ideas.

Reminders

- **Freewriting helps you get your thoughts down on paper.** (Thoughts are constantly passing through your mind.)
- **Freewriting helps you develop and organize these thoughts.**
- **Freewriting helps you make sense out of things** that you may be studying or researching.
- **Freewriting may seem awkward at times**, but just stick with it.

The Process

- **Write nonstop and record whatever comes into your mind.** Follow your thoughts instead of trying to direct them.
- **If you have a particular topic or assignment to complete, use it as a starting point.** Otherwise, begin with anything that comes to mind.
- **Don't stop to judge, edit, or correct your writing;** that will come later.
- **Keep writing even when you think you have exhausted all of your ideas.** Switch to another angle or voice, but keep writing.
- **Watch for a promising writing idea to emerge.** Learn to recognize the beginnings of a good idea, and then expand that idea by recording as many specific details as possible.

The Result

- **Review your writing and underline the ideas you like.** These ideas will often serve as the basis for future writings.
- **Determine exactly what you need to write about.** Once you've figured out what you are required to do, you may then decide to do a second freewriting exercise.
- **Listen to and read the freewriting of others;** learn from your peers.

■ Listing

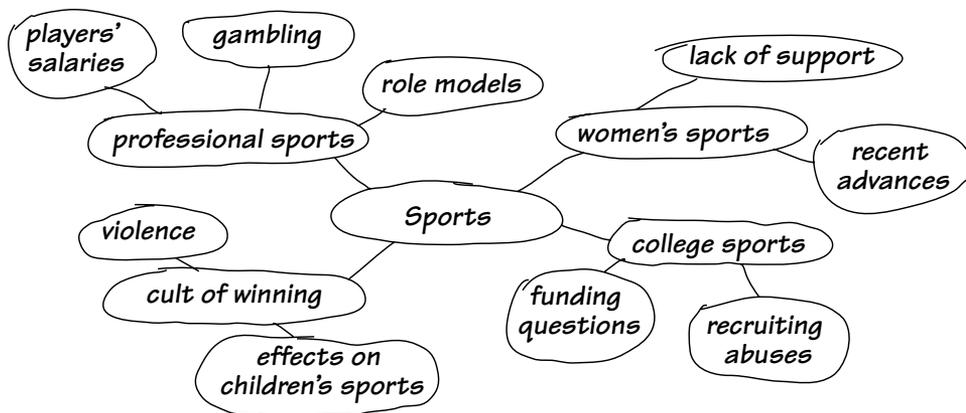
Freely list ideas as they come to mind, beginning with a key concept related to the assignment. (Brainstorming—listing ideas in conjunction with members of a group—is often an effective way to extend your lists.) The following is an example of a student’s list of ideas for possible topics on the subject of news reporting:

Aspect of popular culture: News reporting

Sensationalism
 Sound bites rather than in-depth analysis
 Focus on the negative
 Shock radio
 Shouting matches pretending to be debates
 Press leaks that damage national security, etc.
 Lack of observation of people’s privacy
 Bias
 Contradictory health news confusing to readers
 Little focus on “unappealing” issues like poverty
 Celebration of “celebrity”

■ Clustering

To begin the clustering process, write a key word or phrase related to the assignment in the center of your paper. Circle it, and then cluster ideas around it. Circle each idea as you record it, and draw a line connecting it to the closest related idea. Keep going until you run out of ideas and connections. The following is a student’s cluster on the subject of sports:



TIP: After four or five minutes of listing or clustering, scan your work for an idea to explore in a freewriting. A writing idea should begin to emerge during this freewriting session. (See pages 35–36.)

■ Collecting Information

Writer and instructor Donald Murray said that “writers write with information. If there is no information, there will be no effective writing.” How true! Before you can develop a thoughtful piece of writing, you must gain a thorough understanding of your topic; to do so, you must carry out the necessary reading, reflecting, and researching. Writing becomes a satisfying experience once you can speak with authority about your topic. Use the following guidelines when you start collecting information. (Also see “Research and Writing” in this book.)

- Determine what you already know about your topic. (Use the strategies below this bulleted list.)
- Consider listing questions you would like to answer during your research. (See page 39.)
- Identify and explore possible sources of information. (See page 40.)
- Carry out your research following a logical plan. (See pages 48–53.)

Find out what you already know. ■ ■ ■

Use one or more of the following strategies to determine what you already know about a writing topic.

1. **Focused freewriting:** At this point, you can focus your freewriting by (1) exploring your limited topic from different angles or (2) approaching your freewriting as if it were a quick draft of the actual paper. A quick version will tell you how much you know about your topic and what you need to find out.
2. **Clustering:** Try clustering with your topic serving as the nucleus word. Your clustering should focus on what you already know. (See page 37.)
3. **Five W’s of writing:** Answer the five W’s—Who? What? When? Where? and Why?—to identify basic information on your subject. Add How? to the list for better coverage.
4. **Directed writing:** Write whatever comes to mind about your topic, using one of the modes listed below. (Repeat the process as often as you need to, selecting a different mode each time.)
 - Describe it:** What do you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste?
 - Compare it:** What is it similar to? What is it different from?
 - Associate it:** What connections between this topic and others come to mind?
 - Analyze it:** What parts does it have? How do they work together?
 - Argue it:** What do you like about the topic? What do you not like about it? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
 - Apply it:** What can you do with it? How can you use it?

Ask questions. ■■■

To guide your collecting and researching, you may find it helpful to list questions about your topic that you would like to answer. Alternatively, you can refer to the questions below. These questions address problems, policies, and concepts. Most topics will fall under one of these categories. Use those questions that seem helpful as a guide to your research.

	DESCRIPTION	FUNCTION	HISTORY	VALUE
PROBLEMS	What is the problem? What type of problem is it? What are its parts? What are the signs of the problem?	Who or what is affected by it? What new problems might it cause in the future?	What is the current status of the problem? What or who caused it? What or who contributed to it?	What is its significance? Why? Why is it more (or less) important than other problems? What does it symbolize or illustrate?
POLICIES	What is the policy? How broad is it? What are its parts? What are its most important features?	What is the policy designed to do? What is needed to make it work? What are or will be its effects?	What brought about this policy? What are the alternatives?	Is the policy workable? What are its advantages and disadvantages? Is it practical? Is it a good policy? Why or why not?
CONCEPTS	What is the concept? What are its parts? What is its main feature? Whom or what is it related to?	Who has been influenced by this concept? Why is it important? How does it work?	When did it originate? How has it changed over the years? How might it change in the future?	What practical value does it have? Why is it superior (or inferior) to similar concepts? What is its social worth?

Identify possible sources. ■ ■ ■

Finding meaningful sources is one of the most important steps you will take as you prepare to write. Listed below are tips that will help you identify good sources:

1. **Give yourself enough time.** Finding good sources of information may be time-consuming. Books and periodicals you need may be checked out, your computer service may be down, and so on.
2. **Be aware of the limits of your resources.** Print material may be out-of-date. Online information may be more current, but it may not always be reliable. (See pages 426–429 for ways to help you evaluate information.)
3. **Use your existing resources to find additional sources of information.** Pay attention to books, articles, and individuals mentioned in reliable initial sources of information.
4. **Ask for help.** The specialists in your school library can help you find information that is reliable and relevant. These people are trained to find information; don't hesitate to ask for their help. (See page 449.)
5. **Bookmark useful websites.** Include reference works and academic resources related to your major.

■ Explore different sources of information.

Of course, books and websites are not the only possible sources of information. Primary sources such as interviews, observations, and surveys may lead you to a more thorough and meaningful understanding of a topic. (See pages 443–445.)

<u>Primary Sources</u>	<u>Secondary Sources</u>
Interviews	Articles
Observations	Reference book entries
Participation	Books
Surveys	Websites

■ Carry out your research.

As you conduct your research, try to use a variety of reliable sources. It's also a good idea to choose an efficient note-taking method before you start. You will want to take good notes on the information you find and record all the publishing information necessary for citing your sources. (See pages 432–435.)

Reserve a special part of a notebook to question, evaluate, and reflect on your research as it develops. The record of your thoughts and actions created during this process will mean a great deal to you—as much as or more than the actual information you uncover. Reflection helps you make sense of new ideas, refocus your thinking, and evaluate your progress.

Track sources. ■ ■ ■

Follow these strategies for tracking sources and taking notes.

Track resources in a working bibliography. Once you find a useful book, journal article, news story, or webpage, record identifying information for the source. For more help, see pages 430–431.

Use a note-taking system that respects sources. Essentially, your note-taking system should help you keep an accurate record of useful information and ideas from sources while also allowing you to engage those sources with your own thinking. For a discussion of possible systems, see pages 432–435.

Distinguish summaries, paraphrases, and quotations. As you read sources, you will find material that answers your questions and helps you achieve your writing purpose. At that point, decide whether to summarize, paraphrase, or quote the material:

- A **summary** pulls just the main points out of a passage and puts them in your own words: Summarize source material when it contains relevant ideas and information that you can boil down.
- A **paraphrase** rewrites a passage point by point in your own words: Paraphrase source material when all the information is important but the actual phrasing isn't especially important or memorable.
- A **quotation** records a passage from the source word for word: Quote when the source states something crucial and says it well. **Note:** In your notes, always identify quoted material by putting quotation marks around it.

Summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting are treated more fully on pages 436–438. Here is a brief example, with the original passage coming from Coral Ann Howells' *Alice Munro*, published in 1998 by Manchester University Press as part of its Contemporary World Writers series.

Original: "To read Munro's stories is to discover the delights of seeing two worlds at once: an ordinary everyday world and the shadowy map of another imaginary or secret world laid over the real one, so that in reading we slip from one world into the other in an unassuming domestic sort of way."

Summary: Munro's fiction moves readers from recognizable reality into a hidden world.

Paraphrase: Reading Munro's fiction gives readers the enjoyment of experiencing a double world: day-to-day reality and on top of that a more mysterious, fantastic world, with the result that readers move smoothly between the worlds in a seamless, ordinary way.

Quotation: Munro's fiction takes us into "the shadowy map of another imaginary or secret world laid over the real one."



Critical-Thinking and Writing Activities

As directed by your instructor, complete the following critical-thinking and writing activities by yourself or with classmates.

1. Writer Ralph Fletcher shares, “When I write, I am always struck at how magical and unexpected the process turns out to be.” Would you describe the writing process you follow as “magical” and “unexpected”? Why or why not?
2. Reread one of your recent essays. Does the writing show that you thoroughly understood your subject, met the needs of your audience, and achieved your purpose?
3. Below is a list of general subject areas. Select one that interests you and do the following: Using the strategies on pages 34–37, brainstorm possible topics and select one. Then use the strategies on pages 38–40 to explore what you know about that topic and what you need to learn.

Arts/music

Environment

Health/medicine

Work/occupation

Learning-Outcomes Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide to help you plan your writing.

- _____ I understand the writing process—getting started, planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading, and submitting—and I adapt it to fit each project and my own individual style.
- _____ I know how to analyze the rhetorical situation:
 - My **role**—my position and my goals
 - The **subject**—the general area of inquiry
 - The **purpose**—to inform, explain, analyze, persuade
 - The **form**—essay, narrative, editorial, research paper
 - The **audience**—who they are, what they know, what they need
 - The **context**—weight, assessment, positioning of the project.
- _____ I know how to analyze an assignment, watching for options and restrictions.
- _____ I know how to select a subject and explore it through journal writing, freewriting, listing, clustering, and dialogue. I know how to focus the topic to fit the assignment and my interests.
- _____ I know how to collect information and track it through note taking and research strategies.

↔ Cross-Curricular Connections

Different academic disciplines require different methods of research note taking. Investigate the styles of research note taking used in your discipline.

3 Planning

Some of us are meticulous planners. We organize our lives in advance and formulate strategies for completing every task. Others of us live more in the moment, believing that whatever needs to get done will get done, with or without a plan.

In writing, author and instructor Ken Macrorie calls for a blend of these two approaches: “Good writing,” says Macrorie, “is formed partly through plan and partly through accident.” In other words, too much early planning can get in the way of the discovery aspect of writing, while not enough planning can harm the focus and coherence of your writing.

Learning Outcomes

Take stock of the rhetorical situation.

Develop a focused thesis statement.

Pattern your writing from your thesis.

Organize your research.



Video



Visually Speaking

Consider the photo above. In a paragraph or two, explain how planning might play a role in military life. What might be some of its benefits and drawbacks?

Revisit the Rhetorical Situation

Use the following planning checklist to help you decide whether to move ahead with your planning or reconsider your topic.

Rhetorical Checklist

Writer

_____ Am I interested in this topic?

_____ How much do I know about this topic, and how much do I need to learn?

Subject

_____ Does the topic fit with the subject requirements of the assignment?

_____ Is the topic the right size—not too general or too specific—for the assignment?

_____ What sources can I use to find out more about this topic?

Purpose

_____ What are the specific goals of the assignment?

_____ Am I writing to entertain, inform, explain, analyze, persuade, reflect?

Form

_____ What form should I create: essay, proposal, report, review?

Audience

_____ Will my readers be interested in this topic? How can I interest them?

_____ What do they know and need to know about it? What opinions do they have?

Context

_____ What weight does this assignment have in terms of my grade?

_____ How will the assignment be assessed?

Working with Sources: For projects that involve research, consider how the rhetorical situation can guide your use of sources:

1. For your **subject**, which sources offer reliable information and analysis that has shaped your thinking and pointed toward a working thesis?
2. To achieve your **purpose** (to entertain, inform, analyze, and/or persuade), which resources/sources should be featured in your writing?
3. Given your **audience**, which resources will help you create credibility with the audience and clarify the topic for them?

Forming Your Thesis Statement

After you have completed enough research and collecting, you may begin to develop a more focused interest in your topic. If all goes well, this narrowed focus will give rise to a thesis for your writing. A thesis statement identifies your central idea. It usually highlights a special condition or feature of the topic, expresses a specific claim about it, or takes a stand.

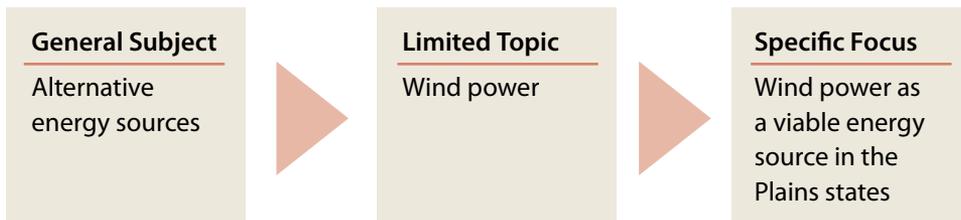
State your thesis in a sentence that effectively expresses what you want to explore or explain in your essay. Sometimes a thesis statement develops early and easily; at other times, the true focus of your writing emerges only after you've written your first draft.



Web Link

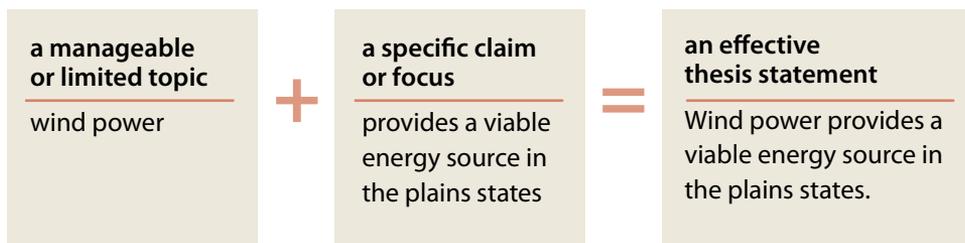
Find a focus. ■ ■ ■

A general subject area is typically built into your writing assignments. Your task, then, is to find a limited writing topic and examine it from a particular angle or perspective. (You will use this focus to form your thesis statement.)



State your thesis. ■ ■ ■

You can use the following formula to write a thesis statement for your essay. A thesis statement sets the tone and direction for your writing. Keep in mind that at this point you're writing a *working thesis statement*—a statement in progress, so to speak. You may change it as your thinking on the topic evolves.



Video

Working with Sources: Sometimes your writing can take direction specifically from your sources. You may consider making your thesis a response to a specific source. For example, if one source is especially strong or especially contrary to your own thinking, you could shape your thesis as an affirmation of the strong source's authority or as a rebuttal to the contrary source's claims.

■ Using a Thesis to Pattern Your Writing

An organizing pattern for your essay may be built into your assignment. For example, you may be asked to develop an argument or to write a process paper. When a pattern is not apparent, one may still evolve naturally during the research and information-collecting steps. If this doesn't happen, take a careful look at your thesis statement.

Let your thesis guide you. ■ ■ ■

An effective thesis will often suggest an organizing pattern. Notice how the thesis statements below direct and shape the writing to follow. (Also see page 21.)

■ Thesis (Focus) for a Personal Narrative

Writers of personal narratives do not always state a thesis directly, but they will generally have in mind an implied theme or main idea that governs the way they develop their writing. The thesis below focuses the reader's attention on a less-than-perfect day in the life of a perfect flight attendant. (See pages 151–152.)

From the first day Northwest hired me in Minneapolis in 1969, I tried to be a model flight attendant, to develop the qualities my operations manual demanded: poise, good judgment, initiative, adaptability and a spotless appearance. But one time I slipped up: I fell asleep.

■ Thesis for a Cause-and-Effect Essay

A cause-and-effect essay usually begins with one or more causes followed by an explanation of the effects, or with a primary effect followed by an explanation of the causes. In the thesis below, the writer credits team sports with helping to advance women into leadership roles in major corporations. (See pages 170–172.)

While most of America's corporations are still commanded by male chief executives, women are gaining ground, winning vice-presidential and top management slots and, in a few cases, the highest leadership roles. Many of these young female executives say playing team sports helped them get ahead.

■ Thesis for an Essay of Comparison

Some comparisons treat one subject before the other (subject by subject), others discuss the subjects point by point, and some treat similarities and then differences. The writer of the thesis below introduces her comparison and contrast of two different views of Islamic dress—both of which she holds. (See pages 186–188.)

To wear *hijab*—Islamic covering—is to invite contradiction. Sometimes I hate it. Sometimes I value it.

■ Thesis for an Essay of Classification

An essay of classification identifies the main parts or categories of a topic and then examines each one. In the thesis below, the writer identifies four ways to discuss literature, and he examines each one in turn. (See pages 206–207.)

There are four main perspectives, or approaches, that readers can use to converse about literature.

■ Thesis for a Process Essay

Process essays are organized chronologically. As indicated in the thesis below, the writer of this essay will explain how cancer cells multiply and affect the body. (See pages 217–218.)

When a cell begins to function abnormally, it can initiate a process that results in cancer.

■ Thesis for a Position Essay

A position paper first introduces a topic and then states a position in its thesis. The thesis statement below defines the writer's position on fatherlessness. (See pages 279–283.)

Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation. Yet, despite its scale and social consequences, fatherlessness is a problem that is frequently ignored or denied.

■ Thesis for an Essay of Definition

An essay of definition explores the denotation, connotation, and history of a term. In the following thesis statement, the writer names the two words he will explore—*deft* and *daft*—and provides an overview of the definition essay. (See page 235.)

Let me see if I can explain the original meaning and also how *daft* and *deft* came to part company.

■ Thesis for an Essay Proposing a Solution

A problem-solution essay usually begins with a discussion of the problem and its causes and then examines possible solutions. In the following thesis statement, the writer points to a problem in the supposedly gender-equal society of the United States. After explaining the problem, she offers and argues for a specific solution. (See pages 312–314.)

While women are represented today in virtually all fields, including the armed forces, only men are required to register for the military draft that would be used in the event of a national-security crisis.

■ Developing a Plan or an Outline

After writing a working thesis and reviewing the methods of development (pages 45–47), you should be ready to organize the information you have collected. Remember, organizing your research and background information *before* you start writing can make the drafting stage less of a hassle. Here are five strategies for effective organizing, starting with the basic list.

Quick List	A brief listing of main points (See below.)
Topic Outline	A more formal plan, including main points and essential details (See page 49.)
Sentence Outline	A formal plan, including main points and essential details, written as complete sentences (See page 50.)
Writing Blueprints	Basic organizational strategies preferred for different forms of writing (See page 51.)
Graphic Organizer	An arrangement of main points and essential details in an appropriate chart or diagram (See pages 52–53.)

Quick Lists ■ ■ ■

Though listing is the simplest of all the methods of organization, it can help you take stock of your main ideas and get a sense of what further research or planning needs to be done. There is no right or wrong way to go about listing. The key is to come up with a system that works best for you. Here are two examples that you may consider: **the basic bulleted list**, which briefly lists the main points you will discuss, and a **T Chart**, which lists the main points on one side and a supporting detail on the other side.

Sample Basic List

Topic: Different ways to discuss literature	——— Topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focus on the text itself ■ Focus on the text and the reader ■ Focus on the author of the text ■ Focus on ideas outside of literature 	} ——— Main Points

Sample T Chart

Topic: Different ways to discuss literature ——— Topic	
Main Points	Supporting Details
Text-centered approach	Emphasizes structure and rules
Audience-centered approach	Relationship between reader and text
Author-centered approach	Emphasizes the writer's life

Topic Outline ■■■

If you have a good deal of information to sort and arrange, you may want to use a **topic outline** for your planning. In a topic outline, you state each main point and essential detail as a word or phrase. Before you start constructing your outline, write your working thesis statement at the top of your paper to help keep you focused on the subject. (Do not attempt to outline your opening and closing paragraphs unless you are specifically asked to do so.)

An effective topic outline is parallel in structure, meaning the main points (I, II, III) and essential details (A, B, C) are stated in the same way. Notice how the sample outline below uses a parallel structure, making it easy to follow.

Sample Topic Outline

- Thesis:** There are four main perspectives, or approaches, that readers can use to converse about literature. ——— Thesis
- I. Text-centered approaches ——— Main Point
 - a. Also called formalist criticism
 - b. Emphasis on structure of text and rules of genre
 - c. Importance placed on key literary elements
 - II. Audience-centered approaches
 - a. Also called rhetorical or reader-response criticism
 - b. Emphasis on interaction between reader and text
 - III. Author-centered approaches
 - a. Emphasis on writer's life
 - b. Importance placed on historical perspective
 - c. Connections made between texts
 - IV. Ideological approaches
 - a. Psychological analysis of text
 - b. Myth or archetype criticism
 - c. Moral criticism
 - d. Sociological analysis
- Supporting Details

INSIGHT: Planning is adaptable. Some writers prefer to generate an outline before they begin writing, while others prefer to make a more detailed outline after having written a draft. In the latter strategy, an outline can serve as a tool for evaluating the logic and completeness of the paper's organization.

Sentence Outline

A **sentence outline** uses complete sentences to explain the main points and essential details in the order that they will be covered in the main part of your essay. Such an outline can help you develop your ideas when writing the paper.

Sample Sentence Outline

Thesis: There are four main perspectives, or approaches, that readers can use to converse about literature. — Thesis

- I. A text-centered approach focuses on the literary piece itself. — Main Point
 - a. This approach is often called formalist criticism. — Supporting Details
 - b. This method of criticism examines text structure and the rules of the genre. — Supporting Details
 - c. A formalist critic determines how key literary elements reinforce meaning. — Supporting Details
- II. An audience-centered approach focuses on the “transaction” between text and reader.
 - a. This approach is often called rhetorical or reader-response criticism.
 - b. A rhetorical critic sees the text as an activity that is different for each reader.
- III. An author-centered approach focuses on the origin of a text.
 - a. An author-centered critic examines the writer’s life.
 - b. This method of criticism may include a historical look at a text.
 - c. Connections may be made between the text and related works.
- IV. The ideological approach applies ideas outside of literature.
 - a. Some critics apply psychological theories to a literary work.
 - b. Myth or archetype criticism applies anthropology and classical studies to a text.
 - c. Moral criticism explores the moral dilemmas in literature.
 - d. Sociological approaches include Marxist, feminist, and minority criticism.

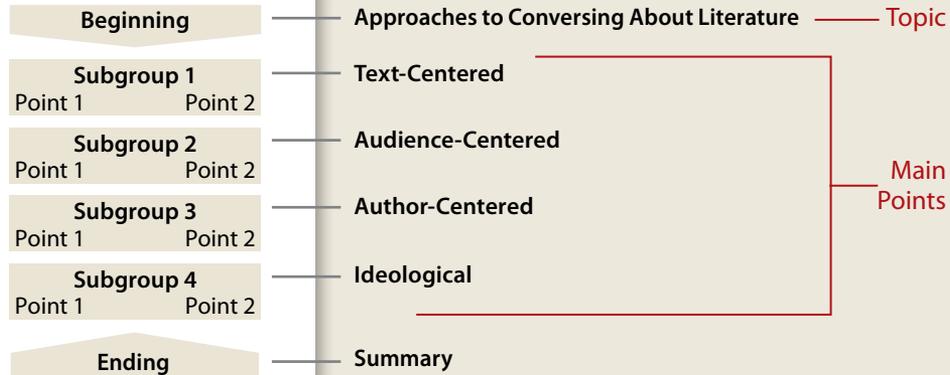
Working with Sources: When your writing project involves sources, the planning phase will include a great deal of sorting through material. Outlining can help you organize your primary and secondary sources to best support your thesis. As you organize your research in your outline, ask these questions:

- Where and how should I work with primary sources—interviews, surveys, analyses, observations, experiments, and other data I have collected?
- Where and how should I bring in secondary sources—scholarly books, journal articles, and the like?

Writing Blueprints

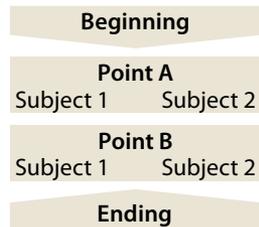
The writing blueprints on this page lay out basic organizational strategies for different forms of writing. The blueprints may help you arrange the details of your essay or even find holes in your research.

Classification Blueprint

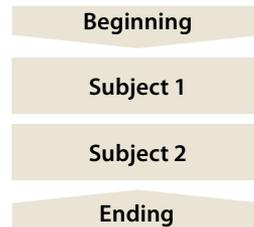


Comparison – Contrast Blueprint

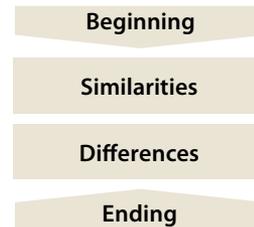
Point by Point



Subject by Subject

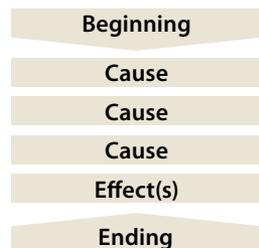


Similarities-Differences

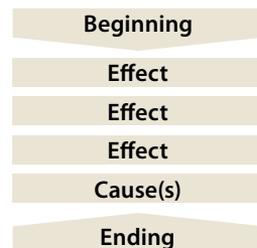


Cause – Effect Blueprint

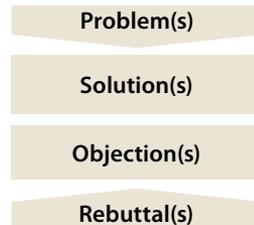
Cause-Focused



Effect-Focused



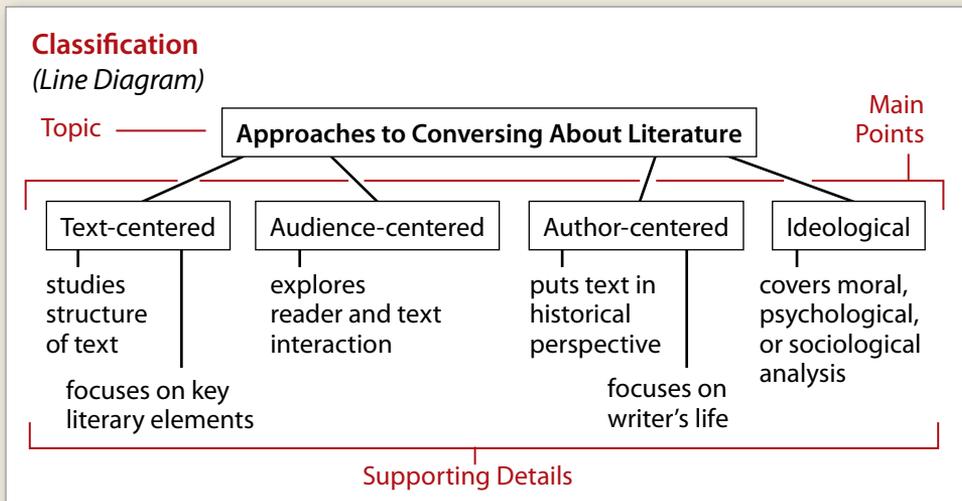
Problem-Solution Blueprint



Graphic Organizers

If you are a visual person, you might prefer a graphic organizer when it comes to arranging your ideas for an essay or a report. Graphic organizers can help you map out ideas and illustrate relationships among them. The following organizers are related to the methods of development discussed on pages 46–47. Each will help you collect and organize your information. Adapt the organizers as necessary to fit your particular needs or personal style.

Note how the line diagram breaks out the topic, main ideas, and supporting details for use in building an essay of classification.



Cause/Effect

(T Chart)

Subject:

Causes

(Because of . . .)

-
-
-

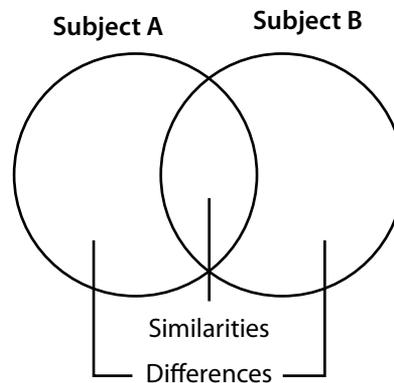
Effects

(. . . these conditions resulted)

-
-
-

Comparison/Contrast

(Venn Diagram)



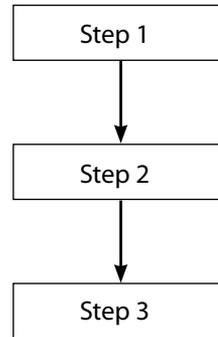
Comparison

Qualities	Subject A	Subject B

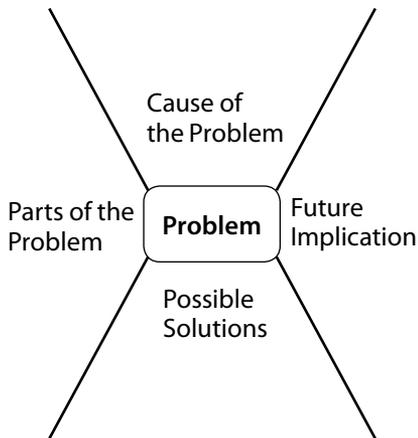
Process Analysis

Subject: _____

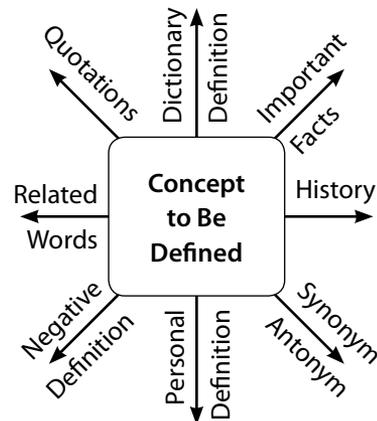
(Chronological Order)



Problem/Solution



Definition





Critical-Thinking and Writing Activities

As directed by your instructor, complete the following activities.

1. Author Ken Macrorie claims that “good writing is formed partly through plan and partly through accident.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Relate Macrorie’s idea to your own writing experiences. How carefully do you plan? How much do you leave to accident?
2. A number of organizational patterns are discussed on pages 46–47. Choose one of these patterns and select a model essay from chapters 10–19 that follows the pattern. Read the essay, note the thesis, and explain how the writer develops it.

Learning-Outcomes Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide to help you plan your writing.

- _____ I have taken stock of the rhetorical situation.
 - I have reviewed the information I have collected so far.
 - My planning and research fully address my subject, purpose, and audience.

- _____ I have developed a focused thesis statement.
 - My thesis statement reflects a limited topic.
 - My thesis statement clearly states the specific idea I plan to develop.
 - The thesis is supported by the information I have gathered.

- _____ I have patterned my writing from my thesis.
 - The thesis suggests a pattern of organization for my essay.

- _____ I have organized my research.
 - I have organized my support in a list, an outline, or a graphic organizer.
 - I have arranged my source material under my main supporting points.

↔ Cross-Curricular Connections

In most disciplines, it is common practice early in the paper to “survey the literature” on the topic. In a literary analysis, you might survey common interpretations of a key concept before you relay your view.

1. Identify the studies that should be included in the review.
2. Categorize studies by approach or arrange them chronologically.

4 Drafting

French novelist Anatole France once said that his first drafts could have been written by a schoolboy, his next draft by a bright college student, his third draft by a superior graduate, and his final draft “only by Anatole France.” Think in those terms as you write your first draft. Your main objective is to get ideas down; you’ll have a chance later to improve your writing.

This chapter provides information and advice about drafting a college-level essay. You’ll find specific advice for creating the three main parts and arranging information.

Learning Outcomes

Reconsider the rhetorical situation.

Understand essay structure.

Create a strong opening.

Develop the middle.

Create an effective closing.

Understand how to use sources in a draft.



Visually Speaking

▶ How is drafting like sketching? Note the blurred hand with the pencil. What does it suggest about the process of drafting?

■ Reconsider the Rhetorical Situation

As you prepare to write, think about the parts of the rhetorical situation:

Think about your role. ■ ■ ■

Are you writing as a student, a citizen, a friend, a member of a scholarly community or discipline? Use a voice that represents you well.

Focus on your subject. ■ ■ ■

As you develop your first draft, these strategies can help you keep your subject in focus.

- Use your outline or writing plan as a general guide. Try to develop your main points, but allow new ideas to emerge naturally.
- Write freely without being too concerned about neatness and correctness. Concentrate on developing your ideas, not on producing a final copy.
- Include as much detail as possible, continuing until you reach a logical stopping point.
- Use your writing plan or any charts, lists, or diagrams you've produced, but don't feel absolutely bound by them.
- Complete your first draft in one or two sittings.
- Use the most natural voice you can so that the writing will flow smoothly. If your voice is too formal during drafting, you'll be tempted to stop and edit your words.
- Quote sources accurately by using your word-processing program's copy-and-paste features or by handwriting or typing quotations carefully.

Reconsider your purpose. ■ ■ ■

Briefly review (1) what you want your writing to do (your task), (2) what you want it to say (your thesis), and (3) how you want to say it (list of ideas or outline).

Reconsider your audience. ■ ■ ■

Review who your readers are, including their knowledge of and attitude toward your topic. Then get ready to talk with them, person to person.

Review the form and context. ■ ■ ■

Make sure you understand the type of writing you should do, the weight of the assignment, and any assessment issues.

Writing with Sources: Use sources that aid your purpose and connect to your audience. Also, make sure your sources do not crowd out your own reasoning and thinking—your role in the assignment.

■ Basic Essay Structure: Major Moves

The following chart lists the main writing moves that occur during the development of a piece of writing. Use it as a general guide for all of your drafting. Remember to keep your purpose and audience in mind throughout the drafting process.

Opening

Engage your reader.

Stimulate and direct the reader's attention.

Establish your direction.

Identify the topic and put it in perspective.

Get to the point.

Narrow your focus and state your thesis.

Middle

Advance your thesis.

Provide background information and cover your main points.

Test your ideas.

Raise questions and consider alternatives.

Support your main points.

Add substance and build interest.

Build a coherent structure.

Start new paragraphs and arrange the support.

Use different levels of detail.

Clarify and complete each main point.

Ending

Reassert the main point.

Remind the reader of the purpose and rephrase the thesis.

Urge the reader.

Gain the reader's acceptance and look ahead.

Opening Your Draft



Video

The opening paragraph is one of the most important elements in any composition. It should accomplish at least three essential things: (1) engage the reader; (2) establish your direction, tone, and level of language; and (3) introduce your line of thought.

Advice: The conventional way of approaching the first paragraph is to view it as a kind of “funnel” that draws a reader in and narrows to a main point. Often, the final sentence explicitly states your thesis.

- Cautions:**
- Don't feel bound by the conventional pattern, which may sound stale if not handled well.
 - Don't let the importance of the first paragraph paralyze you. Relax and write.

The information on the next two pages will help you develop your opening. You can refer to the sample essays in the handbook for ideas.

Engage your reader. ■ ■ ■

Your reader will be preoccupied with other thoughts until you seize, stimulate, and direct his or her attention. Here are some effective ways to “hook” the reader:

- Mention little-known facts about the topic.

Beads may have been what separated human ancestors from their Neanderthal cousins. Yes, beads.
- Pose a challenging question.

Why would human ancestors spend days carving something as frivolous as beads while Neanderthals spent days hunting mammoths?
- Offer a thought-provoking quotation.

“The key thing in human evolution is when people start devoting just ridiculous amounts of time to making these [beads],” says archeologist John Shea of Stonybrook University.
- Tell a brief, illuminating story.

When I walked into the room, I had only to show my hand to be accepted in the group of strangers there. The Phi Delta Kappa ring on my finger—and on all of our fingers—bound us across space and time as a group. Our ancestors discovered the power of such ornamentation forty thousand years ago.

Establish your direction. ■ ■ ■



Web Link

The direction of your line of thought should become clear in the opening part of your writing. Here are some moves you might make to set the right course:

- Identify the topic (issue). Show a problem, a need, or an opportunity.
- Deepen the issue. Connect the topic, showing its importance.
- Acknowledge other views. Tell what others say or think about the topic.

Get to the point. ■ ■ ■

You may choose to state your main point up front, or you may wait until later to introduce your thesis. For example, you could work inductively by establishing an issue, a problem, or a question in your opening and then build toward the answer—your thesis—in your conclusion. (See page 20 for more on inductive reasoning.) Sometimes, in fact, your thesis may simply be implied. In any case, the opening should at least hint at the central issue or thesis of your paper. Here are three ways to get to the point:

1. Narrow your focus. Point to what interests you about the topic.
2. Raise a question. Answer the question in the rest of the essay.
3. State your thesis. If appropriate, craft a sentence that boils down your thinking to a central claim. You can use the thesis sentence as a “map” for the organization of the rest of the essay. (See pages 45–47, 114–117, and 416–417.)

■ Weak Opening

Although the opening below introduces the topic, the writing lacks interesting details and establishes no clear focus for the essay.

I would like to tell you about the TV show *The Simpsons*. It's about this weird family of five people who look kind of strange and act even stranger. In fact, the characters aren't even real—they're just cartoons.

■ Strong Opening

In the essay opener below, the writer uses his first paragraph to get his readers' attention and describe his subject. He uses the second paragraph to raise a question that leads him to a statement of his thesis (underlined).

The Simpsons, stars of the TV show by the same name, are a typical American family, or at least a parody of one. Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, and Maggie Simpson live in Springfield, U.S.A. Homer, the father, is a boorish, obese oaf who works in a nuclear power plant. Marge is an overprotective, nagging mother with an outrageous blue hairdo. Ten-year-old Bart is an obnoxious, “spiky-haired demon.” Lisa is eight and a prodigy on the tenor saxophone and in class. The infant Maggie never speaks but only sucks on her pacifier.

What is the attraction of this yellow-skinned family that stars on a show in which all of the characters have pronounced overbites and only four fingers on each hand? Viewers see a little bit of themselves in everything the Simpsons do. The world of Springfield is a parody of the viewer's world, and Americans can't get enough of it. Viewers experience this parody in the show's explanations of family, education, workplace, and politics.

INSIGHT: Note how, after stating the thesis, the writer forecasts the method of supporting that thesis.

■ Developing the Middle



Web Link

The middle of an essay is where you do the “heavy lifting.” In this part you develop the main points that support your thesis statement.

Advice: As you write, you will likely make choices that were unforeseen when you began. Use “scratch outlines” (temporary jottings) along the way to show where your new ideas may take you.

Cautions: ■ Writing that lacks effective detail gives only a vague image of the writer’s intent.

■ Writing that wanders loses its hold on the essay’s purpose.

For both of these reasons, always keep your thesis in mind when you develop the main part of your writing. Refer to the guidelines on the next two pages for help. You can refer to the sample essays in this book for ideas.

Advance your thesis. ■ ■ ■

If you stated a thesis in the opening, you can advance it in the middle paragraphs by covering your main points and supporting them in these ways.

Explain: Provide important facts, details, and examples.

Narrate: Share a brief story or re-create an experience to illustrate an idea.

Describe: Tell in detail how someone appears or how something works.

Define: Identify or clarify the meaning of a specific term or idea.

Analyze: Examine the parts of something to better understand the whole.

Compare: Provide examples to show how two things are alike or different.

Argue: Use logic and evidence to prove that something is true.

Reflect: Express your thoughts or feelings about something.

Cite authorities: Add expert analysis or personal commentary.

Test your ideas. ■ ■ ■

When you write a first draft, you’re testing your initial thinking about your topic. You’re determining whether your thesis is valid and whether you have enough compelling information to support it. Here are ways to test your line of thinking as you write:

Raise questions. Try to anticipate your readers’ questions.

Consider alternatives. Look at your ideas from different angles; weigh various options; reevaluate your thesis.

Answer objections. Directly or indirectly deal with possible problems that a skeptical reader might point out.

Build a coherent structure. ■■■

Design paragraphs as units of thought that develop and advance your thesis clearly and logically. For example, look at the brief essay below, noting how each body paragraph presents ideas with supporting details that build on and deepen the main idea.

Seeing the Light

The writer introduces the topic and states his thesis.

All lightbulbs make light, so they're all the same, right? Not quite. You have many choices regarding how to light up your life. Two types of bulbs are the traditional incandescent and the newer, more compact fluorescent. By checking out how they're different, you can better choose which one to buy.

The writer starts with a basic explanation of how the two types of lightbulbs function differently.

While either incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs can help you read or find the bathroom at night, each bulb makes light differently. In an incandescent bulb, electricity heats up a tungsten filament (thin wire) to 450 degrees, causing it to glow with a warm, yellow light. A compact fluorescent is a glass tube filled with mercury vapor and argon gas. Electricity causes the mercury to give off ultraviolet radiation. That radiation then causes phosphors coating the inside of the tube to give off light.

The writer shifts his attention to weaknesses of compact bulbs.

Both types of bulbs come in many shapes, sizes, and brightnesses, but compacts have some restrictions. Because of their odd shape, compacts may not fit in a lamp well. Compacts also may not work well in very cold temperatures, and they can't be used with a dimmer switch.

He next explains the strengths of compacts.

On the other hand, while compact fluorescents are less flexible than incandescents, compacts are four times more efficient. For example, a 15-watt compact produces as many lumens of light as a 60-watt incandescent! Why? Incandescents turn only about 5 percent of electricity into light and give off the other 95 percent as heat.

He acknowledges that compacts cost more, but he justifies the cost.

But are compacts less expensive than incandescents? In the short run, no. A compact costs about \$15 while an incandescent costs only a dollar. However, because compacts burn less electricity—and last 7 to 10 times longer—in the long run, compacts are less expensive.

The writer rephrases his thesis as a challenge.

Now that you're no longer in the dark about lightbulbs, take a look at the lamp you're using to read this essay. Think about the watts (electricity used), lumens (light produced), efficiency, purchase price, and lamplife. Then decide how to light up your life in the future.

Arrange supporting details. ■■■



Video

Organizing information in a logical pattern within a paragraph strengthens its coherence. The following pages explain and illustrate organizational strategies, providing suggested transitions to go with them. (See also page 481.)

■ Definition

A definition provides the denotation (dictionary meaning) and connotation (feeling) of a given term. It often provides examples, gives anecdotes, and offers negative definitions—what the thing is not. In the paragraph below, the writer begins his definition by posing a question.

First of all, what is the grotesque—in visual art and in literature? A term originally applied to Roman cave art that distorted the normal, the grotesque presents the body and mind so that they appear abnormal— different from the bodies and minds that we think belong in our world. Both spiritual and physical, bizarre and familiar, ugly and alluring, the grotesque shocks us, and we respond with laughter and fear. We laugh because the grotesque seems bizarre enough to belong only outside our world; we fear because it feels familiar enough to be part of it. Seeing the grotesque version of life as it is portrayed in art stretches our vision of reality. As Bernard McElroy argues, “The grotesque transforms the world from what we ‘know’ it to be to what we fear it might be. It distorts and exaggerates the surface of reality in order to tell a qualitative truth about it.”

—John Van Rys

■ Illustration

An illustration supports a general idea with specific reasons, facts, and details.

As the years passed, my obsession grew. Every fiber and cell of my body was obsessed with the number on the scale and how much fat I could pinch on my thigh. No matter how thin I was, I thought I could never be thin enough. I fought my sisters for control of the TV and VCR to do my exercise programs and videos. The cupboards were stacked with cans of diet mixes, the refrigerator full of diet drinks. Hidden in my underwear drawer were stacks of diet pills that I popped along with my vitamins. At my worst, I would quietly excuse myself from family activities to turn on the bathroom faucet full blast and vomit into the toilet. Every day I stood in front of the mirror, a ritual not unlike brushing my teeth, and scrutinized my body. My face, arms, stomach, buttocks, hips, and thighs could never be small enough.

—Paula Treick



Video

Illustration/Elaboration

additionally
again
along with
also
and

another
as well
besides
finally
for example

for instance
in addition
in other words
moreover
next

other
that is

■ Analogy

An analogy is a comparison that a writer uses to explain a complex or unfamiliar phenomenon (how the immune system works) in terms of a familiar one (how mall security works).

The human body is like a mall, and the immune system is like mall security. Because the mall has hundreds of employees and thousands of customers, security guards must rely on photo IDs, name tags, and uniforms to decide who should be allowed to open cash registers and who should have access to the vault. In the same way, white blood cells and antibodies need to use DNA cues to recognize which cells belong in a body and which do not. Occasionally security guards make mistakes, wrestling Kookie the Clown to the ground while DVD players “walk” out of the service entrance, but these problems amount only to allergic reactions or little infections. If security guards become hypervigilant, detaining every customer and employee, the situation is akin to leukemia, in which white blood cells attack healthy cells. If security guards become corrupt, letting thieves take a “five-finger discount,” the situation is akin to AIDS. Both systems—mall security and human immunity—work by correctly differentiating friend from foe.

—Rob King

■ Cause and Effect

Cause-and-effect organization shows how events are linked to their results. If you start with effects, follow with specific causes; if you begin with causes, follow with specific effects. The example below discusses the effects of hypothermia on the human body.

Even a slight drop in the normal human body temperature of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit causes hypothermia. Often produced by accidental or prolonged exposure to cold, the condition forces all bodily functions to slow down. The heart rate and blood pressure decrease. Breathing becomes slower and shallower. As the body temperature drops, these effects become even more dramatic until it reaches somewhere between 86 and 82 degrees Fahrenheit and the person lapses into unconsciousness. When the temperature reaches between 65 and 59 degrees Fahrenheit, heart action, blood flow, and electrical brain activity stop. Normally such a condition would be fatal. However, as the body cools down, the need for oxygen also slows down. A person can survive in a deep hypothermic state for an hour or longer and be revived without serious complications.

—Laura Black

Cause and Effect

as a result	resulting in
because	since
consequently	therefore
due to the fact that	
every time that	
inevitably	

■ Narration

In the paragraph below, the writer uses narration and chronological order to relate an anecdote—a short, illustrative story.

When I was six or seven years old, growing up in Pittsburgh, I used to take a precious penny of my own and hide it for someone else to find. It was a curious compulsion; sadly, I've never been seized by it since. For some reason I always "hid" the penny along the same stretch of sidewalk up the street. I would cradle it at the roots of a sycamore, say, or in a hole left by a chipped-off piece of sidewalk. Then I would take a piece of chalk, and, starting at either end of the block, draw huge arrows leading up to the penny from both directions. After I learned to write I labeled the arrows: surprise ahead or money this way. I was greatly excited, during all this arrow-drawing, at the thought of the first lucky passer-by who would receive in this way, regardless of merit, a free gift from the universe. But I never lurked about. I would go straight home and not give the matter another thought, until, some months later, I would be gripped again by the impulse to hide another penny.

—Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

■ Process

In the paragraph that follows, a student writer describes the process of entering the "tube," or "green room," while surfing.

At this point you are slightly ahead of the barreling part of the wave, and you need to "stall," or slow yourself, to get into the tube. There are three methods of stalling used in different situations. If you are slightly ahead of the tube, you can drag your inside hand along the water to stall. If you are a couple of feet in front of the barrel, apply all your weight onto your back foot and sink the tail of the board into the water. This is known as a "tail stall" for obvious reasons, and its purpose is to decrease your board speed. If you are moving faster than the wave is breaking, you need to do what is called a "wrap-around." To accomplish this maneuver, lean back away from the wave while applying pressure on the tail. This shifts your forward momentum away from the wave and slows you down. When the wave comes, turn toward the wave and place yourself in the barrel.

—Luke Sunukjian, "Entering the Green Room"

Narration/Process/Chronological

a day before
about
after
afterward
as soon as
at

before
during
finally
first
in the end
later

meanwhile
next
second
soon
then
today

tomorrow
until
yesterday

■ Chronological Order

Chronological (time) order helps you tell a story or present steps in a process. For example, the following paragraph describes how cement is made. Notice how the writer explains every step and uses transitional words to lead readers through the process.

The production of cement is a complicated process. The raw materials that go into cement consist of about 60 percent lime, 25 percent silica, and 5 percent alumina. The remaining 10 percent is a varying combination of gypsum and iron oxide (because the amount of gypsum determines the drying time of the cement). First, this mixture is ground up into very fine particles and fed into a kiln. Cement kilns, the largest pieces of moving machinery used by any industry, are colossal steel cylinders lined with firebricks. They can be 25 feet in diameter and up to 750 feet long. The kiln is built at a slant and turns slowly as the cement mix makes its way down from the top end. A flame at the bottom heats the kiln to temperatures of up to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. When the melted cement compound emerges from the kiln, it cools into little marble-like balls called clinker. Finally, the clinker is ground to a consistency finer than flour and packaged as cement.

—Kevin Maas

■ Classification

When classifying a subject, place the subject in its appropriate category and then show how this subject is different from other subjects in the same category. In the following paragraph, a student writer uses classification to describe the theory of temperament.

Medieval doctors believed that “four temperaments rule mankind wholly.” According to this theory, each person has a distinctive temperament or personality (sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholy, or choleric) based on the balance of four elements in the body, a balance peculiar to the individual. The theory was built on Galen’s and Hippocrates’ notion of “humors,” which stated that the body contains blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile—four fluids that maintain the balance within the body. The sanguine person was dominated by blood, associated with fire: Blood was hot and moist, and the person was fat and prone to laughter. The phlegmatic person was dominated by phlegm (associated with earth) and was squarish and slothful—a sleepy type. The melancholy person was dominated by cold, black bile (connected with the element of water) and as a result was pensive, peevish, and solitary. The choleric person was dominated by hot, yellow bile (air) and thus was inclined to anger.

—Jessica Radsma

Classification

a typical type
another kind
a second variety

in one category
one type
rarest of all

the third variety
the most common
the most popular

■ Climax

Climax is a method in which you first present details and then provide a general climactic statement or conclusion drawn from the details.

As I walked home, I glanced across the road to see a troubling scene unfold. A burly man strode along the curb, shoulders rounded and face clenched in anger or grief. Behind him, a slim little girl sat on her heels on the sidewalk, hands in her lap and tears streaming down white cheeks. I glanced back at that brute, who climbed into his big black truck and started up the engine. I almost ran across the road to stop him, to set right whatever he'd done. But then I spotted the little dog lying very still in the gutter. The man in the truck must have hit the poor creature, stopped to see if he could help, realized he couldn't, apologized, and left the little girl to grieve. There was nothing I could do, either. Face clenched, I looked back to my side of the street and walked on.

—Jamal Kendal

■ Compare-Contrast

To compare and contrast, show how two or more subjects are similar and different.

The old man behind the counter is no doubt Pappy, after which Pappy's Grocery is named. He leans on the glass display case, world weary and watchful, tracking the youth by the snack display. The folds deepen around Pappy's intense eyes as the young customer picks lightly at a bag of potato chips, lifts a can of cashews, runs lithe fingers over the packs of gum. He crouches for a better look at the snack cakes, his pants sliding below colorful boxers. Pappy hitches his own belt higher over his tucked-in shirt. "You gonna buy anything?" The young customer startles, looks up with a smooth face and wide eyes, stands, and walks from Pappy's Grocery.

—Tina Jacobs

Comparison/Contrast

as	even though	on the one hand
also	however	on the other hand
although	in the same way	otherwise
both	like	similarly
but	likewise	still
by contrast	one way	yet

Writing with Sources: Advance and deepen your thesis with reliable reasons and evidence. A typical supporting paragraph starts with a topic sentence and elaborates it with detailed evidence and careful reasoning. Make sure to smoothly integrate quotations into the flow of the writing. Also, avoid dropping in quotations without setting them up and explaining them.

Ending Your Draft

Closing paragraphs can be important for tying up loose ends, clarifying key points, or signing off with the reader. In a sense, the entire essay is a preparation for an effective ending; the ending helps the reader look back over the essay with new understanding and appreciation. Many endings leave the reader with fresh food for thought.



Advice: Because the ending can be so important, draft a variety of possible endings. Choose the one that flows best from a sense of the whole.

- Cautions:**
- If your thesis is weak or unclear, you will have a difficult time writing a satisfactory ending. To strengthen the ending, strengthen the thesis.
 - You may have heard this formula for writing an essay: “Say what you’re going to say, say it, then say what you’ve just said.” Remember, though, if you need to “say what you’ve just said,” say it in new words.

The information on the next two pages will help you develop your ending. You can refer to the sample essays elsewhere in this book for ideas.

Reassert the main point. ■ ■ ■

If an essay is complicated, the reader may need reclarification at the end. Show that you are fulfilling the promises you made in the beginning.

Remind the reader. Recall what you first set out to do; check off the key points you’ve covered; or answer any questions left unanswered.

Rephrase the thesis. Restate your thesis in light of the most important support you’ve given. Deepen and expand your original thesis.

Urge the reader. ■ ■ ■

Your reader may still be reluctant to accept your ideas or argument. The ending is your last chance to gain the reader’s acceptance. Here are some possible strategies:

Show the implications. Follow further possibilities raised by your train of thought; be reasonable and convincing.

Look ahead. Suggest other possible connections.

List the benefits. Show the reader the benefits of accepting or applying the things you’ve said.

INSIGHT: When your writing comes to an effective stopping point, conclude the essay. Don’t tack on another idea.

Complete and unify your message. ■ ■ ■

Your final paragraphs are your last opportunity to refocus, unify, and otherwise reinforce your message. Draft the closing carefully, not merely to finish the essay but to further advance your purpose and thesis.

■ Weak Ending

The ending below does not focus on and show commitment to the essay's main idea. Rather than reinforcing this idea, the writing leads off in a new direction.

I realize I've got to catch my bus. I've spent too much time talking to this woman whose life is a wreck. I give her some spare change and then head off. She doesn't follow me. It's kind of a relief. Toronto is a great city, but sometimes you have weird experiences there. Once a street vendor gave me a free falafel. I didn't want to eat it because maybe something was wrong with it. What a weird city!

■ Strong Endings

Below are final paragraphs from two essays in this book. Listen to their tone, watch how they reconsider the essay's ideas, and note how they offer further food for thought. (The first example is a revision of the weak paragraph above.)

I tell her I need to get going. She should go, too, or she'll be late for the hearing. Before getting up, I reach into my wallet and give her two TTC passes and some spare change. I walk her to the street and point her toward Old City Hall. She never thanks me, only looks at me one last time with immense vulnerability and helplessness. Then she walks away.

I wonder as I hurry towards the station if she'll be okay, if her boyfriend really will get out of jail, and if her grandmother will ever take her back. Either way, I think as I cross Bay Street, what more can I do? I have a bus to catch.

(See the full essay on pages 148–150.)

Passion and power permeate all of Latin America's music. The four major types of music—indigenous, Iberian and Mestizo folk, Afro-American, and popular urban—are as diverse as the people of Latin America, and each style serves a valued need or function in Latinos' everyday lives. As a result, those listening to Latin American music—whether it is a Peruvian Indian's chant, a Venezuelan farmer's whistled tune, a Cuban mambo drummer's vivacious beat, or the Bogotá rock concert's compelling rhythms—are hearing much more than music. They are hearing the passion and power of the Latin American people.

Writing with Sources: Save the best for last. Consider using an especially thought-provoking statement, quotation, or detail in your conclusion. Doing so can help you clinch your point.

Working with Sources: If you are using sources, take care not to overwhelm your draft with source material. Keep the focus on your own ideas:

- Avoid strings of references and chunks of source material with no discussion, explanation, or interpretation on your part in between.
- Don't offer entire paragraphs of material from a source (whether paraphrased or quoted) with a single in-text citation at the end. When you do so, your thinking disappears.
- Be careful not to overload your draft with complex information and dense data lacking explanation.
- Resist the urge to simply copy and paste big chunks from sources. Even if you document the sources, your paper will quickly become a patchwork of source material with a few weak stitches (your contribution) holding it together.
- Note the careful use of source material in the following paragraph.

Sample Paragraph Showing Integration of Source Material

Topic sentence:
idea elaborating and supporting thesis

Development of idea through reasoning

Support of idea through reference to source material

Concluding statement of idea

Antibiotics are effective only against infections caused by bacteria and should never be used against infections caused by viruses. Using an antibiotic against a viral infection is like throwing water on a grease fire—water may normally put out fires but will only worsen the situation for a grease fire. In the same way, antibiotics fight infections, but they cause the body harm only when they are used to fight infections caused by viruses. Viruses cause the common cold, the flu, and most sore throats, sinus infections, coughs, and bronchitis. Yet antibiotics are commonly prescribed for these viral infections. The New England Journal of Medicine reports that 22.7 million kilograms (25,000 tons) of antibiotics is prescribed each year in the United States alone (Wenzel and Edmond, 1962). Meanwhile, the CDC reports that approximately 50 percent of those prescriptions are completely unnecessary (“Antibiotic Overuse” 25). “Every year, tens of millions of prescriptions for antibiotics are written to treat viral illnesses for which these antibiotics offer no benefits,” says the CDC’s antimicrobial resistance director David Bell, M.D. (qtd. in Bren 30). Such mis-prescribing is simply bad medical practice that contributes to the problem of growing bacterial infection.



Critical-Thinking and Writing Activities

As directed by your instructor, complete the following critical-thinking and writing activities by yourself or with classmates.

1. Patricia T. O'Connor says, "All writing begins life as a first draft, and first drafts are never any good. They're not supposed to be." Is this claim true? Why or why not? What do you hope to accomplish with a first draft?
2. Study the chart on page 57. Based on other material you have read or written, add another writing move for each of the three main parts of the essay: opening, middle, and ending. Name the move, explain it, and tell what types of writing it might appear in.
3. Read the final paragraphs of any three essays included in this book. Write a brief analysis of each ending based on the information on pages 67–68.
4. Imagine that you are a journalist who has been asked to write an article about a wedding, a funeral, or another significant event you have experienced. Choose an event and sketch out a plan for your article. Include the main writing moves and the type of information at each stage of your writing.

Learning-Outcomes Checklist

- _____ I have reconsidered the rhetorical situation, thinking about my role, the subject, my purpose, my audience, the medium, and the context.
- _____ I understand the essay structure—opening, middle, and closing.
- _____ I have created a strong opening.
 - The opening engages the reader.
 - The opening establishes a focus and states a main point.
- _____ I have developed the ideas in the middle of my essay.
 - The middle advances my thesis by developing and testing ideas.
 - The middle orders supporting details in a clear, logical way.
- _____ I have created an effective closing.
 - The closing reasserts the main point and completes the message.
- _____ I understand how to use sources to best effect in a draft.

↔ Cross-Curricular Connections

When next you write a paper in one of your content-area classes, use the tips in this chapter. Afterward, indicate which tip was most helpful and why.

5 Revising

The word *revising* means “taking another look,” so revising is best done after a brief break. Set aside your writing and return to it later with fresh eyes. Also, enlist the fresh eyes of another reader, whether a roommate, a classmate, or someone at the writing center. Revising is all about getting perspective.

Of course, once you have perspective, you need to figure out how to make improvements. This chapter provides numerous strategies for focusing on the global traits of your writing—ideas, organization, and voice. The changes you make should improve the work significantly, perhaps even reshaping it.

Learning Outcomes

Think about your overall approach.

Think about the global traits.

Revise for ideas and organization.

Revise for voice and style.

Address paragraph issues.

Revise collaboratively.

Use the writing center.



Video



Visually Speaking

▶ The hands in the photo above are shaping a blob of clay into a piece of pottery. How is revising similar to this process? How is it different?

■ Consider Whole-Paper Issues



Video

When revising, first look at the big picture. Take it all in. Determine whether the content is interesting, informative, and worth sharing. Note any gaps or soft spots in your line of thinking. Ask yourself how you can improve what you have done so far. The information that follows will help you address whole-paper issues such as these.

Revisit the rhetorical situation. ■ ■ ■

Just as the rhetorical situation helped you to set your direction in writing, it can help you make course corrections. Think about each part of the rhetorical situation.

Consider your role. How are you coming across in this draft? Do you sound authoritative, engaged, knowledgeable, confident? How do you want to come across?

Think about your subject. Have you stated a clear focus? Have you supported it with a variety of details? Have you explored the subject fully?

Remember your purpose. Are you trying to analyze, describe, explain, propose? Does the writing succeed? Do the ideas promote your purpose? Does your organization support the purpose? Is your writing voice helpful in achieving your purpose?

Check the form. Have you created writing that matches the form that your instructor requested? Have you taken best advantage of the form, including graphics or other media, if appropriate?

Consider your audience. Have you captured their attention and interest? Have you provided them the information they need to understand your writing? Have you considered their values, needs, and opinions, and used them to connect?

Think about the context. Is this piece of writing the correct length and level of seriousness for the assignment? Is it on schedule? How does it match up to what others are doing?

Writing with Sources: Make sure that your sources work well for each part of the rhetorical situation. Choose sources that

- reflect well on you, showing that you understand and care about the topic.
- illuminate the subject with accurate, precise, substantial information.
- help you achieve your purpose, whether to inform, persuade, or reflect.
- work well within the form and can be appropriately credited.
- are seen as authoritative by the audience.
- are timely and credible in the context.

Consider your overall approach. ■■■

Sometimes it's better to start fresh if your writing contains stretches of uninspired ideas. Consider a fresh start if your first draft shows one of these problems:

The topic is worn-out. An essay titled “Lead Poisoning” may not sound very interesting. Unless you can approach it with a new twist (“Get the Lead Out!”), consider cutting your losses and finding a fresh topic.

The approach is stale. If you've been writing primarily to get a good grade, finish the assignment, or sound cool, start again. Try writing to learn something, prompt real thinking in readers, or touch a chord.

Your voice is predictable or fake. Avoid the bland “A good time was had by all” or the phony academic “When one studies this significant problem in considerable depth . . .” Be real. Be honest.

The draft sounds boring. Maybe it's boring because you pay an equal amount of attention to everything and hence stress nothing. Try condensing less important material and expanding what's important.

The essay is formulaic. In other words, it follows the “five-paragraph” format. This handy organizing frame may prevent you from doing justice to your topic and thinking. If your draft is dragged down by rigid adherence to a formula, try a more original approach.



Video

Writing with Sources: Test the balance of reasoning and sources. Make sure your draft is not thin on source material, but also make sure that the source material does not dominate the conversation. Use these tips for balancing reasoning and sources:

1. Before diving into source material within a paragraph or section of your paper, flesh out your thinking more fully. Offer reasoning that elaborates the claim and effectively leads into the evidence.
2. As you present evidence from source material, build on it by explaining what it means. Evidence doesn't typically speak for itself: through analysis, synthesis, illustration, contrast, and other means, you need to show how or why your sources advance your thesis.
3. After you have presented evidence that elaborates on and supports your idea, extend your thoughts by addressing the reader's “So what?” or “Why does this matter?” skepticism.

■ Revising Your First Draft

Revising helps you turn your first draft into a more complete, thoughtful piece of writing. The following information will help you do that.

Prepare to revise. ■ ■ ■

Once you've finished a first draft, set it aside (ideally for a few days) until you can look at the draft objectively and make needed changes. If you drafted on paper, photocopy the draft. If you drafted on a computer, print your paper (double-spaced). Then make changes with a good pencil or colored pen. If you prefer revising on the computer, consider using your software editing program. In all cases, save your first draft for reference.

Think globally. ■ ■ ■

When revising, focus on the big picture—the overall strength of the ideas, organization, and voice.

Ideas: Check your thesis, focus, or theme. Has your thinking on your topic changed? Also think about your readers' most pressing questions concerning this topic. Have you answered these questions? Finally, consider your reasoning and support. Are both complete and sound?

Organization: Check the overall design of your writing, making sure that ideas move smoothly and logically from one point to the next. Does your essay build effectively? Do you shift directions cleanly? Fix structural problems in one of these ways:

- Reorder material to improve the sequence.
- Cut information that doesn't support the thesis.
- Add details where the draft is thin.
- Rewrite parts that seem unclear.
- Improve links between points by using transitions.

Voice: Voice is your personal presence on the page, the tone and attitude that others hear when reading your work. In other words, voice is the between-the-lines message your readers get (whether you want them to or not). When revising, make sure that the tone of your message matches your purpose, whether it is serious, playful, or satiric.

INSIGHT: Don't pay undue attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation at this early stage in the process. Otherwise, you may become distracted from the task at hand: improving the content of your writing. Editing and proofreading come later.

■ Revising for Ideas and Organization

As you review your draft for content, make sure the ideas are fully developed and the organization is clear. From your main claim or thesis to your reasoning and your evidence, strengthen your thinking and sequencing.



Examine your ideas. ■ ■ ■

Review the ideas in your writing, making sure that each point is logical, complete, and clear. To test the logic in your writing, see pages 257–260.

■ Complete Thinking

Have you answered readers' basic questions? Have you supported the thesis? The original passage below is too general; the revision is clearly more complete.

Original Passage (Too general)

As soon as you receive a minor cut, the body's healing process begins to work. Blood from tiny vessels fills the wound and begins to clot. In less than 24 hours, a scab forms.

Revised Version (More specific)

As soon as you receive a minor cut, the body's healing process begins to work. In a simple wound, the first and second layers of skin are severed along with tiny blood vessels called capillaries. As these vessels bleed into the wound, minute structures called platelets help stop the bleeding by sticking to the edges of the cut and to one another, forming a plug. The platelets then release chemicals that react with certain proteins in the blood to form a clot. The blood clot, with its fiber network, begins to join the edges of the wound together. As the clot dries out, a scab forms, usually in less than 24 hours.

■ Clear Thesis

Make sure that your writing centers on one main issue or thesis. Although this next original passage lacks a thesis, the revision has a clear one.

Original Passage (Lacks a thesis)

Teen magazines are popular with young girls. These magazines contain a lot of how-to articles about self-image, fashion, and boy-girl relationships. Girls read them to get advice on how to act and how to look. Girls who don't really know what they want are the most eager readers.

Revised Version (Identifies a specific thesis statement)

Adolescent girls often see teen magazines as handbooks on how to be teenagers. These magazines influence the ways they act and the ways they look. For girls who are unsure of themselves, these magazines can exert an enormous amount of influence. Unfortunately, the advice these magazines give about self-image, fashion, and boys may do more harm than good.

Examine your organization. ■■■

Good writing has structure. It leads readers logically and clearly from one point to the next. When revising for organization, consider four areas: the overall plan, the opening, the flow of ideas, and the closing.

■ Overall Plan

Look closely at the sequence of ideas or events that you share. Does that sequence advance your thesis? Do the points build effectively? Are there gaps in the support or points that stray from your original purpose? If you find such problems, consider the following actions:

- Refine the focus or emphasis by rearranging material within the text.
- Fill in the gaps with new material. Go back to your planning notes.
- Delete material that wanders away from your purpose.
- Use an additional (or different) method of organization. For example, if you are comparing two subjects, add depth to your analysis by contrasting them as well. If you are describing a complex subject, show the subject more clearly and fully by distinguishing and classifying its parts. (See pages 62–69 for more on organizational methods.)

INSIGHT: What is the best method of organization for your essay? The writing you are doing will usually determine the choice. As you know, a personal narrative is often organized by time. Typically, however, you combine and customize methods to develop a writing idea. For example, within a comparison essay you may do some describing or classifying. See pages 46–47 and 117 for more on the common methods of development.

■ Opening Ideas

Reread your opening paragraph(s). Is the opening organized effectively? Does it engage readers, establish a direction for your writing, and express your thesis or focus? The original opening below doesn't build to a compelling thesis statement, but the revised version engages the reader and leads to the thesis.

Original Opening (Lacks interest and direction)

The lack of student motivation is a common subject in the news. Educators want to know how to get students to learn. Today's higher standards mean that students will be expected to learn even more. Another problem in urban areas is that large numbers of students are dropping out. How to interest students is a challenge.

Revised Version (Effectively leads readers into the essay)

How can we motivate students to learn? How can we get them to meet today's rising standards of excellence? How can we, in fact, keep students in school long enough to learn? The answer to these problems is quite simple. Give them money. Pay students to study and learn and stay in school.

■ Flow of Ideas

Look closely at the beginnings and endings of each paragraph. Have you connected your thoughts clearly? (See page 86 for a list of transition words.) The original opening words of the paragraph sequence below, from an essay of description, offer no links for readers. The revised versions use strong transitions indicating spatial organization (order by location).

Original First Words in the Four Middle Paragraphs

There was a huge, steep hill . . .

Buffalo Creek ran . . .

A dense “jungle” covering . . .

Within walking distance from my house . . .

Revised Versions (Words and phrases connect ideas)

Behind the house, there was a huge, steep hill . . .

Across the road from the house, Buffalo Creek ran . . .

On the far side of the creek bank was a dense “jungle” covering . . .

Up the road, within walking distance from my house . . .

INSIGHT: Review “Supporting Your Claims” (pages 254–256) and use those strategies to strengthen weak or unconvincing passages.

■ Closing Ideas

Reread your closing paragraph(s). Do you offer an effective summary, reassert your main point in a fresh way, and provide readers with food for thought as they leave your writing? Or is your ending abrupt, repetitive, or directionless? The original ending below is uninspiring; it adds little to the main part of the writing. The revision summarizes the main points in the essay and then urges the reader to think again about the overall point of writing.

Original Ending (Sketchy and flat)

Native Son deals with a young man’s struggle against racism. It shows the effects of prejudice. Everyone should read this book.

Revised Version (Effectively ends the writing)

Native Son deals with a young man’s struggle in a racist society, but also with so much more. It shows how prejudice affects people, how it closes in on them, and what some people will do to find a way out. Anyone who wants to better understand racism in the United States should read this book.

TIP: To generate fresh ideas for your closing, freewrite answers to questions like these: Why is the topic important to me? What should my readers have learned? Why should this issue matter to readers? What evidence or appeal (pages 262–263) will help readers remember my message and act on it? How does the topic relate to broader issues in society, history, or life?

Revising for Voice and Style



Web Link

Generally, readers more fully trust writing that speaks in an informed voice and a clear, natural style. To develop an informed voice, make sure that your details are correct and complete; to develop a clear style, make sure that your writing is well organized and unpretentious. Check the issues below. (For a definition of voice, see page 74.)



Video

Check the level of commitment. ■■■

Consider how and to what degree your writing shows that you care about the topic and reader. For example, note how the original passage below lacks a personal voice, revealing nothing about the writer's connection to—or interest in—the topic. In contrast, the revision shows that the writer cares about the topic.

Original Passage (Lacks voice)

Cemeteries can teach us a lot about history. They make history seem more real. There is an old grave of a Revolutionary War veteran in the Union Grove Cemetery. . . .

Revised Version (Personal, sincere voice)

I've always had a special feeling for cemeteries. It's hard to explain any further than that, except to say history never seems quite as real as it does when I walk among many old gravestones. One day I discovered the grave of a Revolutionary War veteran. . . .

Check the intensity of your writing. ■■■

All writing—including academic writing—is enriched by an appropriate level of intensity, or even passion. In the original passage below, the writer's concern for the topic is unclear because the piece sounds neutral. In contrast, the revised version exudes energy.

Original Passage (Lacks feeling and energy)

The Dream Act could make a difference for people. It just takes a long time to get any bill through Congress. This bill probably will never get approved. Instead of passing the Dream Act, the country will probably just deport high school students from other countries.

Revised Passage (Expresses real feelings)

Given such debates, it might be a long time before the bill becomes law, thereby dashing the dreams of nearly 65,000 high school students like Maria who can't wait another year because they may already be in deportation proceedings. We need to step up and educate our representatives and senators about the importance of passing the Dream Act on its own instead of including the bill along with CIR. We need to urge them to debate and approve the Dream Act now, thereby making Maria's dreams—and the dreams of thousands of students like her—a reality!

Develop an academic style. ■■■

Most college writing requires an academic style. Such a style isn't stuffy; you're not trying to impress readers with ten-dollar words. Rather, you are using language that facilitates a thoughtful, engaged discussion of the topic. To choose the best words for such a conversation, consider the issues that follow.



Video

■ Personal Pronouns

In some academic writing, personal pronouns are acceptable. Such is the case in informal writing, such as reading responses, personal essays involving narration, description, and reflection, and opinion-editorial essays written for a broad audience. In addition, *I* is correctly used in academic writing rooted in personal research, sometimes called an *I-search paper*.

Generally, however, avoid using *I*, *we*, and *you* in traditional academic writing. The concept, instead, is to focus on the topic itself and let your attitude be revealed indirectly. As E. B. White puts it, “To achieve style, begin by affecting none—that is, begin by placing yourself in the background.”

No: I really think that the problem of the homeless in Chicago is serious, given the number of people who are dying, as I know from my experience where I grew up.

Yes: Homelessness in Chicago often leads to death. This fact demands the attention of more than lawmakers and social workers; all citizens must address the problems of their suffering neighbors.

TIP: Use the pronoun *one* carefully in academic prose. When it means “a person,” *one* can lead to a stilted style if overused. In addition, the pronoun *their* (a plural pronoun) should not be used with *one* (a singular pronoun).

■ Technical Terms and Jargon

Technical terms and jargon—“insider” words—can be the specialized vocabulary of a subject, a discipline, a profession, or a social group. As such, jargon can be difficult to read for “outsiders.” Follow these guidelines:

- Use technical terms to communicate with people within the profession or discipline as a kind of shorthand. However, be careful that such jargon doesn't devolve into meaningless buzzwords and catchphrases.
- Avoid jargon when writing for readers outside the profession or discipline. Use simpler terms and define technical terms that must be used.

Technical: Bin's Douser power washer delivers 2200 psi p.r., runs off standard a.c. lines, comes with 100 ft. h.d. synthetic-rubber tubing, and features variable pulsation options through three adjustable s.s. tips.

Simple: Bin's Douser power washer has a pressure rating of 2200 psi (pounds per square inch), runs off a common 200-volt electrical circuit, comes with 100 feet of hose, and includes three nozzles.

■ Level of Formality

Most academic writing (especially research papers, literary analyses, lab reports, and argumentative essays) should meet the standards of formal English. **Formal English** is characterized by a serious tone; careful attention to word choice; longer and more complex sentences reflecting complex thinking; strict adherence to traditional conventions of grammar, mechanics, and punctuation; and avoidance of contractions.

Formal English, modeled in this sentence, is worded correctly and carefully so that it can withstand repeated readings without seeming tiresome, sloppy, or cute.

You may write other papers (personal essays, commentaries, journals, and reviews) in which informal English is appropriate. **Informal English** is characterized by a personal tone, the occasional use of popular expressions, shorter sentences with slightly looser syntax, contractions, and personal references (*I, we, you*), but it still adheres to basic conventions.

Informal English sounds like one person talking to another person (in a somewhat relaxed setting). It's the type of language that you're reading now. It sounds comfortable and real, not affected or breezy.

TIP: In academic writing, generally avoid slang—words considered outside standard English because they are faddish, familiar to few people, and sometimes insulting.

■ Unnecessary Qualifiers

Using qualifiers (such as *mostly, often, likely, or tends to*) is an appropriate strategy for developing defensible claims in argumentative writing. (See pages 252–253.) However, when you “overqualify” your ideas or add intensifiers (*really, truly*), the result is insecurity—the impression that you lack confidence in your ideas. The cure? Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Insecure: I totally and completely agree with the new security measures at sporting events, but that's only my opinion.

Secure: I agree with the new security measures at sporting events.

FYI Each academic discipline has its own vocabulary and its own vocabulary resources. Such resources include dictionaries, glossaries, or handbooks. Check your library for the vocabulary resources in your discipline. Use them regularly to deepen your grasp of that vocabulary.



Know when to use the passive voice. ■ ■ ■

Most verbs can be in either the active or the passive voice. When a verb is active, the sentence's subject performs the action. When the verb is passive, the subject is acted upon.



Active: If you *can't attend* the meeting, *notify* Richard by Thursday.

Passive: If a meeting *can't be attended* by you, Richard *must be notified* by Thursday.

Weaknesses of Passive Voice: The passive voice tends to be wordy and sluggish because the verb's action is directed backward, not ahead. In addition, passive constructions tend to be impersonal, making people disappear.

Passive: The sound system *can now be used* to listen in on sessions in the therapy room. Parents *can be helped* by having constructive one-on-one communication methods with children modeled by therapists.

Active: Parents *can now use* the sound system to listen in on sessions in the therapy room. Therapists *can help* parents by modeling constructive one-on-one communication methods with children.

Strengths of Passive Voice: Using the passive voice isn't wrong. In fact, the passive voice has some important uses: (1) when you need to be tactful (say, in a bad-news letter), (2) if you wish to stress the object or person acted upon, and (3) if the actual actor is understood, unknown, or unimportant.

Active: Our engineers determined that you bent the bar at the midpoint.

Passive: Our engineers determined that the bar had been bent at the midpoint. (tactful)

Active: Congratulations! We *have approved* your scholarship for \$2,500.

Passive: Congratulations! Your scholarship for \$2,500 *has been approved*. (emphasis on receiver; actor understood)

TIP: Avoid using the passive voice unethically to hide responsibility. For example, an instructor who says, "Your assignments could not be graded because of scheduling difficulties," might be trying to evade the truth: "I did not finish grading your assignments because I was watching *CSI*."

Writing with Sources: Academic writing must be free of plagiarism. Check that you have clearly indicated which material in your draft is summarized, paraphrased, or quoted from another source. (For more help, see pages 436–438.)

■ Addressing Paragraph Issues

While drafting, you may have constructed paragraphs that are loosely held together, poorly developed, or unclear. When you revise, take a close look at your paragraphs for focus, unity, and coherence (pages 83–85).

Remember the basics. ■ ■ ■

A paragraph should be a concise unit of thought. Revise a paragraph until it . . .

- is organized around a controlling idea—often stated in a topic sentence.
- consists of supporting sentences that develop the controlling idea.
- concludes with a sentence that summarizes the main point and prepares readers for the next paragraph or main point.
- serves a specific function in a piece of writing—opening, supporting, developing, illustrating, countering, describing, or closing.

Sample Paragraph

Topic sentence	<p>Tumor cells can hurt the body in a number of ways. First, a tumor can grow so big that it takes up space needed by other organs. Second, some cells may detach from the original tumor and spread throughout the body, creating new tumors elsewhere. This happens with lymphatic cancer—a cancer that’s hard to control because it spreads so quickly. A third way that tumor cells can hurt the body is by doing work not called for in their DNA. For example, a gland cell’s DNA code may tell the cell to produce a necessary hormone in the endocrine system. However, if cancer damages or distorts that code, sick cells may produce more of the hormone than the body can use—or even tolerate (Braun 4). Cancer cells seem to have minds of their own, and this is why cancer is such a serious disease.</p>
Supporting sentences	
Closing sentence	

Keep the purpose in mind. ■ ■ ■

Use these questions to evaluate the purpose and function of each paragraph:

- What function does the paragraph fulfill? How does it add to your line of reasoning or the development of your thesis?
- Would the paragraph work better if it were divided in two—or combined with another paragraph?
- Does the paragraph flow smoothly from the previous paragraph, and does it lead effectively into the next one?

Check for unity. ■ ■ ■

A unified paragraph is one in which all the details help to develop a single main topic or achieve a single main effect. Test for unity by following these guidelines.

■ Topic Sentence

Very often the topic of a paragraph is stated in a single sentence called a “topic sentence.” Check whether your paragraph needs a topic sentence. If the paragraph has a topic sentence, determine whether it is clear, specific, and well focused. Here is a formula for writing good topic sentences:

Formula: A topic sentence = a limited topic + a specific feeling or thought about it.

Example: The fear that Americans feel (limited topic) comes partly from the uncertainty related to this attack (a specific thought).

■ Placement of the Topic Sentence

Normally the topic sentence is the first sentence in the paragraph. However, it can appear elsewhere in a paragraph.

Middle Placement: Place a topic sentence in the middle when you want to build up to and then lead away from the key idea.

During the making of *Apocalypse Now*, Eleanor Coppola created a documentary about the filming called *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*. In the first film, the insane Colonel Kurtz has disappeared into the Cambodian jungle. As Captain Willard searches for Kurtz, the screen fills with horror. **However, as *Hearts of Darkness* relates, the horror portrayed in the fictional movie was being lived out by the production company.** For example, in the documentary, actor Larry Fishburne shockingly says, “War is fun. . . . Vietnam must have been so much fun.” Then toward the end of the filming, actor Martin Sheen suffered a heart attack. When an assistant informed investors, the director exploded, “He’s not dead unless I say he’s dead.”

End Placement: Place a topic sentence at the end when you want to build to a climax, as in a passage of narration or persuasion.

When sportsmen stop to reflect on why they find fishing so enjoyable, most realize that what they love is the feel of a fish on the end of the line, not necessarily the weight of the fillets in their coolers. Fishing has undergone a slow evolution over the last century. While fishing used to be a way of putting food on the table, most of today’s fishermen do so only for the relaxation that it provides. The barbed hook was invented to increase the quantity of fish a man could land so that he could better feed his family. **This need no longer exists, so barbed hooks are no longer necessary.**

■ Supporting Sentences

All the sentences in the body of a paragraph should support the topic sentence. The closing sentence, for instance, will often summarize the paragraph's main point or emphasize a key detail. If any sentences shift the focus away from the topic, revise the paragraph in one of the following ways:

- Delete the material from the paragraph.
- Rewrite the material so that it clearly supports the topic sentence.
- Create a separate paragraph based on the odd-man-out material.
- Revise the topic sentence so that it relates more closely to the support.

■ Consistent Focus

Examine the following paragraph about fishing hooks. The original topic sentence focuses on the point that some anglers prefer smooth hooks. However, the writer leaves this initial idea unfinished and turns to the issue of the cost of new hooks. In the revised version, unity is restored: The first paragraph completes the point about anglers who prefer smooth hooks; the second paragraph addresses the issue of replacement costs.

Original Paragraph (Lacks unity)

According to some anglers who do use smooth hooks, their lures perform better than barbed lures as long as they maintain a constant tension on the line. Smooth hooks can bite deeper than barbed hooks, actually providing a stronger hold on the fish. Some people have argued that replacing all of the barbed hooks in their tackle would be a costly operation.

Revised Version (Unified)

According to some anglers who do use smooth hooks, their lures perform better than barbed lures as long as the anglers maintain a constant tension on the line. Smooth hooks can bite deeper than barbed hooks, actually providing a stronger hold on the fish. These anglers testify that switching from barbed hooks has not noticeably reduced the number of fish that they are able to land. In their experience, and in my own, enjoyment of the sport is actually heightened by adding another challenge to playing the fish (maintaining line tension).

Some people have argued that replacing all of the barbed hooks in their tackle would be a costly operation. While this is certainly a concern, barbed hooks do not necessarily require replacement. With a simple set of pliers, the barbs on most conventional hooks can be bent down, providing a cost-free method of modifying one's existing tackle. . . .



Paragraphs that contain unrelated ideas lack unity and are hard to follow. As you review each paragraph for unity, ask yourself these questions: Is the topic of the paragraph clear? Does each sentence relate to the topic? Are the sentences organized in the best possible order?

Check for coherence. ■ ■ ■

When a paragraph is coherent, the parts stay together. A coherent paragraph flows smoothly because each sentence is connected to others by patterns in the language such as repetition and transitions. To strengthen the coherence in your paragraphs, check for the issues discussed below.

■ Effective Repetition

To achieve coherence in your paragraphs, consider using repetition—repeating words or synonyms where necessary to remind readers of what you have already said. You can also use parallelism—repeating phrase or sentence structures to show the relationships among ideas. At the same time, you will add a unifying rhythm to your writing.

Ineffective: The floor was littered with discarded soda cans, newspapers that were crumpled, and wrinkled clothes.

Effective: **The floor was littered with discarded soda cans, crumpled newspapers, and wrinkled clothes.** (Three parallel phrases are used.)

Ineffective: Reading the book was enjoyable; to write the critique was difficult.

Effective: **Reading the book was enjoyable; writing the critique was difficult.** (Two similar structures are repeated.)

■ Clear Transitions

Linking words and phrases like “next,” “on the other hand,” and “in addition” connect ideas by showing the relationship among them. There are transitions that show location and time, compare and contrast things, emphasize a point, conclude or summarize, and add or clarify information. (See page 86 for a list of linking words and phrases.) Note the use of transitions in the following examples:

The paradox of Scotland is that violence had long been the norm in this now-peaceful land. In fact, the country was born, bred, and came of age in war.
(The transition is used to emphasize a point.)

The production of cement is a complicated process. First, the mixture of lime, silica, alumina, and gypsum is ground into very fine particles.
(The transition is used to show time or order.)

INSIGHT: Another way to achieve coherence in your paragraphs is to use pronouns effectively. A pronoun forms a link to the noun it replaces and ties that noun (idea) to the ideas that follow. As always, don’t overuse pronouns or rely too heavily on them in establishing coherence in your paragraphs.

■ Transitions and Linking Words

The words and phrases below can help you tie together words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs.

Words used to **show location**:

above	behind	down	on top of
across	below	in back of	onto
against	beneath	in front of	outside
along	beside	inside	over
among	between	into	throughout
around	beyond	near	to the right
away from	by	off	under

Words used to **show time**:

about	during	next	today
after	finally	next week	tomorrow
afterward	first	second	until
as soon as	immediately	soon	when
at	later	then	yesterday
before	meanwhile	third	

Words used to **compare things (show similarities)**:

also	in the same way	likewise
as	like	similarly

Words used to **contrast things (show differences)**:

although	even though	on the other hand	still
but	however	otherwise	yet

Words used to **emphasize a point**:

again	for this reason	particularly	to repeat
even	in fact	to emphasize	truly

Words used to **conclude or summarize**:

all in all	finally	in summary	therefore
as a result	in conclusion	last	to sum up

Words used to **add information**:

additionally	and	equally important	in addition
again	another	finally	likewise
along with	as well	for example	next
also	besides	for instance	second

Words used to **clarify**:

for instance	in other words	put another way	that is
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Note: Use transitions to link, expand, or intensify an idea, but don't add elements carelessly, creating run-on or rambling sentences (pages 662–664).

Check for completeness. ■ ■ ■

The sentences in a paragraph should support and expand on the main point. If your paragraph does not seem complete, you will need to add information.

Supporting Details

If some of your paragraphs are incomplete, they may lack details. There are numerous kinds of details, including the following:

facts	anecdotes	analyses	paraphrases
statistics	quotations	explanations	comparisons
examples	definitions	summaries	analogies

Add details based on the type of writing you are engaged in.

Describing: Add details that help readers see, smell, taste, touch, or hear it.

Narrating: Add details that help readers understand the events and actions.

Explaining: Add details that help readers understand what it means, how it works, or what it does.

Persuading: Add details that strengthen the logic of your argument.

Specific Details

The original paragraph below fails to answer fully the question posed by the topic sentence. In the revised paragraph, the writer uses an anecdote to answer the question.

Original Paragraph (Lacks completeness)

So what is stress? Actually, the physiological characteristics of stress are some of the body's potentially good self-defense mechanisms. People experience stress when they are in danger. In fact, stress can be healthy.

Revised Version (Full development)

So what is stress? Actually, the physiological characteristics of stress are some of the body's potentially good self-defense mechanisms. Take, for example, a man who is crossing a busy intersection when he spots an oncoming car. Immediately his brain releases a flood of adrenaline into his bloodstream. As a result, his muscles contract, his eyes dilate, his heart pounds faster, his breathing quickens, and his blood clots more readily. Each one of these responses helps the man leap out of the car's path. His muscles contract to give him exceptional strength. His eyes dilate so that he can see more clearly. His heart pumps more blood and his lungs exchange more air—both to increase his metabolism. If the man were injured, his blood would clot faster, ensuring a smaller amount of blood loss. In this situation and many more like it, stress symptoms are good (Curtis 25–26).

INSIGHT: If a paragraph is getting long, divide it at a natural stopping point. The topic sentence can then function as the thesis for that part of your essay or paper.

Working with Sources: Test your evidence to make certain that it provides the support you need.

- **accurate:** The information is all correct.
- **precise:** The data are concrete and specific, not vague and general.
- **substantial:** The amount of evidence reaches a critical mass—enough to convey the idea and convince readers of its validity.
- **authoritative:** The evidence comes from a reliable source. Moreover, the information is as close to the origin as possible; it is not a report conveying thirdhand or fourthhand information.
- **representative:** The information fairly represents the range of data on the issue. Your presentation of evidence is balanced.
- **fitting:** Given your purpose, the topic, and your reader, the evidence is appropriate and relevant for the question or issue you are discussing.

The reference page below comes from the APA paper, “Our Roots Go Back to Roanoke (see pages 547–557).” Note how student writer Renee Danielle Singh used a variety of sources that meet the criteria listed above.

Our Roots 12

References

Journal article

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■ Revising Collaboratively

Every writer can benefit from feedback from an interested audience, especially one that offers constructive and honest advice during a writing project. Members of an existing writing group already know how valuable it is for writers to share their work. Others might want to start a writing group to experience the benefits. Your group might collaborate online or in person. In either case, the information on the next two pages will help you get started.



Web Link



Video

Know your role. ■ ■ ■

Writers and reviewers should know their roles and fulfill their responsibilities during revising sessions. Essentially, the writer should briefly introduce the draft and solicit honest responses. Reviewers should make constructive comments in response to the writing.

Provide appropriate feedback. ■ ■ ■

Feedback can take many forms, including the three approaches described here.

Basic Description: In this simple response, the reviewer listens or reads attentively and then simply describes what she or he hears or sees happening in the piece. The reviewer offers no criticism of the writing.

Ineffective: “That was interesting. The piece was informative.”

Effective: “First, the essay introduced the challenge of your birth defect and how you have had to cope with it. Then in the next part you . . .”

Summary Evaluation: Here the reviewer reads or listens to the piece and then provides a specific evaluation of the draft.

Ineffective: “Gee, I really liked it!” or “It was boring.”

Effective: “Your story at the beginning really pulled me in, and the middle explained the issue strongly, but the ending felt a bit flat.”

Thorough Critique: The reviewer assesses the ideas, organization, and voice in the writing. Feedback should be detailed and constructive. Such a critique may also be completed with the aid of a review sheet or checklist. As a reviewer, be prepared to share specific responses, suggestions, and questions. But also be sure to focus your comments on the writing, rather than the writer.

Ineffective: “You really need to fix that opening! What were you thinking?”

Effective: “Let’s look closely at the opening. Could you rewrite the first sentence so it grabs the reader’s attention? Also, I’m somewhat confused about the thesis statement. Could you rephrase it so it states your position more clearly?”

Respond according to a plan.

Using a specific plan or scheme like the following will help you give clear, helpful, and complete feedback.

OAQS Method: Use this simple four-step scheme—**Observe, Appreciate, Question,** and **Suggest**—to respond to your peers’ writing.

1. **Observe** means to notice what another person’s essay is designed to do and say something about its design or purpose. For example, you might say, “Even though you are writing about your boyfriend, it appears that you are trying to get a message across to your parents.”
2. **Appreciate** means to praise something in the writing that impresses or pleases you. You can find something to appreciate in any piece of writing. For example, you might say, “You make a very convincing point” or “With your description, I can actually see his broken tooth.”
3. **Question** means to ask whatever you want to know after you’ve read the essay. You might ask for background information, a definition, an interpretation, or an explanation. For example, you might say, “Can you tell us what happened when you got to the emergency room?”
4. **Suggest** means to give helpful advice about possible changes. For example, you might say, “With a little more physical detail—especially more sounds and smells—your third paragraph could be the highlight of the whole essay. What do you think?”

Asking the Writer Questions

Reviewers should ask the following types of questions while reviewing a piece of writing:

- **To help writers reflect on their purpose and audience . . .**
 Why are you writing this?
 Who will read this, and what do they need to know?
- **To help writers focus their thoughts . . .**
 What message are you trying to get across?
 Do you have more than one main point?
 What are the most important examples?
- **To help writers think about their information . . .**
 What do you know about the subject?
 Does this part say enough?
 Does your writing cover all of the basics (*Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?*)?
- **To help writers with their openings and closings . . .**
 What are you trying to say in the opening?
 How else could you start your writing?
 How do you want your readers to feel at the end?

■ Using the Writing Center

A college writing center or lab is a place where a trained adviser will help you develop and strengthen a piece of writing. You can expect the writing center adviser to do certain things; other things only you can do. For quick reference, refer to the chart below.



Web Link

Adviser's Job

Make you feel at home	Be respectful
Discuss your needs	Be ready to work
Help you choose a topic	Decide on a topic
Discuss your purpose and audience	Know your purpose and audience
Help you generate ideas	Embrace the best ideas
Help you develop your logic	Consider other points of view; stretch your own perspective
Help you understand how to research your material	Do the research
Read your draft	Share your writing
Identify problems in organization, logic, expression, and format	Recognize and fix problems
Teach ways to correct weaknesses	Learn important principles
Help you with grammar, usage, diction, vocabulary, and mechanics	Correct all errors

TIPS for getting the most out of the writing center

- Visit the center at least several days before your paper is due.
- Take your assignment sheet with you to each advising session.
- Read your work aloud, slowly.
- Expect to rethink your writing from scratch.
- Do not defend your wording—if it needs defense, it needs revision.
- Ask questions. (No question is “too dumb.”)
- Request clarification of anything you don’t understand.
- Ask for examples or illustrations of important points.
- Write down all practical suggestions.
- Ask the adviser to summarize his or her remarks.
- Rewrite as soon as possible after—or even during—the advising session.
- Return to the writing center for a response to your revisions.



Critical-Thinking and Writing Activities

As directed by your instructor, complete the following critical-thinking and writing activities by yourself or with classmates.

1. Doris Lessing has stated that when it comes to writing, “The more a thing cooks, the better.” In what sense is revision a crucial stage in that cooking process? Using Lessing’s cooking metaphor as a starting point, explore how revision should function in your own writing.
2. Review the opening and closing paragraphs of one of your essays. Then come up with fresh and different approaches for those paragraphs using the information on pages 76–77 as a guide.
3. For your current writing assignment, ask a peer to provide detailed feedback using the information in this chapter as a guide. Then take a fresh copy of your paper to the writing center and work through your draft with an adviser. Revise the draft as needed.

Learning-Outcomes Checklist

- _____ I have thought about my overall approach, reconsidering the rhetorical situation—my role, subject, purpose, form, audience, and context.
- _____ I have thought about the three global traits: ideas, organization, and voice.
- _____ I have revised for ideas and organization.
 - **Ideas:** I have a clear thesis and have provided excellent support.
 - **Organization:** I have an opening, a middle, and a closing, and I use a consistent pattern of organization.
- _____ I have revised for voice and style.
 - **Voice:** My voice works well for all parts of the rhetorical situation.
- _____ I have made sure paragraphs are unified, coherent, and complete.
- _____ I have gotten a peer review and have helped others revise.
- _____ I have made use of the writing center as needed.



Cross-Curricular Connections

As you write papers for your major, make sure to use types of evidence and methods of analysis that the discipline accepts and values.

6 Editing and Proofreading

Editing and proofreading allow you to fine-tune your writing, making it ready to hand in. When you edit, look first for words, phrases, and sentences that sound awkward, uninteresting, or unclear. When you proofread, check your writing for spelling, mechanics, usage, and grammar errors. Ask one of your writing peers to help you.

The guidelines and strategies given in this chapter will help you edit your writing for style and clarity and proofread it for errors.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand editing.
- Combine short, simplistic sentences.
- Expand sentences to create a more expressive style.
- Improve sentence style.
- Use effective words.
- Proofread your writing.



Video



Visually Speaking

- ▶ How does the image above connote editing and proofreading?
- ▶ What tools could a writer use for this phase of the writing process?

■ Editing Your Revised Draft

When you have thoroughly revised your writing, you need to edit it so as to make it clear and concise enough to present to readers. Use the editing guidelines below to check your revised draft.

Review the overall style of your writing. ■■

1. **Read your revised writing aloud.** Better yet, have a writing peer read it aloud to you. Highlight any writing that doesn't read smoothly and naturally.
2. **Check that your style fits the rhetorical situation.**

Goal: Does your writing sound as if you wrote it with a clear aim in mind?
Do the sentence style and word choice match the goal?

Reader: Is the tone sincere? Does the writing sound authentic and honest?

Subject: Does the writing suit the subject and your treatment of it in terms of seriousness or playfulness, complexity or simplicity?

3. **Examine your sentences.** Check them for clarity, conciseness, and variety. Replace sentences that are wordy or rambling; combine or expand sentences that are short and choppy. Also, vary the beginnings of your sentences and avoid sentence patterns that are too predictable. (See pages 95–101.)

Consider word choice. ■■

1. **Avoid redundancy.** Be alert for words or phrases that are used together but mean nearly the same thing.

repeat again red in color refer back

2. **Watch for repetition.** When used appropriately, repetition can add rhythm and coherence to your writing. When used ineffectively, however, it can be a real distraction.

The man looked as if he were in his late seventies. **The man** was dressed in an old suit. I soon realized that **the man** was homeless. . . .

3. **Look for general nouns, verbs, and modifiers.** Specific words are much more effective than general ones. (See page 102.)

The girl moved on the bench. (general)
Rosie slid quietly to the end of the park bench. (specific)

4. **Avoid highly technical terms.** Check for jargon or technical terms that your readers will not know or that you haven't adequately explained. (See page 103.)

As the **capillaries** bleed, **platelets** work with **fibrinogens** to form a clot.

5. **Use fair language.** Replace words or phrases that are biased or demeaning. (See pages 104–106.)

■ Combining Sentences

Effective sentences often contain several basic ideas that work together to show relationships and make connections. Here are five basic ideas followed by seven examples of how the ideas can be combined into effective sentences.

1. The longest and largest construction project in history was the Great Wall of China.
2. The project took 1,700 years to complete.
3. The Great Wall of China is 1,400 miles long.
4. It is between 18 and 30 feet high.
5. It is up to 32 feet wide.

Edit short, simplistic sentences. ■■■

Combine your short, simplistic sentences into longer, more detailed sentences. Sentence combining is generally carried out in the following ways:

- Use a **series** to combine three or more similar ideas.
The Great Wall of China is **1,400 miles long**, **between 18 and 30 feet high**, and up to **32 feet wide**.
- Use a **relative pronoun** (*who, whose, that, which*) to introduce subordinate (less important) ideas.
The Great Wall of China, **which is 1,400 miles long and between 18 and 30 feet high**, took 1,700 years to complete.
- Use an **introductory phrase or clause**.
Having taken 1,700 years to complete, the Great Wall of China was the longest construction project in history.
- Use a **semicolon** (and a conjunctive adverb if appropriate).
The Great Wall took 1,700 years to complete; it is 1,400 miles long and up to 30 feet high and 32 feet wide.
- Repeat a **key word** or phrase to emphasize an idea.
The Great Wall of China was the longest construction **project** in history, a **project** that took 1,700 years to complete.
- Use **correlative conjunctions** (*either, or; not only, but also*) to compare or contrast two ideas in a sentence.
The Great Wall of China is **not only** up to 30 feet high and 32 feet wide, **but also** 1,400 miles long.
- Use an **appositive** (a word or phrase that renames) to emphasize an idea.
The Great Wall of China—**the largest construction project in history**—is 1,400 miles long, 32 feet wide, and up to 30 feet high.

■ Expanding Sentences

Expand sentences when you edit so as to connect related ideas and make room for new information. Length has no value in and of itself: The best sentence is still the shortest one that says all it has to say. An expanded sentence, however, is capable of saying more—and saying it more expressively.

Use cumulative sentences. ■ ■ ■

Modern writers often use an expressive sentence form called the cumulative sentence. A cumulative sentence is made of a general “base clause” that is expanded by adding modifying words, phrases, or clauses. In such a sentence, details are added before and after the main clause, creating an image-rich thought. Here’s an example of a cumulative sentence, with the base clause or main idea in boldface:

In preparation for her Spanish exam, **Julie was studying** at the kitchen table, completely focused, memorizing a list of vocabulary words.

Discussion: Notice how each new modifier adds to the richness of the final sentence. Also notice that each of these modifying phrases is set off by a comma. Here’s another sample sentence:

With his hands on his face, **Tony was laughing** halfheartedly, looking puzzled and embarrassed.

Discussion: Such a cumulative sentence provides a way to write description that is rich in detail, without rambling. Notice how each modifier changes the flow or rhythm of the sentence.

Expand with details. ■ ■ ■

Here are seven basic ways to expand a main idea:

1. with **adjectives and adverbs**: *halfheartedly, once again*
2. with **prepositional phrases**: *with his hands on his face*
3. with **absolute phrases**: *his head tilted to one side*
4. with **participial (ing or ed) phrases**: *looking puzzled*
5. with **infinitive phrases**: *to hide his embarrassment*
6. with **subordinate clauses**: *while his friend talks*
7. with **relative clauses**: *who isn’t laughing at all*

INSIGHT: To edit sentences for more expressive style, it is best to (1) know your grammar and punctuation (especially commas); (2) practice tightening, combining, and expanding sentences using the guidelines in this chapter; and (3) read carefully, looking for models of well-constructed sentences.

■ Checking for Sentence Style

Writer E. B. White advised young writers to “approach sentence style by way of simplicity, plainness, orderliness, and sincerity.” That’s good advice from a writer steeped in style. It’s also important to know what to look for when editing your sentences. The information on this page and the following four pages will help you edit your sentences for style and correctness.

Avoid these sentence problems. ■ ■ ■

Always check for and correct the following types of sentence problems. Turn to the pages listed below for guidelines and examples when attempting to fix problems in your sentences.

Short, Choppy Sentences: Combine or expand any short, choppy sentences; use the examples and guidelines on page 95.

Flat, Predictable Sentences: Rewrite any sentences that sound predictable and uninteresting by varying their structures and expanding them with modifying words, phrases, and clauses. (See pages 98–100.)

Incorrect Sentences: Look carefully for fragments, run-ons, and comma splices and correct them accordingly.

Unclear Sentences: Edit any sentences that contain unclear wording, misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, or incomplete comparisons.

Unacceptable Sentences: Change sentences that include nonstandard language, double negatives, or unparallel construction.

Unnatural Sentences: Rewrite sentences that contain jargon, clichés, or flowery language. (See page 103.)

Review your writing for sentence variety. ■ ■ ■

Use the following strategy to review your writing for variety in terms of sentence beginnings, lengths, and types.

- In one column on a piece of paper, list the opening words in each of your sentences. Then decide if you need to vary some of your sentence beginnings.
- In another column, identify the number of words in each sentence. Then decide if you need to change the lengths of some of your sentences.
- In a third column, list the kinds of sentences used (exclamatory, declarative, interrogative, and so on). Then, based on your analysis, use the instructions on the next two pages to edit your sentences as needed.

Writing with Sources: When you integrate a quotation into the flow of text, make sure that the quotation works with the material around it. Either make the quotation a grammatical part of the sentence, or introduce the quotation with a complete sentence followed by a colon.

Vary sentence structures. ■ ■ ■

To energize your sentences, vary their structures using one or more of the methods shown on this page and the next.

1. **Vary sentence openings.** Move a modifying word, phrase, or clause to the front of the sentence to stress that modifier. However, avoid creating dangling or misplaced modifiers.

The norm: We apologize for the inconvenience this may have caused you.

Variation: For the inconvenience this may have caused you, we apologize.

2. **Vary sentence lengths.** Short sentences (ten words or fewer) are ideal for making points crisply. Medium sentences (ten to twenty words) should carry the bulk of your information. When well crafted, occasional long sentences (more than twenty words) can develop and expand your ideas.

Short: Welcome back to Magnolia Suites!

Medium: Unfortunately, your confirmed room was unavailable last night when you arrived. For the inconvenience this may have caused you, we apologize.

Long: Because several guests did not depart as scheduled, we were forced to provide you with accommodations elsewhere; however, for your trouble, we were happy to cover the cost of last night's lodging.

3. **Vary sentence kinds.** The most common sentence is declarative—it states a point. For variety, try exclamatory, imperative, interrogative, and conditional statements.

Exclamatory: Our goal is providing you with outstanding service!

Declarative: To that end, we have upgraded your room at no expense.

Imperative: Please accept, as well, this box of chocolates as a gift to sweeten your stay.

Interrogative: Do you need further assistance?

Conditional: If you do, we are ready to fulfill your requests.

INSIGHT: In creative writing (stories, novels, plays), writers occasionally use fragments to vary the rhythm of their prose, emphasize a point, or create dialogue. Avoid fragments in academic or business writing.

Writing with Sources: When you refer to ideas from a source, use the “historical present tense.” That is, refer to the person and her or his work in the present tense—“Einstein **writes** that relativity . . .” Use past tense only if you want to emphasize the pastness of the source.

4. **Vary sentence arrangements.** Where do you want to place the main point of your sentence? You make that choice by arranging sentence parts into loose, periodic, balanced, or cumulative patterns. Each pattern creates a specific effect.

■ **Loose Sentence**

The Travel Center offers an attractive flight-reservation plan for students, one that allows you to collect bonus miles and receive \$150,000 in life insurance per flight.

Analysis: This pattern is direct. It states the main point immediately (bold), and then tacks on extra information.

■ **Periodic Sentence**

Although this plan requires that you join the Travel Center's Student-Flight Club and pay the \$10 admission fee, **in the long run you will save money!**

Analysis: This pattern postpones the main point (bold) until the end. The sentence builds to the point, creating an indirect, dramatic effect.

■ **Balanced Sentence**

Joining the club in your freshman year will save you money over your entire college career; in addition, **accruing bonus miles over four years will earn you a free trip to Europe!**

Analysis: This pattern gives equal weight to complementary or contrasting points (bold); the balance is often signaled by a comma and a conjunction (*and, but*) or by a semicolon. Often a conjunctive adverb (*however, nevertheless*) or a transitional phrase (*in addition, even so*) will follow the semicolon to further clarify the relationship.

■ **Cumulative Sentence**

Because the club membership is in your name, **you can retain its benefits** as long as you are a student, even if you transfer to a different college or go on to graduate school.

Analysis: This pattern puts the main idea (bold) in the middle of the sentence, surrounding it with modifying words, phrases, and clauses.

5. **Use positive repetition.** Although you should avoid needless repetition, you might use emphatic repetition to repeat a key word to stress a point.

■ **Repetitive Sentence**

Each year, more than a million young people who read poorly leave high school unable to read well, functionally illiterate.

■ **Emphatic Sentence**

Each year, more than a million young people leave high school functionally illiterate, so **illiterate** that they can't read daily newspapers, job ads, or safety instructions.

Use parallel structure. ■ ■ ■

Coordinated sentence elements should be parallel—that is, they should be written in the same grammatical forms. Parallel structures save words, clarify relationships, and present the information in the correct sequence. Follow these guidelines.

1. For words, phrases, or clauses in a series, keep elements consistent.

Not parallel: I have tutored students in Biology 101, also Chemistry 102, not to mention my familiarity with Physics 200.

Parallel: I have tutored students in *Biology 101, Chemistry 102, and Physics 200.*

Not parallel: I have volunteered as a hospital receptionist, have been a hospice volunteer, and as an emergency medical technician.

Parallel: I have done volunteer work as *a hospital receptionist, a hospice counselor, and an emergency medical technician.*

2. Use both parts of correlative conjunctions (*either, or; neither, nor; not only, but also; as, so; whether, so; both, and*) so that both segments of the sentence are balanced.

Not parallel: *Not only* did Blake College turn 20 this year. Its enrollment grew by 16 percent.

Parallel: *Not only* did Blake College turn 20 this year, *but* its enrollment *also* grew by 16 percent.

3. Place a modifier correctly so that it clearly indicates the word or words to which it refers.

Confusing: MADD promotes *severely* punishing and eliminating drunk driving because this offense leads to a *great number* of deaths and sorrow.

Parallel: MADD promotes eliminating and *severely* punishing drunk driving because this offense leads to *many* deaths and *untold* sorrow.

4. Place contrasting details in parallel structures (words, phrases, or clauses) to stress a contrast.

Weak contrast: The average child watches 24 hours of television a week and reads for 36 minutes.

Strong contrast: Each week, the average child *watches television for 24 hours but reads for only about half an hour.*

Writing with Sources: When using sources, smoothly integrate text references to those sources. (For guidelines, see pages 491–528 for MLA and pages 529–558 for APA.)

Avoid weak constructions. ■ ■ ■

Avoid constructions (like those below) that weaken your writing.

■ Nominal Constructions

The nominal construction is both sluggish and wordy. Avoid it by changing the noun form of a verb (*description* or *instructions*) to a verb (*describe* or *instruct*). At the same time, delete the weak verb that preceded the noun.

NOMINAL CONSTRUCTIONS

(noun form underlined)

Tim gave a description . . .

Lydia provided instructions . . .

STRONG VERBS

Tim *described* . . .

Lydia *instructed* . . .

- Sluggish:** John *had a discussion* with the tutors regarding the incident. They gave him their *confirmation* that similar developments had occurred before, but they had not *provided* submissions of their reports.
- Energetic:** John *discussed* the incident with the tutors. They *confirmed* that similar problems had developed before, but they hadn't *submitted* their reports.

■ Expletives

Expletives such as “it is” and “there is” are fillers that serve no purpose in most sentences—except to make them wordy and unnatural.

- Sluggish:** *It is* likely that Nathan will attend the Communication Department's Honors Banquet. *There is* a journalism scholarship that he might win.
- Energetic:** Nathan will likely attend the Communication Department's Honors Banquet and might win a journalism scholarship.

■ Negative Constructions

Sentences constructed upon the negatives *no*, *not*, *neither/nor* can be wordy and difficult to understand. It's simpler to state what *is* the case.

- Negative:** During my four years on the newspaper staff, *I have not been* behind in making significant contributions. My editorial skills *have* certainly *not deteriorated*, as I have *never failed* to tackle challenging assignments.
- Positive:** During my four years on the newspaper staff, *I have made* significant contributions. My editorial skills have steadily *developed* as I *have tackled* difficult assignments.

Avoiding Imprecise, Misleading, and Biased Words



Web Link

As you edit your writing, check your choice of words carefully. The information on the next five pages will help you edit for word choice.

Substitute specific words. ■ ■ ■

Replace vague nouns and verbs with words that generate clarity and energy.

■ Specific Nouns

Make it a habit to use specific nouns for subjects. General nouns (*woman, school*) give the reader a vague, uninteresting picture. More specific nouns (*actress, university*) give the reader a better picture. Finally, very specific nouns (*Meryl Streep, Notre Dame*) are the type that can make your writing clear and colorful.

GENERAL TO SPECIFIC NOUNS

Person	Place	Thing	Idea
woman	school	book	theory
actor	university	novel	scientific theory
Meryl Streep	Notre Dame	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	relativity

■ Vivid Verbs

Like nouns, verbs can be too general to create a vivid word picture. For example, the verb *looked* does not say the same thing as *stared, glared, glanced, or peeked*.

- Whenever possible, use a verb that is strong enough to stand alone without the help of an adverb.

Verb and adverb: John fell down in the student lounge.

Vivid verb: John **collapsed** in the student lounge.

- Avoid overusing the “be” verbs (*is, are, was, were*) and helping verbs. Often a main verb can be made from another word in the same sentence.

A “be” verb: Cole is someone who follows international news.

A stronger verb: Cole **follows** international news.

- Use active rather than passive verbs. (Use passive verbs only if you want to downplay who is performing the action in a sentence. See page 81.)

Passive verb: Another provocative essay was submitted by Kim.

Active verb: Kim **submitted** another provocative essay.

- Use verbs that show rather than tell.

A verb that tells: Dr. Lewis is very thorough.

A verb that shows: Dr. Lewis **prepares** detailed, interactive lectures.

Replace jargon and clichés. ■ ■ ■

Replace language that is overly technical or difficult to understand. Also replace overused, worn-out words.

■ Understandable Language

Jargon is language used in a certain profession or by a particular group of people. It may be acceptable to use if your audience is that group of people, but to most ears jargon will sound technical and unnatural.

Jargon: The bottom line is that our output is not within our game plan.

Clear: Production is not on schedule.

Jargon: I'm having conceptual difficulty with these academic queries.

Clear: I don't understand these review questions.

Jargon: Pursuant to our conversation, I have forwarded you a remittance attached herewith.

Clear: As we discussed, I am mailing you the check.

■ Fresh and Original Writing

Clichés are overused words or phrases. They give the reader no fresh view and no concrete picture. Because clichés spring quickly to mind (for both the writer and the reader), they are easy to write and often remain unedited.

an axe to grind
as good as dead
beat around the bush
between a rock and a hard place
burning bridges
easy as pie

piece of cake
planting the seed
rearing its ugly head
stick your neck out
throwing your weight around
up a creek

■ Purpose and Voice

Other aspects of your writing may also be tired and overworked. Be alert to the two types of clichés described below.

Clichés of Purpose:

- Sentimental papers gushing about an ideal friend or family member, or droning on about a moving experience
- Overused topics with recycled information and predictable examples

Clichés of Voice:

- Writing that assumes a false sense of authority: "I have determined that there are three basic types of newspapers. My preference is for the third."
- Writing that speaks with little or no sense of authority: "I flipped when I saw *Viewpoints*."
- Writing that is pretentious: "Because I have researched the topic thoroughly, readers should not question my conclusion."

Change biased words. ■■■

When depicting individuals or groups according to their differences, use language that implies equal value and respect for all people.

■ Words Referring to Ethnicity

ACCEPTABLE GENERAL TERMS

American Indians,
Native Americans

Asian Americans
(not Orientals)

Latinos, Latinas,
Hispanics

ACCEPTABLE SPECIFIC TERMS

Cherokee people, Inuit people, and so forth

Chinese Americans, Japanese
Americans, and so forth

Mexican Americans, Cubans
Americans, and so forth

African Americans, blacks

“African American” has come into wide acceptance, though the term “black” is preferred by some individuals.

Anglo Americans (English ancestry), European Americans

Use these terms to avoid the notion that “American,” used alone, means “white.”

Additional References

NOT RECOMMENDED

Eurasian, mulatto

nonwhite

Caucasian

American (to mean U.S. citizen)

PREFERRED

person of mixed ancestry

person of color

white

U.S. citizen

■ Words Referring to Age

AGE GROUP

up to age 13 or 14

between 13 and 19

late teens and 20s

30s to age 60

60 and older

65 and older

ACCEPTABLE TERMS

boys, girls

youth, young people, young men,
young women

young adults, young women,
young men

adults, men, women

older adults, older people (not elderly)

seniors (senior citizens also acceptable)

INSIGHT: Whenever you write about a person with a disability, an impairment, or other special condition, give the person and your readers the utmost respect. Nothing is more distracting to a reader than an insensitive or outdated reference.

■ Words Referring to Disabilities or Impairments

In the recent past, some writers were choosing alternatives to the term *disabled*, including *physically challenged*, *exceptional*, or *special*. However, it is not generally held that these new terms are precise enough to serve those who live with disabilities. Of course, degrading labels such as *crippled*, *invalid*, and *maimed*, as well as overly negative terminology, must be avoided.

NOT RECOMMENDED

handicapped
birth defect
stutter, stammer, lisp
an AIDS victim
suffering from cancer
mechanical foot
false teeth

PREFERRED

disabled
congenital disability
speech impairment
person with AIDS
person who has cancer
prosthetic foot
dentures

■ Words Referring to Conditions

People with various disabilities and conditions have sometimes been referred to as though they were their condition (quadriplegics, depressives, epileptics) instead of people who happen to have a particular disability. As much as possible, remember to refer to the person first, the disability second.

NOT RECOMMENDED

the disabled
cripples
the retarded
dyslexics
neurotics
subjects, cases
quadriplegics
wheelchair users

PREFERRED

people with disabilities
people who have difficulty walking
people with a developmental disability
students with dyslexia
patients with neuroses
participants, patients
people who are quadriplegic
people who use wheelchairs

■ Additional Terms

Make sure you understand the following terms that address specific impairments:

hearing impairment	=	partial hearing loss, hard of hearing (not deaf, which is total loss of hearing)
visual impairment	=	partially sighted (not blind, which is total loss of vision)
communicative disorder	=	speech, hearing, and learning disabilities affecting communication

■ Words Referring to Gender

- Use parallel language for both sexes:

The **men** and the **women** rebuilt the school together.

Hank and **Marie**

Mr. Robert Gumble, Mrs. Joy Gumble

Note: The courtesy titles *Mr.*, *Ms.*, *Mrs.*, and *Miss* ought to be used according to the person's preference.

- Use nonsexist alternatives to words with masculine connotations:

humanity (not *mankind*) **synthetic** (not *man-made*)

artisan (not *craftsman*)

- Do not use masculine-only or feminine-only pronouns (*he*, *she*, *his*, *her*) when you want to refer to a human being in general:

A politician can kiss privacy good-bye when **he** runs for office.

(not recommended)

Instead, use *he or she*, change the sentence to plural, or eliminate the pronoun:

A politician can kiss privacy good-bye when **he or she** runs for office.

Politicians can kiss privacy good-bye when **they** run for office.

A politician can kiss privacy good-bye when running for office.

- Do not use gender-specific references in the salutation of a business letter when you don't know the person's name:

Dear Sir: Dear Gentlemen: (neither is recommended)

Instead, address a position:

Dear Personnel Officer:

Dear Members of the Economic Committee:

■ Occupational Issues

NOT RECOMMENDED

chairman
salesman
clergyman
male/female nurse
male/female doctor
mailman
insurance man
fireman
businessman
congressman
steward, stewardess
policeman, policewoman

PREFERRED

chair, presiding officer, moderator
sales representative, salesperson
minister, priest, rabbi
nurse
doctor, physician
mail carrier, postal worker, letter carrier
insurance agent
firefighter
executive, manager, businessperson
member of Congress, representative, senator
flight attendant
police officer

■ Proofreading Your Writing

The following guidelines will help you check your revised writing for spelling, mechanics, usage, grammar, and form.



Review punctuation and mechanics. ■ ■ ■

1. **Check for proper use of commas** before coordinating conjunctions in compound sentences, after introductory clauses and long introductory phrases, between items in a series, and so on.
2. **Look for apostrophes** in contractions, plurals, and possessive nouns.
3. **Examine quotation marks** in quoted information, titles, or dialogue.
4. **Watch for proper use of capital letters** for first words in written conversation and for proper names of people, places, and things.

Look for usage and grammar errors. ■ ■ ■

1. **Look for words that writers commonly misuse:** *there/their/they're; accept/except.*
2. **Check for verb use.** Subjects and verbs should agree in number: Singular subjects go with singular verbs; plural subjects go with plural verbs. Verb tenses should be consistent throughout.
3. **Review for pronoun/antecedent agreement problems.** A pronoun and its antecedent must agree in number.

Check for spelling errors. ■ ■ ■

1. **Use a spell checker.** Your spell checker will catch most errors.
2. **Check each spelling you are unsure of.** Especially check those proper names and other special words your spell checker won't know.
3. **Consult a handbook.** Refer to a list of commonly misspelled words, as well as an up-to-date dictionary.

Check the writing for form and presentation. ■ ■ ■

1. **Note the title.** A title should be appropriate and lead into the writing.
2. **Examine any quoted or cited material.** Are all sources of information properly presented and documented? (See pages 491–528 and 529–558.)
3. **Look over the finished copy of your writing.** Does it meet the requirements for a final manuscript? (See page 130.)



Critical-Thinking and Writing Activities

As directed by your instructor, complete the following activities.

1. The nineteenth-century British writer Matthew Arnold offers this advice to writers about refining their writing: “Have something to say and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style.” Does your own writing clearly communicate a meaningful message? Explain why or why not.
2. Choose a writing assignment that you have recently completed. Edit the sentences in this writing for style and correctness using pages 94–101 as a guide. Then use pages 102–106 in this chapter to edit the piece of writing for vague words, jargon, clichés, and biased language.
3. Combine some of the following ideas into longer, more mature sentences. Write at least four sentences, using page 95 as a guide.

Dogs can be difficult to train. The necessary supplies include a leash and treats. Patience is also a necessity. Dogs like to please their owners. Training is not a chore for dogs. A well-trained dog is a pleasure to its owner.

Learning-Outcomes Checklist

- _____ I understand that editing involves checking overall sentence style and word choice.
- _____ I have combined short, simplistic sentences.
- _____ I have expanded sentences, where appropriate, to create a more expressive style.
- _____ I have avoided sentence problems and improved sentence style.
 - Varying sentence structures
 - Varying sentence arrangements
 - Using parallel structure
 - Avoiding weak constructions
- _____ I have made sure that I use strong, effective words.
 - Using specific nouns and vivid verbs
 - Replacing jargon and clichés
 - Changing biased words
- _____ I have proofread my writing, checking punctuation, mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling—as well as form and presentation.

↔ Cross-Curricular Connections

Different disciplines have different documentation systems, each with its own conventions, formats, and punctuation practices. For MLA style, see pages 491–528, and for APA style, see pages 529–558.

7 Submitting Writing and Creating Portfolios

Submitting your writing might be as simple as handing it in to your instructor or posting it to a class wiki, or it might be as involved as submitting it to a journal in your area of study or assembling it with your other works to publish in a portfolio. Whatever the case, sharing your writing makes all the work you have done worthwhile. As writer Tom Liner states, “You learn ways to improve your writing by seeing its effect on others.”

This chapter will help you prepare your writing for submission and sharing. When you make your writing public—in whatever form—you are *publishing* it.

Learning Outcomes

- Format your writing.
- Submit writing, perhaps in a portfolio.



Visually Speaking

- ▶ How does the image above relate to submitting your writing?
How is writing like running a race?

■ Formatting Your Writing

A good page design makes your writing clear and easy to follow. Keep that in mind when you produce a final copy of your writing.

Strive for clarity in page design. ■ ■ ■

Examine the following design elements, making sure that each is appropriate and clear in your project and in your writing.

■ Format and Documentation

Keep the design clear and uncluttered. Aim for a sharp, polished look in all your assigned writing.

Use the designated documentation form. Follow all the requirements outlined in the MLA (pages 491–528) or APA (pages 529–558) style guides.

■ Typography

Use an easy-to-read serif font for the main text. Serif type, **like this**, has “tails” at the tops and bottoms of the letters. For most types of writing, use a 10- or 12-point type size.

Consider using a sans serif font for the title and headings. Sans serif type, **like this**, does not have “tails.” Use larger, perhaps 18-point, type for your title and 14-point type for any headings. You can also use boldface for headings if they seem to get lost on the page. (Follow your instructor’s formatting guidelines.)



Because most people find a sans serif font easier to read on screen, consider a sans serif font for the body and a serif font for the titles and headings in any writing you publish online.

■ Spacing

Follow all requirements for indents and margins. This usually means indenting the first line of each paragraph five spaces, maintaining a one-inch margin around each page, and double-spacing throughout the paper.

Avoid widows and orphans. Avoid leaving headings, hyphenated words, or single lines (widows) of new paragraphs alone at the bottom of a page. Also avoid single words (orphans) at the bottom of a page or carried over to the top of a new page.

■ Graphic Devices

Create bulleted or numbered lists to highlight individual items in a list. But, be selective, using traditional paragraphs when they help you more effectively communicate your message. Writing should not include too many lists.

Include charts or other graphics. Graphics should be neither so small that they get lost on the page, nor so large that they overpower the page.

■ Submitting Writing and Creating Portfolios

Once you have formatted and proofread your final draft, you should be ready to share your writing. For college assignments, you will often simply turn in your paper to your instructor. However, you should also think about sharing your writing with other audiences, including those who will want to see your writing portfolio.

Consider potential audiences. ■ ■ ■

You could receive helpful feedback by taking any of the following steps:

- Share your writing with peers or family members.
- Submit your work to a local publication or an online journal.
- Post your writing on an appropriate website, including your own.
- Turn in your writing to your instructor.

Select appropriate submission methods. ■ ■ ■

There are two basic methods for submitting your work.

- **Paper submission:** Print an error-free copy on quality paper.
- **Electronic submission:** If allowed, send your writing as an e-mail attachment.

Use a writing portfolio. ■ ■ ■

There are two basic types of writing portfolios: (1) a *working portfolio* in which you store documents at various stages of development, and (2) a *showcase portfolio* with which you share appropriate finished work. For example, you could submit a portfolio to complete course requirements or to apply for a scholarship, graduate program, or job. The documents below are commonly included in a showcase portfolio:

- A table of contents listing the pieces included in your portfolio
- An opening essay or letter detailing the story behind your portfolio (how you compiled it and why it features the qualities expected by the intended reader)
- A specified number of—and types of—finished pieces
- A cover sheet attached to each piece of writing, discussing the reason for its selection, the amount of work that went into it, and so on
- Evaluation sheets or checklists charting the progress or experience you want to show related to issues of interest to the reader





Critical-Thinking and Writing Activities

As directed by your instructor, complete the following critical-thinking and writing activities by yourself or with classmates.

1. Catherine Drinker Bowen has argued the following: “Writing is not apart from living. Writing is a kind of double living.” As you think about sharing your own writing and adding it to your writing portfolio, does this claim ring true? Why or why not?
2. Choose one of your recent writing assignments and use the instructions on page 110 to assess the quality of your formatting and page design. Edit and redesign the paper as needed.
3. For the class in which you are using this book, begin two working portfolios: (1) an electronic portfolio on your computer and (2) a paper portfolio in a sturdy folder or binder. In the electronic portfolio, store all drafts of your assignments, as well as all related electronic correspondence with your instructor. In your paper portfolio, store all printed drafts of your work, including copies that show your instructor’s notations and grades.

Learning-Outcomes Checklist

- _____ I have formatted my writing according to assignment and submission guidelines.
 - Using appropriate headings, layout, margins, typography, and documentation
- _____ I have submitted my writing in an appropriate way.
 - Fitting my assignment, program, and career goals
- _____ I have added my writing to my portfolio.
 - Demonstrating an appropriate level of scholarship and research
 - Using appropriate voice and style
 - Including an attractive design



Cross-Curricular Connections

How does writing a paper in your discipline establish your position in the research community? How does adding a paper to your portfolio establish your position in your writing career?