

Say it Well:
A Research Writing Guide
for
English 102 Rhetoric and Writing II
Lewis-Clark State College



Say it Well:
A Research Writing Guide
LCSC English 102 Rhetoric & Writing II

1st Edition

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This adaptation has reformatted the original text, and replaced some images and figures to fit with the needs of the text.

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Humanities Division

Lewis-Clark State College Library

Lewis-Clark State College Writing Center

eLearning Services

Credits

This textbook is a collection of materials from the following sources that are under the Creative Commons license and curated by the editors for LCSC's First-Year Writing Program.

Choosing & Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research

Composing Ourselves and Our World

Council of Writing Program Administrators

EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

Excelsior Online Writing Lab

Information Strategies for Communicators

More Online Learning for Iowa Educators (MOLLIE)

The Process of Research Writing

The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Writing Commons

Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence

Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volumes 1 & 2

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Introduction to English 102 Rhetoric & Writing II

Overview

English 102 is designed to introduce students to college-level writing. It is a writing-intensive course. Students are required to use critical thinking skills to study writing as a process, including pre-writing or inventing, drafting, collaborating, revising, and editing.

LCSC Course Catalog & Outcomes

English 102 Rhetoric & Writing II (3 credits)

A continuation of ENGL-101 with an emphasis on general research techniques with applications to various academic disciplines. Successful students will be able to:

1. Continue to demonstrate competency in the course outcomes for ENGL-101;
 2. Locate, identify, and participate in academic discourse;
 3. Read critically, synthesize, and evaluate information;
 4. Use a variety of research tools (databases, indexes, the internet, etc.) to locate appropriate information sources;
 5. Develop a focused research topic or project;
 6. Conduct a review of the literature for a specific topic;
 7. Understand what constitutes evidence in a particular discipline;
 8. Use valid evidence to support claims;
 9. Understand and use APA and MLA formats for organizing and documenting multiple source papers;
 10. Understand and demonstrate the ethical responsibility of the research writer to explore multiple perspectives on a topic and to cite sources and report findings accurately.
- Writing integrated; computer intensive.

Pre-requisite: A grade of 'C' or better in ENGL-101 or satisfactory placement score

Idaho General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs)

- Use flexible writing process strategies to generate, develop, revise, edit, and proofread texts.
- Adopt strategies and genre appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
Use inquiry-based strategies to conduct research that explores multiple and diverse ideas and perspectives, appropriate to the rhetorical context.
- Use rhetorically appropriate strategies to evaluate, represent, and respond to the ideas and research of others.
- Address readers' biases and assumptions with well-developed evidence-based reasoning.
- Use appropriate conventions for integrating, citing, and documenting source materials as well as for surface-level language and style.

Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition

(v3.0) <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>

(adopted 17 July 2014)

Introduction

This Statement identifies outcomes for first-year composition programs in U.S. postsecondary education. It describes the writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop in first-year composition, which at most schools is a required general education course or sequence of courses. This Statement therefore attempts to both represent and regularize writing programs' priorities for first-year composition, which often takes the form of one or more required general education courses. To this end it is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, this Statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory.^[1] It intentionally defines only "outcomes," or types of results, and not "standards," or precise levels of achievement. The setting of standards to measure students' achievement of these Outcomes has deliberately been left to local writing programs and their institutions.

In this Statement "composing" refers broadly to complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies. Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages. Writers' composing activities have always been shaped by the technologies

available to them, and digital technologies are changing writers' relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways.

These outcomes are supported by a large body of research demonstrating that the process of learning to write in any medium is complex: it is both individual and social and demands continued practice and informed guidance. Programmatic decisions about helping students demonstrate these outcomes should be informed by an understanding of this research.

As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, abilities will diversify along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines as these writers move into new settings where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. Therefore, this document advises faculty in all disciplines about how to help students build on what they learn in introductory writing courses.

Rhetorical Knowledge

Rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing. Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Learn and use key rhetorical concepts through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes
- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure
- Understand and use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences
- Match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print and electronic) to varying rhetorical situations

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The expectations of readers in their fields
- The main features of genres in their fields
- The main purposes of composing in their fields

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, situations, and texts. When writers think critically about the materials they use--whether print texts, photographs, data sets, videos, or other materials--they separate assertion from evidence, evaluate sources and evidence, recognize and evaluate underlying assumptions, read across texts for connections and patterns, identify and evaluate chains of reasoning, and compose appropriately qualified and developed claims and generalizations. These practices are foundational for advanced academic writing.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts
- Read a diverse range of texts, attending especially to relationships between assertion and evidence, to patterns of organization, to the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements, and to how these features function for different audiences and situations
- Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources
- Use strategies--such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign--to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The kinds of critical thinking important in their disciplines
- The kinds of questions, problems, and evidence that define their disciplines
- Strategies for reading a range of texts in their fields

Processes

Writers use multiple strategies, *composing processes*, to conceptualize, develop, and finalize projects. Composing processes are seldom linear: a writer may research a topic before drafting, then conduct additional research while revising or after consulting a colleague.

Composing processes are also flexible: successful writers can adapt their composing processes to different contexts and occasions.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing
- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- To employ the methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication within their fields
- To develop projects using the characteristic processes of their fields
- To review work-in-progress for the purpose of developing ideas before surface-level editing
- To participate effectively in collaborative processes typical of their field

Knowledge of Conventions

Conventions are the formal rules and informal guidelines that define genres, and in so doing, shape readers' and writers' perceptions of correctness or appropriateness. Most obviously, conventions govern such things as mechanics, usage, spelling, and citation practices. But they also influence content, style, organization, graphics, and document design.

Conventions arise from a history of use and facilitate reading by invoking common expectations between writers and readers. These expectations are not universal; they vary by genre (conventions for lab notebooks and discussion-board exchanges differ), by discipline (conventional moves in literature reviews in Psychology differ from those in English), and by occasion (meeting minutes and executive summaries use different registers). A writer's grasp of conventions in one context does not mean a firm grasp in another. Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to changes in material conditions and composing technologies and attending carefully to emergent conventions.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising
- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary
- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions
- Learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts
- Explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions
- Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The reasons behind conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and citation systems in their fields or disciplines
- Strategies for controlling conventions in their fields or disciplines
- Factors that influence the ways work is designed, documented, and disseminated in their fields
- Ways to make informed decisions about intellectual property issues connected to common genres and modalities in their fields.

[1] This Statement is aligned with the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, an articulation of the skills and habits of mind essential for success in college and is intended to help establish a continuum of valued practice from high school through to the college major.

LCSC First-Year Writing Policies

Syllabus

You will receive a syllabus during the first week of class. The syllabus is typically handed out in class and posted on Blackboard. The syllabus outlines the policies for attendance, grading, and general expectations of the course. You will also find information about your instructor including their name, location of their office, office hours and how to contact them.

A note about office hours: These are dedicated times your instructor is available to meet with students. Take advantage of these times to talk with your instructor about any questions you may have about completing an assignment or your grade in the course.

Attendance

While attendance policies are set by each individual instructor, it is expected that you will attend class regularly, participate in class activities and discussions, be on time, and engage with the material and topics of discussion. You will receive feedback on your writing on a regular basis and have opportunities to ask specific questions about your assignments. Anecdotal evidence shows that students who attend class show greater improvement in their writing and in general do better in the course.

If you will miss class due to LCSC activities, such as athletics, class field trip, or club related events, you must fill out the [College-Related Student Travel Form](#), have it signed by your instructor / coach / advisor and submit it to your instructor at least a week before the schedule absence.

Military and Firefighter Policy: If you serve in the military or are a firefighter, there are special policies regarding absences, as well as withdrawing from classes due to service. Details can be found in the [LCSC Policy & Procedures Policy 5.302](#)

How to withdraw / drop a course:

If you feel that you are unable to successfully complete the course, you may consider withdrawing from the class. Before dropping, you will want to consult with your academic advisor, as well as financial aid to discuss any repercussions. The final date to withdraw / drop from a class is posted on the [LCSC Academic Calendar](#). Details and drop forms about the process can be found on the [LCSC Registrar's website](#).

Textbooks/Readings

For your English 102 class, this guide, *Say it Well*, will comprise your textbook. A digital copy is available on Blackboard. If you wish to use a printed copy, there are copies on reserve at the LCSC Library and LCSC Writing Center. Also, students may download a PDF of this textbook to print. Students may print portions of it on their own or take it to the [LCSC Graphic Communications office](#) to be printed and bound into a text.

Other readings may be added to supplement this textbook. Your course syllabus will have details.

Assignments

English 102 courses will complete writing assignments using primary and secondary research. The specific assignments may vary from instructor to instructor but will cover the same goals. You can expect to do a variety writing assignments to help you develop your skills for each assignment. Writing is based on a process, so it is expected that you will complete the various assignments with the goal of improving your writing within each genre.

Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty

From the [LCSC Student Handbook 2018-2019](#)

Cheating or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable. The College functions to promote the cognitive and psychosocial development of all students. Therefore, all work submitted by a student must represent one's own ideas, concepts and current understanding. Academic Dishonesty includes:

- Cheating—intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term “academic exercise” includes all forms of work submitted for credit hours.
- Fabrication—intentional and/or unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or the source of any information in an academic exercise.
- Collusion Facilitating Academic Dishonesty—intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of Academic Dishonesty.
- Plagiarism—the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas or words or statement of another person as one's own without acknowledgment.

The sanctions imposed for a violation of this section of the Code are independent of, and in addition to, any adverse academic evaluation which results from the student's conduct. The course instructor is responsible for academic evaluation of a student's work and shall make that evaluation without regard to any disciplinary action which may or may not be taken against a student under the Student Code of Conduct.

When it comes to writing, purchasing and/or downloading a paper off the internet or from another student, letting your parents, roommates, siblings, friends, or strangers write the paper for you or write significant portions of your assignment(s) all count as part of cheating and fabrication. It is expected that all of the writing you turn in to your professors is written by you. It is one thing to receive feedback on your draft during peer-review or the writing center, with suggestions on how to improve a sentence or ideas on how to improve your paper, but quite another when you have someone write large sections of a draft for you.

Avoiding Plagiarism in Writing

Plagiarism in writing—Any information that does not come from common knowledge or personal experience and that is accessed via an external medium (personal interview, internet source, books, newspapers, etc.) must be cited. When in doubt, cite the source. A practice that should become routine in your writing is to cite the source in two ways: with an in-text citation and on a Works Cited/Reference page.

Two important reminders:

- 1) plagiarism can occur in formal writing assignments as well as informal writing and
- 2) writing submitted through Blackboard may be run through a plagiarism checker.

Other resources on avoiding plagiarism

- [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism | WAC Clearinghouse](#)
- [Is It Plagiarism Yet? | Purdue OWL](#)
- [Safe Practices | Purdue OWL](#)
- [Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices](#)

Copyright and Fair Use

From [Library of Congress: Copyright and Primary Sources](#)

Copyright

What is copyright?

Copyright refers to the author's (creators of all sorts such as writers, photographers, artists, film producers, composers, and programmers) exclusive right to reproduce, prepare derivative works, distribute copies, and publicly perform and display their works. These rights may be transferred or assigned in whole or in part in writing by the author. Unless otherwise agreed in writing, work created by an employee is usually owned by the employer. The U.S. Copyright Act gets its authority from Article 1, Section 8, cl. 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

If there is no copyright notice, does that mean there is no copyright?

The absence of a copyright notice does not mean that there is no copyright. Copyright protection exists automatically from the moment of creation in a tangible fixed form, which is generally considered to include electronic form. A notice is not required to protect copyright.

Fair Use

What is "fair use"?

Fair use is an exception to the exclusive protection of copyright under American law. It permits certain limited uses without permission from the author or owner. Depending on the

circumstances, copying may be considered "fair" for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship or research.

To determine whether a specific use under one of these categories is "fair," courts are required to consider the following factors:

- the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
- the nature of the copyrighted work;
- the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole (is it long or short in length, that is, are you copying the entire work, as you might with an image, or just part as you might with a long novel); and
- the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

Public Domain (from the [Copyright Office FAQ](#))

A work of authorship is in the "public domain" if it is no longer under copyright protection or if it failed to meet the requirements for copyright protection. Works in the public domain may be used freely without the permission of the former copyright owner.

Resources for Successful Students

Student Success

There are many resources online and on campus to help you be a successful student. Balancing home, work, and school takes motivation and dedication.

You will want to take the *Performance Prognosis Inventory for English 102*. This will give you a good idea of the expectations your professors will have and is a good indicator if your current behaviors will help you succeed in class.

It is recommended that you have a schedule. You do not need anything fancy; a simple notebook can work as a calendar and schedule keeper if you check it regularly. Here are resources that can be very helpful:

Semester on a Page - Use the [LCSC Academic Calendar](#) to fill out the important holidays and deadlines. Use your syllabi from all of your classes to note when important assignments are due. Make sure to fill in important dates from your personal calendar. This will help you see your semester as a whole, see conflicting deadlines and important assignments and events so you know when to plan ahead. You can also use the Semester on a Page to plan out long-term research projects.

Weekly Planner – Use the weekly planner to organize your week. Schedule everything from when you are eating and doing laundry to entering your work schedule, study schedule and of course, when to have fun. So if you can't miss your favorite weekly tv show or gaming night, make sure to schedule that in too!

Semester on a Page

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00	Gym	Gym	Gym	Gym	Gym	Gym	Gym
7:00	English @ 7:30	Breakfast	English @ 7:30	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:00					Work	Work	
9:00	Snack	Homework	Snack	Homework			
10:00	Math @ 10:30		Math @ 10:30				Visit family
11:00							
12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch		
1:00	Homework	Work	Homework	Work	Bio lab		
2:00							
3:00							
4:00		Break		Break			
5:00	Dinner	History	Dinner	Biology	Going out	Dinner	Homework
6:00						Laundry	
7:00							
8:00	TV time		Gaming night				
9:00							
10:00	Sleep	Sleep		Sleep		Sleep	Sleep
11:00			Sleep				

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
--------	--------	---------	-----------	----------	--------	----------

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							

Performance Prognosis Inventory for English 102

Based on the original by Dr. Sandra Y. McGuire

The inventory below lists behaviors that you should exhibit in order to excel in English 102. Write true or false beside each of the following statements describing the way you will work in this class. The scoring scale is on the next page.

1. I will always read the assigned material before I go to class.
2. I will go over my class notes as soon as possible after class and note questions I might have.
3. I will learn the relevant concepts about writing so that I have the background necessary to understand the writing assignments.
4. I will read and write daily to stay on track to finish needed assignments.
5. I will go to my instructor's office hours and the LCSC Writing Center regularly to discuss my struggles with writing and to clarify any questions I have on assignments.
6. I will utilize the LCSC Library resources, including talking with the librarians, to improve the quality of the sources used in my research.
7. I will read and annotate the sources in depth to help with my understanding of my research topic.
8. I will reflect, reread, and revise my previous written work to improve it.
9. I am willing to read my work aloud to find errors.
10. I will actively participate in peer-review where we will provide feedback to each other on our writing, as well as learn how to improve my own writing.
11. I will review grammar and punctuation rules when they are a problem in my writing.
12. I will write multiple drafts of an essay to improve it.
13. I will actively participate in small group and class discussions.
14. I will be on-time, stay for the whole class, and attend more than 90% of the time.
15. I know that I can earn an A in this class through hard work , and will put forth the effort to do so.

The predicted grade for your performance this semester is provided below.

Performance Prognosis Inventory

Number of True Responses = Predicted Grade

13–15 = A

12–13 = B

10–11 = C

8–9 = D

less than 8 = F

Know that you can change your predicted grade at any point by changing your behavior so that more of the statements are true.

Below are additional resources to help you become a successful student.

Articles and Books for Student Success

These resources are to help you be more successful. More than simply a list of behaviors, such as the *Inventory* above, they explain and provide a deeper understanding of what it takes to not only be successful in English 101, but to be a successful student in all of your classes.

Writing Success

["What Does the Professor Want? Understanding the Assignment"](#) by Amy Guptill, from *Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence*

The book, *The Word on College Reading and Writing* by Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear has excellent resources on "Dealing with Obstacles and Developing Good Habits" in order to be a better writing student:

- ["Overcoming Writing Anxiety and Writer's Block"](#)
- ["Good Writing Habits"](#)
- ["Procrastination"](#)

General Student Success

[Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom](#) by Thomas C. Priester, SUNY Genesee Community College, Batavia, 2015

[A Different Road To College: A Guide For Transitioning Non-Traditional Students](#) by Alise Lamoreaux, Lane Community College, 2016

[College Success](#) This adapted edition is produced by the [University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing](#). Original authors & publisher removed at their request.

LCSC Writing Center

Like the U. S. Post Office's Christmas campaign— "Mail early. Mail often."—the [LCSC Writing Center](#) invites students to "Visit early. Visit often." You are invited to work with the writing consultants, students trained to help their peers understand assignments, generate ideas,

express those ideas clearly, and learn the finer points of organization, punctuation, and documentation.

Visit early to get help understanding assignments, brainstorming ideas, or sharing a first draft with a consultant who can offer suggestions for organization and revision.

Visit often to develop

- an acquaintance with the writing process, which requires an understanding of purpose and audience, the generation of multiple drafts, and a willingness to re-see your work and find clearer ways to express your ideas.
- an understanding of the styles of writing and documentation required by various disciplines.
- general writing skills and greater confidence in using writing to explore and express ideas.
- better skills at integrating sources into research assignments as well as improved citation methods.

The LCSC Writing Center is not an editing service, nor can they suggest a grade for an assignment. While the writing tutors can provide feedback on your project, you are responsible for making sure that the assignment fulfills all of the requirements required for a grade.

Additional information:

- The LCSC Writing Center is located in the LCSC Library, Room 172.
- It is open the second week of the semester through the fifteenth week. It is not open during holiday breaks including Thanksgiving, Spring Break, or Summer.
- The weekly schedule is Monday - Thursday 9 am - 5 pm and Friday 9 am - noon. Additional hours are available prior to midterms and finals week.
- For more information please visit their [website](#).

LCSC Library

The [LCSC Library](#) offers resources to help you with your writing and research. You can check out laptops, projectors, books, ebooks, movies, music, and study guides.

The have group study tables, as well as [six study rooms](#) that are available for study groups. Two of these rooms have a monitor to hook up to your laptops to help review presentations or work on collaborative writing.



On the first floor is a computer lab in the library with desktop computers, printing stations, and scanners.

You can also find the LCSC Writing Center here. The second floor is designated a Quiet Zone for individual, quiet study. Throughout the library there are comfortable chairs for reading. Also, the majority of the book resources are on the second floor.

For English 102, a core component of the course is conducting research, and the LCSC Library has multiple resources for you to succeed. These include scheduling a one-on-one [research appointment](#) with one of the reference librarians. They can help you find books and search one of over [100 academic databases](#) with academic and news articles, as well as streaming videos. The [Interlibrary Loan Service](#) (ILL) can request materials not available at the LCSC Library. There is a [24/7 Ask a Librarian](#) service where a librarian from LCSC or from another institution can help you find resources.

For fun, you can play one of the board or card games they have available, select a book from the Pleasure Reading area, use the yoga ball instead of a desk chair, charge your digital device, get a coffee from the Starbucks coffee machine, or check out a popular movie from the New Media collection. Check out the events such as board game night. Rumor has it that ASLCSC provides *free* snacks.

The library posts their [hours of operation](#) on their website.

There is detailed information throughout this text on how to use the library for your research projects.

Technology Use @ LCSC

There are two departments on campus that provide technology services and support to students, [Information Technology](#) and [e-Learning Services](#).

The Information Technology (IT) department provides services, including [LCMail](#), [WarriorWeb](#) and assistance connecting to the secured [WarriorStudent WiFi](#) network. They have detailed information on their website on how to use these services as well as troubleshoot any problems.

The e-Learning Services (eLS) department at LCSC facilitates a variety of technology-enhanced instruction, through Blackboard. Their website has information, including the [e-Learning Student Handbook](#) and links to [Blackboard Support](#). They provide [computer system](#) and [web browser recommendations](#), [tutorials on how to use Blackboard](#), and information on test proctoring for online students. Additionally, there are links for Student Success Tools, including information on how to use Google Drive and others.

It is recommended that you use [Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) to access Blackboard.

Additional computer services available on campus

Computer Labs

The LCSC campus has two open computer labs available for student use; they are located in the Library and the Student Union Building Room 202. Details are available on this [website](#).

Computer Printing

There are both in-lab and mobile printing service on campus. Five dollars is added to your WarriorOne card to use for printing at designated computer labs. The credits are added to your card automatically each Fall and Spring semester, but not in the Summer. Unused print credits do not roll over to the next semester. Details about how to use mobile printing can be found on the Student Printing [website](#).

Loaner Laptops

Laptops are available for check out in the SUB and in the LCSC Library. Visit the check-out desk for details.

How to Log on to Blackboard

The direct link to login to Blackboard is: <https://lcsc.blackboard.com>. LCSC Blackboard is accessible from the [LCSC homepage](#). Go to "Quicklinks" on the upper left, and the link for Blackboard is included.

Blackboard Login Information

- Username: Your Warrior Web ID, which is the first part of your LCMail (usually first initial, middle initial, full last name; Example: bbwarrrior)
- Password: Your eight-digit birth date in MMDDYYYY format (Example: January 31, 1985 = 01311985).

After accessing Blackboard for the first time, you should change your password to something more unique and secure.

If you are struggling to use Blackboard, contact the [24/7 Blackboard Support](#) website. You can submit a request for help online, by phone, or use their live chat feature.

Google Docs & Drive

Google office products are a free and easy way to complete assignments. Using your LCMail log-in information, you can access all of their products including Google Drive, Docs, Slides, and Hangout.

Google Drive is an important service to use throughout your academic career. This is a free cloud storage service where you can back up all of the documents you need for class. For your English class, this drive can be helpful for keeping track of rough drafts and storing your final drafts, as well as your research and readings for the class. Check out [Getting Started with Google Drive](#) for details. The drive and your files are accessible from any computer, tablet, or phone with the appropriate apps.

Google Docs is a word processor, which is a free and easy way to write and automatically back-up your work. There are detailed instructions from [Google Help Center](#) on [How to Use Google Docs](#), as well as how to access and start a Google Doc from a computer, Android, and an iPhone/iPad device. From that page you can find information on how to format documents for your writing class.

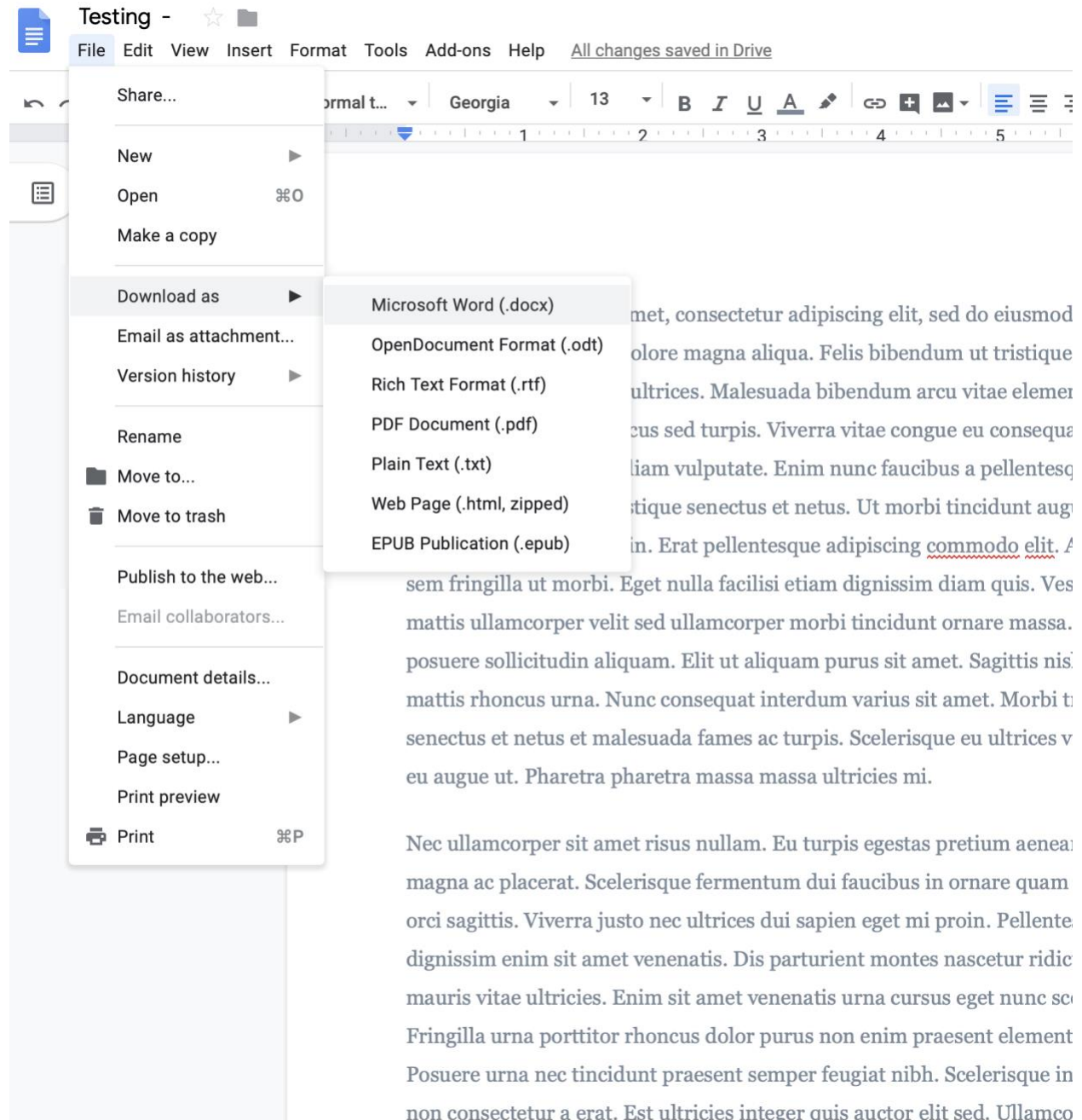
If you use Google Docs and need to upload your document to Blackboard, you must export it as a Microsoft Word or PDF document in order for it to be read in Blackboard and for your instructor to be able to read your submission.

In Google Docs you

- select the *File* menu,

- select *Download as* and
- select either the *Microsoft Word (.docx)* or *PDF document (.pdf)*.

Take a look at the image below to see the menu.



Sending Emails

From [Email Guidelines for Students](#) by Lee Ann Hodges in Writing Commons. 29 Sept 2017

You are often required to use email to communicate with instructors, staff, advisors, and peers. As your studies advance, you may also use email to contact professionals in your field for service-learning or job opportunities. College is the beginning of your professional life, and email messages can reflect positively or negatively on your professional image.

Email Accounts

LCSC provides you with an email account—use it! Here’s why:

- Using your LCSC-provided email address identifies you to the sender so that your email is less likely to be deleted out of hand or quarantined by a spam filter.
- You can keep college and personal email separate, which will help you stay organized.
- You don’t have to be as concerned with the impression that a cutesy or risqué personal email address may create. (Think “hotmess@gmail.com” or “drinkingbuddy@yahoo.com”)
- All of your official LCSC emails will go to your account. The only way you can conduct official business via email is through your account.

Components of an Email

The Subject Line

Think of a subject line as the title for the email; it lets the reader know what to expect from the message. The subject line is crucial, yet many students skip it. Invest an extra minute in a specific subject line, and it may make the difference between being ignored and answered quickly.

Most professionals receive numerous email messages each day, yet they may have little time to respond. Many people prioritize answering emails on the basis of the subject line. A blank subject line is not useful to the reader; furthermore, if the email address is unfamiliar, the message may get mistaken for a virus or spam message and deleted.

Make subject lines as specific as possible. General subject lines such as “Question” or “Hello” aren’t helpful in conveying the content of your message to the reader. Here are a few examples of ineffective and effective subject lines:

Ineffective Subject Lines	Effective Subject Lines
Question	Question About POL 120 Research Paper
Request	Recommendation Letter Request
Project	BIO 275 Group Project Submission
Meet	Study Group Meeting Times
Job	Assistant Network Administrator Inquiry
Plan	Marketing Plan Recommendations

Notice that the effective subject lines above use title case, in which the principal words are capitalized. However, sentence case can be effective for subject lines expressed as complete sentences. Examples: "Are you available Wednesday?" or "Thank you for your time."

Salutation

The salutation is the greeting, such as "Dear Dr. Marks" or "Good afternoon, Ms. Cho." Salutations can range from informal (Hi, Dr. Stein!) to formal (Dear Professor Williams:); when choosing a salutation, students should consider their audience, how well they know their readers, and the writing situation.

- Double-check the spelling of the recipient's name and his or her honorific (Dr. / Professor etc.).
- Do not guess if you are uncertain of a person's honorific or gender. Incorrect assumptions of gender or educational level can be awkward for (or even offensive to) the recipient. Using a position title is an excellent solution. Examples:
 - Dear Director Kelly:
 - Dear Professor Glover:
- Do not use first name only with an individual in a position of authority unless invited to do so or if the recipient has signed a previous email to you with only his or her first name.
- If you are unsure:
 - When you aren't sure who will read the email; sometimes email addresses are set up for an entire department or for general information requests. If so, you can start with "Hello,".
 - When the email is sent to a group. However, it's also fine to add an inclusive salutation, such as "Dear colleagues" or "Hello, all".

You can avoid a salutation when the email is very brief and straightforward, such as in the case of a reply to a previous message.

The Message

All but the briefest and most straightforward of messages should use the three-part structure of introduction, body, and conclusion. Emails are usually short, so keep each of these three parts brief; it is common, for example, to have one-sentence introductions and conclusions.

Introduction: State the purpose of the message.

Body: Supply the necessary details.

Conclusion: Close with a courteous statement or action information, such as deadlines and contact information.

Sample E-mail Message

SUBJECT: Internship Recommendation Request

Specific subject line gives reader a good idea of what the message is about.

Dear Dr. Boyer,

A more formal salutation is appropriate for a request like this.

I was in your ENG 309 Technical Editing class last fall and learned many techniques that could be used in an internship for which I've applied. Would you be willing to recommend me for the position?

Introduction reminds the reader of who the writer is and states the purpose of the email.

The internship is at Spectrum Publishing, which produces print and web-based textbooks for high school science courses. As you may recall, although my major is in English, I chose a minor in biology in hopes of obtaining a job in a science-related publishing field.

The recommendation is a simple web-based form that can be completed at <http://spectrumpublishing.com/internrecommendation>. The deadline is April 15.

These paragraphs provide all necessary information for completing the recommendation, making it easy for the professor to agree.

I hope you'll be willing to recommend me. The internship is a perfect fit for my interests and goals, and a vote of confidence from a professor with in-depth experience in this field would carry much weight. I look forward to hearing from you!

Courteous closing emphasizes how important the recommendation is without sounding pushy.

Thank you,

Cynthia Voight

Replying to Messages

When replying to an email message, you have a few options:

- Replying to all recipients or just to the sender
- Replying with or without the original message

“Reply to all” should only be used when everyone who received the message needs to see your reply; this feature will send your response to everyone listed in the “To” and “CC” lines. Carefully consider whether the entire group needs your response before using “reply to all;” unnecessary use of this feature is annoying to your readers.

The “reply with message” feature is useful for supplying automatic context for a response. One caution, however: make certain that you type the response at the top of the message, not at the end, where your reader must scroll down to locate it.

Do not use the reply feature to start a new conversation on a different topic; create a new email message with a fresh subject line.

Email Content, Organization, and Formatting Tips

Provide all details the reader may need.

Supply proper identification if the recipient does not know you or may not remember you. For example, list your course and section when corresponding with a professor. Unless an instructor has an unusually small number of students or an exceptionally good memory, he or she is not likely to remember which class you’re in, especially early in the semester. If inquiring about a service-learning opportunity, mention your college and how you learned of the position.

Avoid stream-of-consciousness messages. In other words, don’t just write words as they come to you; read it from the recipient’s perspective and edit accordingly before you click “send.”

Watch your tone and be respectful, especially if you’re frustrated when you send the email.

- Poor Tone: “I tried to access the link to the Opposing Viewpoints database you recommended, but it won’t go through! How am I supposed to complete this assignment?!”
- Diplomatic Tone: “I tried to access the link to the Opposing Viewpoints database, but I got a message that the server was unavailable. Is there a different database with similar information that I could use?”

- Unprofessional Tone: "Sorry for submitting the components of internship application separately. The requirements were really hard to find on your website, and I just now realized that I hadn't submitted one of them."
- Professional Tone: "Attached is the personal statement required for the internship application. I sent the personal information form and recommendations on May 4, so this submission should complete my file."

Use proper paragraphing. Many writers make the mistake of lumping all the content of an email message into one long paragraph. Short paragraphs lend themselves well to skimming, a practice that most email readers use.

Add a space between paragraphs to provide a visual clue as to where a new paragraph starts.

Use standard English. Text language is unacceptable.

Run a spell-check. In fact, consider writing important or lengthy messages in a word processing program, which generally has better spelling and grammar checkers than email programs.

When you're satisfied with the draft, you can copy and paste it to the email program.

Make sure that any attachments you intend to send are truly attached. Also, refer to the attachment in the message itself to alert the reader to its presence.

Email is an excellent academic and professional tool that students can use to your benefit. Extra time spent crafting effective email messages is an investment in a practical and valuable communication skill.

Chapter 1

Thinking about Research and Planning Your Project

Overview

When your instructor assigns you to write a research project, you might be filled with questions: *What do I want to write about? What do I already think/know about a certain topic? What do I want to learn about it? What type of research will I need to include? Where should I look for this research?* ... and so on. This is good! Asking questions and thinking about your topic is the first step of the research writing process.

After you've done that, you will be ready to begin the next phase of research writing: planning your project. At this point, you will still have myriad questions about your project. Just as with the first stage of research, it's important to carefully consider all of these questions, as they are the driving force behind quality research.

The following chapter will help you generate ideas for your research project. You will also learn how to think critically about research and develop strong research questions to help guide you in the search for information. In addition, you will learn how to fashion a working thesis and write a research proposal.

Chapter Contents

The "Thinking about Research and Planning Your Project" chapter includes readings and exercises on:

- Writing Research Projects:
 - Why Write Research Projects?
 - What is Academic Research Writing?
 - The Process of Research Writing
- Thinking Critically about Research
- Inquiry-Based Research
- Writing Research Questions
- Developing a Working Thesis
- Writing a Research Proposal

Why Write Research Projects?

From the ["Introduction" of *The Process of Research Writing*](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- Writing with and for Academic Research: What is It?
- Research Writing with Computers and the Internet
- Writing as a Process: A Brief Explanation and Map

A lot of times, instructors and students tend to separate "thinking," "researching," and "writing" into different categories that aren't necessarily very well connected. First you think, then you research, and then you write.

The reality is though that the possibilities and process of research writing are more complicated and much richer than that. We *think* about what it is we want to research and write about, but at the same time, we learn *what* to think based on our research and our writing. The goal of the following chapters is to guide you through this process of research writing by emphasizing a series of exercises that touch on different and related parts of the research process.

But before going any further, you need to be aware of two important points about this book:

These chapters provide an introduction to academic writing and research, and chances are you will keep learning about academic writing and research after this class is over. You may have to take other writing classes where you will learn different approaches to the writing process, perhaps one where you will learn more about research writing in your discipline. However, even if this is your one and only "writing class" in your college career, you will have to learn more about academic writing for every class and every new academic writing project. Learning how to write well is not something that ends when the class ends. Learning how to write is an on-going, life-long process.

Academic writing is not the only kind of writing worth learning about, and it is not the only potential use for this book or this class. The focus of the following chapters is the important, common, and challenging sort of writing students in a variety of disciplines tend to do, projects that use research to inform an audience and make some sort of point; specifically, academic research writing projects. But clearly, this is not the *only* kind of writing writers do.

Sometimes, students think introductory college writing courses are merely an extension of the writing courses they took in high school. This is true for some, but for the majority of new college students, the sort of writing required in college is different from the sort of writing

required in high school. College writing tends to be based more on research than high school writing. Further, college-level instructors generally expect a more sophisticated and thoughtful interpretation of research from student writers. It is not enough to merely use more research in your writing; you also have to be able to think and write about the research you've done.

Besides helping you write different kinds of projects where you use research to support a point, the concepts about research you will learn from this course and our text will help you become better **consumers** of information and research. And make no mistake about it: information that is (supposedly) backed up by research is everywhere in our day-to-day lives. News stories we see on television or read in magazines or newspapers are based on research. Legislators use research to argue for or against the passage of the laws that govern our society. Scientists use research to make progress in their work.

Even the most trivial information we all encounter is likely to be based on something that at least looks like research. Consider advertising: we are all familiar with "research-based" claims in advertising like "four out of five dentists agree" that a particular brand of toothpaste is the best, or that "studies show" that a specific type of deodorant keeps its wearers "fresh" longer. Advertisers use research like this in their advertisements for the same reason that scientists, news broadcasters, magazine writers, and just about anyone else trying to make a point uses research: it's persuasive and convinces consumers to buy a particular brand of toothpaste.

This is not to say that every time we buy toothpaste we carefully mull over the research we've heard mentioned in advertisements. However, using research to persuade an audience must work on some level because it is one of the most commonly employed devices in advertising.

One of the best ways to better understand how we are affected by the research we encounter in our lives is to learn more about the process of research by becoming better and more careful critical readers, writers, and researchers. Part of that process will include the research-based writing you do in this course. In other words, this text will be useful in helping you deal with the practical and immediate concern of how to write essays and other writing projects for college classes, particularly ones that use research to support a point. But perhaps more significantly, these same skills can help you write and read research-based texts well beyond college.

Academic Research Writing: What Is It?

Writing That Isn't "Research Writing"

Not all useful and valuable writing automatically involves research or can be called “academic research writing.”

While poets, playwrights, and novelists frequently do research and base their writings on that research, what they produce doesn’t constitute academic research writing. The film *Shakespeare in Love* incorporated facts about Shakespeare’s life and work to tell a touching, entertaining, and interesting story, but it was nonetheless a work of fiction since the writers, director, and actors clearly took liberties with the facts in order to tell their story. If you were writing a research project for a literature class which focuses on Shakespeare, you would not want to use *Shakespeare in Love* as evidence about how Shakespeare wrote his plays.

Essay exams are usually not a form of research writing. When an instructor gives an essay exam, she usually is asking students to write about what they learned from the class readings, discussions, and lectures. While writing essay exams demand an understanding of the material, this isn’t research writing because instructors aren’t expecting students to do additional research on the topic.

All sorts of other kinds of writing we read and write all the time—letters, emails, journal entries, instructions, etc.—are not research writing. Some writers include research in these and other forms of personal writing, and practicing some of these types of writing—particularly when you are trying to come up with an idea to write and research about in the first place—can be helpful in thinking through a research project. But when we set about to write a research project, most of us don’t have these sorts of personal writing genres in mind.

So, What is “Research Writing”?

Research writing is writing that uses evidence (from journals, books, magazines, the internet, experts, etc.) to persuade or inform an audience about a particular point.

Research writing exists in a variety of different forms. For example, academics, journalists, or other researchers write articles for journals or magazines; academics, professional writers and almost anyone create web pages that both use research to make some sort of point and that show readers how to find more research on a particular topic. All of these types of writing projects can be done by a single writer who seeks advice from others, or by a number of writers who collaborate on the project.

Academic research writing—the specific focus of this text, and the sort of writing project you will probably need to write in this class—is a form of research writing. How is academic

research writing different from other kinds of writing that involve research? The goal of this textbook is to answer that question, and academic research projects come in a variety of shapes and forms. (In fact, you may have noticed that this text purposefully avoids the term “research paper” since this is only one of the many ways in which it is possible to present academic research). But in brief, academic research writing projects are a bit different from other kinds of research writing projects in three significant ways:

Thesis: Academic research projects are organized around a point or a “thesis” that members of the intended audience would not accept as “common sense.” What an audience accepts as “common sense” depends a great deal on the audience, which is one of the many reasons why what “counts” as academic research varies from field to field. But audiences want to learn something new either by being informed about something they knew nothing about before or by reading a unique interpretation on the issue or the evidence.

Evidence: Academic research projects rely almost exclusively on evidence in order to support the writer’s point. Academic research writers use evidence in order to convince their audiences that the point they are making is right. Of course, all writing uses other means of persuasion—appeals to emotion, to logic, to the credibility of the author, and so forth. But the readers of academic research writing projects are likely to be more persuaded by good evidence than by anything else.

“Evidence,” the information you use to support your point, includes readings you find in the library (journal and magazine articles, books, newspapers, and many other kinds of documents); materials from the internet (web pages, information from databases, other internet-based forums); and information you might be able to gather in other ways (interviews, field research, experiments, and so forth).

Citation: Academic research projects use a detailed citation process in order to demonstrate to their readers where the evidence that supports the writer’s point came from. Unlike most types of “non-academic” research writing, academic research writers provide their readers with a great deal of detail about where they found the evidence they are using to support their point. This process is called ***citation***, or “citing” of evidence. It can sometimes seem intimidating and confusing to writers new to the process of academic research writing, but it is really nothing more than explaining to your reader where your evidence came from.

Research Writing with Computers and the Internet

There are good reasons for writing with computers. To name just a few, computers help writers:

- **Revise more easily**, since writers don’t need to retype an entire draft;

- **Share their writing with others**, either electronically (on disk or via email) or in “hard copy” since the writer only needs to print additional copies;
- **Store and organize files**, since papers that might get lost or take up a lot of room can all be stored onto a cloud service (such as Google Drive) or a USB flash drive; and
- **Make correct and “nice looking” drafts** with the use of features like spelling and grammar checkers, and with design features that allow writers to select different fonts and layouts for appropriate printing and digital formats.

Chances are, you already know these things.

If you are *not* using computers or the internet in your academic research writing process, you need to try and learn more about the possibilities. It can be intimidating and time consuming to begin effectively using a computer, but there are few things that will be as rewarding for your academic writing career.

The Process of Research Writing

Writing as a Process: A Brief Explanation and Map

No essay, story, or book (including this one) simply “appeared” one day from the writer’s brain; rather, all writings are made after the writer, with the help of others, works through the process of writing.

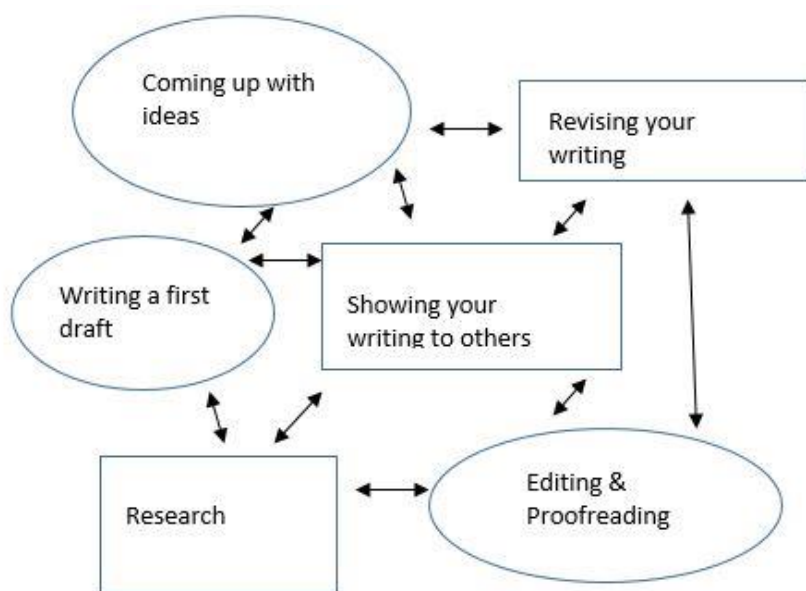
Generally speaking, the process of writing involves:

- **Coming up with an idea** (sometimes called brainstorming, invention or “pre-writing”);
- **Writing a rough draft of that idea**;
- **Showing that rough draft to others to get feedback** (peers, instructors, colleagues, etc.);
- **Revising the draft** (sometimes many times); and
- **Proofreading and editing** to correct minor mistakes and errors.

An added component in the writing process of research projects is, obviously, research. Rarely does research begin before at least some initial writing (even if it is nothing more than brainstorming or pre-writing exercises), and research is usually not completed until after the entire writing project is completed. Rather, research comes into play at all parts of the process and can have a dramatic effect on the other parts of the process. Chances are you will need to do at least some simple research to develop an idea to write about in the first place. You might do the bulk of your research as you write your rough draft, though you will almost certainly have to do more research based on the revisions that you decide to make to your project.

There are two other things to think about within this simplified version of the process of writing. **First, the process of writing always takes place for some *reason or purpose* and *within some context* that potentially change the way you do these steps.** The process that you will go through in writing for this class will be different from the process you go through in responding to an essay question on a Sociology midterm or when sending an email to a friend. This is true in part because your purposes for writing these different kinds of texts are simply different.

Second, the process of writing isn't quite as linear and straightforward as my list might suggest. Writers generally have to start by coming up with an idea, but writers often go back to their original idea and make changes in it after they write several drafts, do research, talk with others, and so on. The writing process might be more accurately represented like this:



Seem complicated? It is, or at least it can be.

So, instead of thinking of the writing process as an ordered list, you should think of it more as a “web” where different points can and do connect with each other in many different ways, and a process that changes according to the demands of each writing project. While you might write an essay where you follow the steps in the writing process in order (from coming up with an idea all the way to proofreading), writers also find themselves following the writing process out of order all the time. That’s okay. The key thing to remember about the writing process is that it *is* a process made up of many different steps, and writers are rarely successful if they “just write.”

Thinking Critically about Research

From "[Chapter 1](#)" of *The Process of Research Writing* | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- What is "Research" and Why Should I Use It?
- What's Different about Academic Research?
- Primary versus Secondary Research
- Scholarly versus Non-Scholarly Sources
- Sources that are Both Scholarly and Non-Scholarly?
- The Internet: The Researcher's Challenge
- Evaluating the Quality and Credibility of Your Research
- Complicating Factors in Evaluating the Credibility of Internet Research

What is "Research" and Why Should I Use It?

Research always begins with the goal of answering a question. In your quest to answer basic research questions, you turn to a variety of different sources for evidence: reference resources, people, evaluative and opinionated articles, and other sources. All along the way, you continually evaluate and re-evaluate the credibility of your sources.

For example, if you wanted to find out where you could buy the best computer within your budget, your question might be "what kind of computer should I buy and where should I buy it?" To answer your questions about computers, the first research tool you might use is the phone book, where you would look up "computer retailers" in the yellow pages. You might also ask friends where they got their computers and what they thought were the best (and worst) stores to go to. You would probably also talk to your friends about the kind of computer they bought: a Windows-based PC versus a Macintosh computer, or a desktop versus a laptop computer, for example. You could go to a computer store and ask the salespeople for their advice, though you would perhaps be more critical of what they tell you since they are biased. After all, salespeople are trying to sell you a computer that they sell in their stores, not necessarily the "best" computer for the amount of money you want to spend. To get the opinions of computer experts, you might do research in computer magazines or websites, looking for reviews and ratings of different models of computers in your price range.

Of course, you could skip this research process entirely. You could simply go to a store and buy the first computer in your budget based on nothing more than a "gut feeling" or based on some criteria that has little to do with the quality of the computer—the color, for example.

Who knows? By just guessing like this, you might actually end up with a computer as good as you would have ended up with after your research. After all, researchers can never

be *certain* that the evidence they find to answer their research questions is entirely correct, and the fact that there are different kinds of computers available suggests it is possible for people to look at the research and reach different conclusions about what is the “best computer.” Talk to loyal Macintosh computer owners and you will get a very different answer about “the best” kind of computer than you will from loyal Windows PC owners!

Nonetheless, the likelihood is quite high that the computer you bought after careful research is a better choice than the computer you would have bought after conducting no research at all. Most of us would agree that you have a better chance of being “right” about your choice of computer (and just about anything else) if that choice is informed by research.

Activity: Experience with Research

Working alone or collaboratively in small groups, answer the following questions:

What are some examples of some of the decisions you have made that were based on a research method similar to the one described here? What do you think would have been the result of your decision had you not done any research?

Can you think of any decisions that you have made that were not based on research? Would these decisions have turned out more favorably had you conducted some basic research?

What kinds of decisions do think are potentially best made without research?

What's Different about Academic Research?

The reasons academics and scholars conduct research are essentially the same as the reasons someone does research on the right computer to buy: to find information and answers to questions with a method that has a greater chance of being accurate than a guess or a “gut feeling.” College professors in a history department, physicians at a medical school, graduate students studying physics, college juniors in a literature class, students in an introductory research writing class—all of these people are members of the academic community, and they all use research to find answers to their questions that have a greater chance of being “right” than making guesses or betting on feelings.

Students in an introductory research writing course are “academics,” the same as college professors? Generally speaking, yes. You might not think of yourself as being a part of the same group as college professors or graduate students, but when you enter a college classroom, you are joining the academic community in the sense that you are expected to use your research to support your ideas and you are agreeing to the conventions of research within your discipline. Another way of looking at it: first-year college students and college professors more or less follow the same “rules” when it comes to making points supported by research and evidence.

A Student Profile: Daniel Marvins, New to Academic Research

Daniel Marvins is a first-year college student at a large public university in the Midwest. While he certainly wrote plenty of essays when he was in high school, Marvins thought that the kind of research writing his teacher was asking him to do for his writing class was different.

“In high school, we wrote more about stories and poems and newspaper articles we read,” Marvins said. “We didn’t do a lot of research, other than looking things up on the web.”

Marvins was ready for the challenge of tackling the thinking and research that would be expected of him in college. But he still wasn’t sure about being “an academic.” “I never thought of it that way, because I didn’t really see how the stuff I had to write for school made me anything like my teachers. But I guess I’m starting to see the connection.”

Read Marvins’s “Working Thesis Essay” in “The Working Thesis Exercise.”

Primary Research Versus Secondary Research

Before you begin to answer your questions, you’ll need to know about two types of research: primary research and secondary research. And, you’ll need to learn about the differences between them.

Primary research is usually the “raw stuff” of research—the materials that researchers gather on their own and then analyze in their writing. For example, primary research would include the following:

- The experiments done by chemists, physicists, biologists, and other scientists.
- Researcher-conducted interviews, surveys, polls, or observations.
- The particular documents or texts (novels, speeches, government documents, and so forth) studied by scholars in fields like English, history, or political science.

Secondary research is usually considered research from texts where one researcher is quoting someone else to make a point. For example, secondary research would include the following:

- An article in a scientific journal that reported on the results of someone else’s experiment.

- A magazine or newspaper account of an interview, survey, or poll done by another researcher.
- An article in a scholarly journal or a book about a particular novel or speech.

When you quote from another article in your research project, your writing becomes an example of secondary research. When other researchers quote information from your research project in *their* research project, *your* research project is considered a secondary source for them. And if a researcher decides to write about you (a biography, for example) and if that researcher examines and quotes from some of the writings you did in college—like the research project you are working on right now—then your project would probably be considered a primary source.

Obviously, the divisions between primary and secondary research are not crystal-clear. But even though these differences between primary and secondary research are somewhat abstract, the differences are good ones to keep in mind as you consider what to research and as you conduct your research. For example, if you were writing a research project on the connection between pharmaceutical advertising and the high cost of prescription drugs, it would be useful and informative to consider the differences between primary research on the subject (an article where the researcher documents statistical connections) and the secondary research (an essay where another researcher summarizes a variety of studies done by others).

Of course, the term “secondary” research has nothing to do with the quality or value of the research; it just means that to answer the questions of your research project and to support your point, you are relying in great part on the observations and opinions of others.

Most research projects completed by students in writing classes are based almost exclusively in secondary research because most students in introductory writing classes don't have the time, resources, or expertise to conduct credible primary research. However, sometimes some modest primary research is a realistic option. For example, if you were writing about the dangers of internet-based computer crime and someone on your campus was an expert in the subject and was available for an interview, your interview of her would be primary research. If you were writing about the problems of parking on your campus, you might conduct some primary research in the form of observations, surveys of the students that drive and try to park on campus, interviews of the campus officials in charge of parking, and so forth.

Activity on Primary Research

Working alone or collaboratively in small groups, answer the following questions:

What other sorts of evidence do you think you would find that would count as “primary” research? What other sorts of evidence do you think would count as “secondary” research?

Think about the kind of topics you are interested in researching and writing about. What sorts of “primary” research can you imagine examining that might be useful in your writing? What sorts of “secondary” research can you imagine examining that might be useful in your writing?

Scholarly versus Non-Scholarly Sources

Before you begin to research you should be aware of the difference between “scholarly” and “non-scholarly” or popular sources.

Scholarly or academic publications are those where academics publish their research and opinions about topics of concern in their discipline. By and large, scholarly publications are highly specialized periodicals, as many of their titles suggest: *College Composition and Communication*, *Foodservice Research International*, or the *Journal of Analytic Social Work*. Scholarly periodicals tend to be published less frequently than popular sources, perhaps monthly, quarterly, or even less often. For the most part, the readers of scholarly journals are scholars themselves interested in the specific field of the publication—in other words, the articles in these publications are written for academics (both students and teachers) interested in the field, not a “general audience.” Because of the audience, the language of academic journals is often specialized and potentially difficult to understand for a reader not familiar with the field.

Scholarly or academic sources tend to be kind of bland in appearance: other than charts, graphs, and illustrations that appear predominantly in scientific publications, most academic journals include few color photos or flashy graphics. Most academic journals are not published in order to make a profit: while they frequently include some advertising, they usually only include a few ads to offset publication costs. Also, most academic journals are associated with academic organizations or institutions that subsidize and support their publication. Unless you are a subscriber, chances are the only place you will find most of these journals in your college or university library.

Usually, the articles that appear in academic journals indicate where the writer’s evidence comes from with footnotes, end notes, or information in parentheses. Most academic articles end with a bibliography or a “Works Cited” page, which is a list of the research the writer used in his essay. This practice—generally called “citation”—is particularly important in scholarly

writing because the main audience of these articles (other scholars) is keenly interested in knowing where the writers got their information. As a member of the academic community, you too will have to follow some system of citation in the research project you do for this and other classes.

Non-scholarly or popular sources tend to be written by journalists and writers who are not necessarily experts about the subject they are writing about. While there certainly are specialized popular sources, they tend to have names most of us have seen on the magazine racks of grocery and drug stores—*GQ*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Sports Illustrated*, and so on—and even specialized popular sources tend to be written with a more general audience in mind. Writers of popular sources reach a general and broad audience by keeping the style of the writing in their articles approachable to people from a variety of different educational backgrounds—not necessarily members of the academic community.

Many popular periodicals are published weekly and almost all of them are published at least monthly. They tend to be visually appealing with lots of color photographs, graphics, and advertisements. Almost all popular sources are intended to make a profit, and some of the better known periodicals (*Time* or *Newsweek*, for example) sell millions of copies every week. Finally, popular sources rarely provide citation information about where the writer got her information.

Generally speaking, academic and non-academic books have characteristics that are similar to academic and non-academic periodicals. Academic books tend to be written by and for academics, are usually somewhat bland in appearance, tend to be published by companies that are supported by academic institutions, and tend to be only available at academic libraries or specialized bookstores. Non-academic books tend to be written by journalists or other writers trying to reach a more general audience, they are more eye-catching in appearance, they are published by large and for-profit publishing companies, and they are more readily available at public libraries and bookstores.

Scholarly versus Non-Scholarly or Popular Sources

Scholarly Sources

Usually titled according to their specialization (*College English*, *Journal of Analytic Social Work*, etc.)

Contain articles written by and for academics with language that is highly specialized for academic readers

Often published less frequently than monthly

Usually fairly bland in appearance

Generally not published “for profit” and usually supported by an academic organization or institution

Almost always available only through subscription or at an academic library

Most publish fewer than 5,000 copies of an issue

Its articles follow some sort of citation system (MLA or APA, for example) that allow its readers to know where the writer’s research comes from

Non-Scholarly or Popular Sources

Often titled in ways that have little to do with their focus (*Newsweek*, *Time*, *People*, etc.)

Contain articles written by journalists and in a language that is for a non-academic reader

Almost always published at least monthly, and often weekly

Visually appealing and attractive in appearance

Generally published “for profit,” and many well-known popular publications are very profitable; often supported by very large corporations

Almost always readily available at bookstores, grocery and convenience stores

Many publish tens of thousands of copies each issue

Very rarely contain any sort of citation information that allows readers to know where writers found their information

Sources that are Both Scholarly and Non-Scholarly?

While these differences between scholarly and non-scholarly sources might seem straightforward, many publications are somewhere in between scholarly and non-scholarly. A **peer-reviewed journal** like *College English* is clearly an academic source and a magazine like *People* is clearly a **popular periodical**. But categorizing magazines like *Ms.*, *Harper's*, or *The Atlantic* is more difficult since these publications tend to publish articles that are in many ways similar to the articles published in more academic sources.

Another difficult to categorize source is corporate or **trade journals**. Most professions and industries have highly specialized publications about that particular business. For example, *Human Resource Executive* is targeted to professionals who work in Human Resources departments, *Accounting Today* is for and about the accounting business, and *Advertising Age* focuses on the advertising industry. While most of the writers and editors of trade journals do not have scholarly backgrounds, they tend to be highly focused and knowledgeable about their business. An article about hiring trends in *Human Resource Executive* will probably have more in common with an academic source than it will with a popular source.

A third “in between” type of research resource is **newspapers**. On the one hand, most newspapers would seem to share the characteristics of non-scholarly or popular sources: they are written for a general audience by writers who are not necessarily experts, they include many photographs and graphics, and so on. However, a number of publications like *The Chronicle of Higher Education* are quite different from most newspapers because they are written for a specialized audience, like college and community college teachers and administrators. Further, newspapers tend to be used by a wide variety of readers and writers—including scholars—as a source of basic and reliable information about day-to-day events.

In research writing courses, teachers will often insist students use only or mostly scholarly sources in their research projects because, as is discussed in some detail in the next section in this chapter, scholarly sources tend to be more credible and reliable than non-scholarly sources. This is not to say that popular sources aren't credible or reliable; clearly, most of them are, and in many cases, specialized popular sources can be very useful in academic research. A research project about computer crime may very well include relevant information from a popular source like *WIRED* or a trade publication written for people who work in the computer industry.

However, scholarly sources are generally considered *more* credible and reliable than popular sources. They tend to publish articles that go into more detail about their subjects, they are written for a more knowledgeable audience, and they are written by experts.

Activity on Scholarly Sources

Working alone or collaboratively in small groups, consider the following questions:

What sorts of scholarly sources are you and your classmates already familiar with? What sorts of non-scholarly sources of evidence are you already familiar with that might be useful for your research process?

Think about the kind of topics you are interested in researching and writing about. Are you aware of any scholarly sources where you are likely to find research on your topic? What about popular or non-scholarly publications?

If you are not yet familiar with specific titles of scholarly or popular sources that might be relevant for your topic, what kind of research would you conduct to find these sources?

The Internet: The Researcher's Challenge

Along with the distinction between primary and secondary sources and the distinction between scholarly and non-scholarly publications, you now need to consider how the internet impacts your search for secondary sources. The internet started up almost 30 years ago, and elements like email and newsgroup discussions have been around for quite some time.

Widespread use of the internet really took off in the early 1990s with the development of the World Wide Web. In fact, the web has become such a powerful research resource that many beginning research writing students wonder why they should go to the library at all.

The web has become such a powerful medium in part because it has such a far reach—literally, anyone anywhere in the world who is connected to the internet can access almost any of the hundreds of millions of webpages and other documents on the web. But it also has grown so quickly because it is relatively easy to put documents on to the web.

Nowadays, the web has become dominated by corporate and “mainstream” sites that are advertised on television and in traditional magazines and newspapers, which means that it is

difficult for an individual's website to compete with the websites of *The New York Times* or amazon.com. But individuals can still publish their own websites, and individually published websites can still attract a large and international audience.

Indeed, one of the great strengths of the internet is that just about anyone can put up "professional looking" webpages that can reach a potential audience of millions. However, this strength of the web is also its weakness, at least as far as being a good place to look for research because **anyone** can publish what appears to be a seemingly professional website, regardless of his or qualifications.

This fact means the web is significantly different from more traditional sources of research. Most scholarly publications are closely scrutinized by editors and other scholars within a particular field. Further, the articles that appear in even the most non-scholarly of popular sources pass through a variety of different writers and editors before they make it to press.

The problem with many webpages is that the review process and editors that we assume to be in place with traditional print sources are simply not there. For example, it would be easy for me to fabricate a website (complete with charts, graphs, and fake statistics) that argued that students and teachers who used this textbook became more fit, richer, and better-looking. Such inaccurate claims would never pass the review process of a scholarly journal or a popular magazine—with the possible exception of the sort of tabloid we all see at the grocery store check-out that reports on Elvis sightings. But on the internet, it is just another page which, if someone finds it "believable," could be included in someone's research writing.

The screenshot shows the DHMO.org website. At the top left is the EAC logo (United States Environmental Assessment Center). In the center is the DHMO.org logo (Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division). At the top right is a banner for the DHMO.org Store with VISA, PayPal, and MasterCard logos. Below the logos, the page is divided into three columns:

- DHMO Special Reports:**
 - [Dihydrogen Monoxide FAQ](#)
 - [Enviro Impact of DHMO](#)
 - [DHMO and Cancer](#)
 - [DHMO Research](#)
 - [DHMO in the Dairy Industry](#)
 - [MSDS for DHMO](#)
 - [DHMO Conspiracy](#)
 - [Editorial: Truth about DHMO](#)
 - [Fake Email SPAM Alert](#)
 - [Linking to DHMO.org](#)
 - [What is Dihydrogen Monoxide?](#)
- WELCOME:**

Welcome to the web site for the Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division (DMRD), currently located in Newark, Delaware. The **controversy** surrounding dihydrogen monoxide has never been more widely debated, and the goal of this site is to provide an unbiased data clearinghouse and a forum for public discussion.

Explore our many **Special Reports**, including the **DHMO FAQ**, a definitive primer on the subject, plus reports on the **environment**, **cancer**, current **research**, and an insider exposé about the use of DHMO
- DHMO Related Info:**
 - [National Consumer Coalition Against DHMO](#)
 - [Environmental Protection Agency](#)
 - [NIH National Toxicology Program](#)
 - [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](#)
 - [National Cancer Institute](#)
 - [Green Party, New Zealand](#)
 - [Sandia National Laboratories](#)
 - [Sierra Club](#)
 - [Greenpeace](#)

Send Email to Your Representative

At the bottom left, there is a **Press Kit - press only** section with the following information:

Username: **press**
Password: **press**

The Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division website, <<http://www.dhmo.org>>, certainly *looks* like an official and reliable website. What seems to make it a bit suspect? What exactly is Dihydrogen Monoxide, anyway?

More seriously, many deceptive and professional-looking webpages present *very* inaccurate and misleading information and they are not intended to be jokes. Some of these pages are the work of various hate groups—racists or Holocaust deniers, for example—and some of these sites seem to be the work of con artists. But when these sites are read uncritically, they can cause serious problems for academic researchers, in addition to the general public.

Of course, not *everything* you find on the web is untrustworthy. Far from it. For one thing, the lines between what counts as an internet source and a more traditional print source are beginning to blur. There are numerous online databases available in many libraries that have complete text versions of articles from academic and popular periodicals, and the articles from these databases are every bit as reliable as the traditional print sources.

Additionally, more and more traditional print sources are creating and maintaining websites. Almost all of the most popular news magazines, newspapers, and television networks have webpages that either reproduce information available in more traditional formats or that publish articles specifically for the web. More and more scholarly publications are becoming available on the web as well, and considering the international reach and low cost of publishing on the web, it seems inevitable that more (maybe most) academic journals will eventually move from being traditional print journals to ones available only online.

Conversely, not everything you find in traditional print publications—either scholarly or non-scholarly—is always accurate and truthful. Despite the safeguards that most academic and popular publications follow to ensure they publish truthful and accurate articles, there are all sorts of examples of inaccuracies in print.

More common and perhaps more problematic small errors and misrepresentations appear in both academic and popular sources, evidence that the process of editorial review is not perfect. And what counts as true or accurate in many fields is a question of some debate and uncertainty, and this is frequently reflected in published articles of all sorts.

Here's my point: as I will discuss in the next section, the best way to ensure that your evidence is reliable, regardless of where you found that evidence, is to seek out a variety of different types of evidence and to think critically about the quality and credibility of your sources. This is particularly true with web-based research.

Activity: Your Use of Websites

Working alone or collaboratively in small groups, consider the following questions:

Think of a website that you visit on a regular basis. What makes this site a useful and credible resource for you?

Are there any websites that you have come across that you thought were not believable or credible? Why did you find this site not believable?

Evaluating the Quality and Credibility of your Research

Finding evidence that answers a question is only the first part of the research process. You also have to evaluate the quality and credibility of your research. Inevitably, as we've already seen in this chapter, you do this as you consider the origins of your research—primary versus secondary research, scholarly versus popular sources, the internet, and so forth. But evaluating the quality and credibility of your research is more subtle and complicated than just determining the source of the evidence. Consider again the example from the beginning of this chapter about deciding which computer to buy. One of the things you would have to weigh is the credibility of the information you received from your friends compared to the information you received from a salesperson at the computer store. You can probably count on your friends to be trustworthy and honest, but they might not know much about computers. Conversely, while a salesperson might know a lot about computers, you may be uncertain to what extent you can trust him to give you the best advice. The salesperson wants to sell you a computer, which means that his motivations might be consciously or unconsciously influencing the information he is providing you.

Who should you trust? We have all been in situations like this, and there is no easy way to answer that question. Chances are, you'll make your computer decision based on your interpretation of the evidence and based on what you perceive to be the reliability and credibility of your different sources. If someone else were faced with the same computer decision and the same evidence, they might make a different choice. That is why there are different kinds of computers on the market and that is why different people can do the same sort of research about "the best" computer and why they can arrive at different conclusions.

Academic research is not much different in the sense that different researchers, considering the same or similar evidence, often arrive at different conclusions. Academic research rarely provides clear answers in the sense of definitively knowing the "rights" and "wrongs" about some issue. Not all academics think that computer hacking is wrong (or right), that the solution to commercial over-fishing is strict international control, or that F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* depicts the connection between material goods and the American dream. Rather, there are debates about these issues, differences of interpretation and opinion that result from different researchers looking at the same evidence.

Furthermore, the debates about differences of opinion on how to interpret evidence are good and healthy because these discussions further our understanding of complex issues. If we all agreed that something was true, then there would be no point in conducting research and

writing about it. Indeed, if we all agreed about everything and had all of our questions answered as well as we thought possible, there would be no point to education at all!

Ultimately, there is no easy formula for evaluating the credibility and reliability of research. But there are some basic questions you should ask about your all of your evidence to ensure it is reliable and credible:

- Who wrote it?
- What do you think motivated the writer?
- Where was it published?
- When was it written?

Who wrote or said it?

- ***Is there an author named with the evidence?***

If your evidence does not name the author, it might still be reliable, especially if you have confidence about where the evidence was published. However, most credible and reliable publications tell readers who wrote the articles they contain.

On webpages and other internet-based sources, it can sometimes be tricky to find the name of the webpage's author. Many websites don't name an author, which, given the nature of the web, should send up red flags for you as a researcher regarding the credibility of the evidence. But like print publications, more credible webpages will include the name of the page's writer. Be sure to look for the writer's name throughout the particular page (including the bottom) and related pages within the website.

- ***What are the qualifications of the author?***
- ***Does he or she seem to be an expert in the field?***
- ***Has he or she written about this topic before?***
- ***Are there other experiences that seem to uniquely qualify him or her as a reliable and credible source on this topic?***

Many academic publications will give a lot of detail about their authors, including their degrees and academic training, the institution where they work (if they are a college professor or instructor), and other publications they have had in the past. Popular sources tend to include less information about their writers, though they too will often indicate in a byline (where the writer's name is listed in a magazine or newspaper article) if the writer is a reporter, contributing editor, or editor for a particular subject.

Credible web sources will also describe the qualifications of the source's author or authors. If you can find an author's name on a website but you can't find anything about their qualifications on their research subject, you should be suspicious about what that research has to say.

- ***Have you come across the writer based on some of the other research you have done?***

After you have conducted a bit of research on your topic, you might find yourself coming across the same authors writing similar articles in different publications. You might also find different publications referring to the author or her work, which would suggest that the author is indeed reliable and credible in her field. After all, if other articles and writers refer positively to a particular writer or her articles again and again, then it seems likely that the often-referred-to writer is credible.

Understanding and trusting the expertise of the author of your evidence is probably the most crucial test of credibility and reliability of that evidence.

Simply put, academics find evidence that comes from an author who is a credible expert to be much more persuasive than evidence that does not come from an expert.

For example, while my mom is a reliable source of information regarding many different topics, it would do you little good for me to interview her for an academic research project about the problems of over-fishing. Mind you, I value my mom's thoughts and wisdom, and she might have some things to say about the effects of decreased catches of fish that I find insightful. However, because my mom doesn't have any expertise about commercial fishing

and because she doesn't know anything more (or less) about it than most people, most of the readers of my research project won't be persuaded by what she has to say.

On the other hand, my mother was a hospice worker for many years, working with terminally ill patients and their families. If I were conducting research about the advantages and disadvantages of hospice care for terminally ill patients, my mom might be a very interesting and credible source.

What do you think motivated the writer?

- ***Is the writer identified with a particular organization or group that might have a specific interest in the subject of the writing?***

This can often be the source of conscious or unconscious bias. An obvious example: a writer who is identified as a member of the National Rifleman's Association, which represents a variety of Americans particularly interested in protecting the right to own guns, will certainly have a different view on gun ownership than a member of The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, an organization working to enact gun control legislation.

You need to be particularly careful with web-based sources of research when considering the writer's affiliation with different groups or organizations. There have been numerous incidents where webpage writers falsely claimed their webpages were affiliated with particular groups or causes.

- ***Does the writer identify himself or herself with an explicit political group or party?***

Considering a writer's politics is particularly important when thinking about the credibility of a website. Besides the ease with which a writer can misrepresent themselves or others, the low cost and wide reach of the web has also made it an attractive forum for hate groups, terrorists, and other "fringe" political movements. This doesn't automatically mean the information you find on reactionary or radical websites is wrong; however, writers with particularly strong and extreme politics frequently present information that is biased to the point of inaccuracy.

Of course, while it is important to consider why a writer wrote about her subject and to think about how her motivations impact how she wrote about his or her subject, having a particular bias or motivation doesn't automatically lead to a lack of credibility or reliability.

Where was it published?

- ***Was the piece of writing published in an academic or non-academic source? A book, a journal, a magazine, etc.?***

I've already discussed this a great deal in this chapter; generally speaking, academic sources are considered more credible than non-academic sources, and print-based sources are generally considered more credible than web-based sources.

But there are some more subtle tests of credibility and reliability concerning where a piece of research was published. For example, single-authored or co-authored scholarly books on a particular subject might be more regarded as more credible than a scholarly journal article because books go into much greater detail on topics than journal articles.

- ***Are you familiar with the publication?***

If you are a new researcher to a particular field of study this can be a difficult question to answer since you might not have heard of some of the more well-known and credible publications known in that field. But once you get to know the field better (which will inevitably be the case as you conduct more research on your topic), chances are you will begin to realize certain publications are seen by experts in the field as more credible than others.

When was it written?

Last, but far from least, the date of publication can dramatically affect the credibility of your research. Obviously, this is especially important for date-sensitive research topics. If you were writing a research project about the internet and the World Wide Web, chances are any research older than about 1990 or so would be of limited use since the web literally did not exist before 1990.

But other potentially less obvious topics of research have date sensitive components to them. For example, if you were doing research on cigarette smoking or drunk driving, you would have to be careful about evaluating the credibility of research from the 1970s or 1960s or earlier since cultural “norms” in the United States for both smoking and drinking have changed a great deal.

Knowing (or rather, *not* knowing) the date of publication of a piece of research is yet another thing to be worried about when evaluating the credibility of web-based sources. Many websites do not include any information about the date of publication or the date when the page was last updated. This means that you have no way of knowing when the information on that dateless page was published.

The date of publication is a key piece of information, the sort of thing that is always included in more print sources. Again, just because the date of publication or update is missing from a website does not automatically discount it as a credible source; however, it should make you suspicious.

Working alone or collaboratively in small groups, consider a variety of different types of research—articles from scholarly and non-scholarly sources, newspaper articles, books, websites, and other types of evidence.

Using the criteria discussed here, how would you rate the quality and credibility of your research?

Which of your sources seems the most reliable?

Are there any pieces of evidence that, upon closer examination, do not seem credible or reliable?

Evidence Quality and Credibility Checklist

Who wrote or said it?

- The writer's name
- Qualifications
- Expertise in the field
- Previous publications on the topic
- Unique experiences of the writer

Why did the source write or say it?

- Association with an organization or group
- The writer's stated or implied politics

Where (what source) was it published?

- Academic/scholarly source versus non-academic/popular source
- Prior knowledge of publication

When was it published or said?**And when it comes to evidence from the internet...**

It's still important to know **who** wrote it, **why** you think they wrote it, **where** you found it online, and **when** was it published.

If you **don't know** the answers to the who/why/where/when questions, you should be skeptical of the evidence.

Don't be fooled by websites that "look" real, because...

Anybody can publish information on the web, no matter what that information is. Unlike most scholarly and many non-scholarly publications, web writers don't have to have the work reviewed by editors and publishers to reach an audience.

The internet is still good place to find research. You just have to be a bit more careful with them.

Inquiry-Based Research

From [Chapter 8 of *EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers*](#) | Shane Abrams | 2018

It's possible that you've already written research projects by this point in your academic career. If your experience has been like mine was, writing these projects went one of two ways:

- a) The teacher assigns a specific topic for you to research, and sometimes even a specific thesis for you to prove.
- b) The teacher provides more freedom, allowing students to choose a topic at their own discretion or from a set of options.

In both situations, my teacher expected me to figure out what I wanted to argue, then find research to back me up. I was expected to have a fully formed stance on an issue, then use my sources to explain and support that stance. Not until graduate school did I encounter inquiry-based research, which inverts this sequence. Put simply, inquiry-based research refers to research and research writing that is motivated by questions, not by answers.

<i>Non-Inquiry-Based Research</i>	<i>Inquiry-Based Research</i>
Your research begins with an answer and seeks out evidence that confirms that answer.	Your research begins with a question, reviews all the evidence available, and then develops that answer.
<i>For example, a murder occurs and I get a bad vibe from the butler. I look for all the clues that confirm that the butler did it; assuming I find what I need, I can declare that the butler did it.</i>	<i>For example, a murder occurs. I look for as many clues that I can, then determine the most likely culprit based on that evidence.</i>
It's quite possible that the butler <i>did</i> do it, and both logical processes might lead me to the same conclusion. However, an inquiry-based investigation allows more consideration for the possibility that the butler is innocent.	

Consider the difference this can make: if research is about learning, then an inquiry-based perspective is essential. If you only seek out the ideas that agree with you, you will never learn.

Even in the event that the investigation yields the same answers, their differences are crucial. The example in the table above demonstrates confirmation bias, (You might be familiar with this phenomenon from politicized social media spheres which tailor content to the user; you may have also identified it as the force behind many axes of prejudice, racialized police

violence, and discrimination.) When we only look for answers that agree with our preexisting ideas, we are more likely to ignore other important ideas, voices, and possibilities. Most importantly, confirmation bias inhibits genuine learning, which relies on challenging, expanding, and complicating our current knowledge and worldviews.

Consequently, inquiry-based research is time-consuming and intensive: instead of only dealing with evidence that supports a certain answer or perspective, it requires the reasoner to encounter a great diversity of evidence and answers, which can be difficult to sift through. This distinction has important implications for the kind of research and research writing for which this book advocates.

a) You don't have to—shouldn't, in fact—have a thesis set in stone before starting research. In lieu of a thesis guiding your process a research question or path of inquiry will motivate your research and writing. You might have a hypothesis or a working thesis, but you must be tremendously flexible: be prepared to pivot, qualify, nuance, or entirely change your answer as you proceed.

b) In order to pursue your research question, you will need to encounter *a lot* of sources. Not all of the sources you encounter will make it into your paper, which is a new practice for some students. (When I engage in inquiry-based research, I would approximate that one in every twelve sources I encounter makes an appearance in my final draft. The other eleven may be interesting or educational but might not have a place in my discussion.) This is a time-consuming process, but it leads to more significant learning, more complex thinking, and more interesting and effective rhetoric.

“The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge.”

– Thomas Berger

Ongoing Conversation

Inspired by Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, University of California Press, 1941.

Imagine yourself arriving at a party or some other social gathering. You walk up to a circle of people chatting casually about *Star Wars*. It's clear they have been on about it for a while. Some of them you know, some of them you've heard of but never met, and some of them are total strangers—but they all seem to have very strong opinions about the film franchise. You want to jump into the conversation, so when someone posits, “Jar Jar Binks was the worst character of the prequels, and maybe even the whole canon,” you blurt out, “Yeah, Jar Jar was not good. He was bad. He was the worst character of the prequels. He might even be the worst of the whole canon.” The circle of people turns to stare at you, confused why you just parroted back what the last person said; all of you feel awkward that you derailed the discussion.

Even writing that example makes me socially anxious. Let's try option B instead: as you arrive to the group, you listen attentively. You gradually catch the flow and rhythm of the conversation, noticing its unique focus and language. After hearing a number of people speak regarding Jar Jar, you bring together their ideas along with your ideas and experiences. You ease yourself in to the conversation by saying, "I agree with Stan: Jar Jar is a poorly written character. However, he does accomplish George Lucas's goals of creating comic relief for young audiences, who were a target demographic for the prequels." A few people nod in agreement; a few people are clearly put out by this interpretation. The conversation continues, and as it grows later, you walk away from the discussion (which is still in full force without you) having made a small but meaningful contribution—a ripple, but a unique and valuable ripple.

This dynamic is much like the world of research writing. Your writing is part of an ongoing conversation: an exchange of ideas on a certain topic which began long before you and will continue after you. If you were to simply parrot back everyone's ideas to them, you would not advance the conversation and it would probably feel awkward. But by synthesizing many different sources with your unique life experiences, from your unique vantage point, you can mobilize research and research writing to develop compelling, incisive, and complex insights. You just need to get started by feeling out the conversation and finding your place.

Developing a Topic

Finding a conversation that you're excited about and genuinely interested in is the first and most important step. As you develop a topic, keep in mind that pursuing your curiosities and passions will make your research process less arduous, more relevant, and more pleasant. Such an approach will also naturally improve the quality of your writing: the interest you have for a topic will come across in the construction of your sentences and willingness to pursue multiple lines of thought about a topic. An author's boredom results in a boring paper, and an author's enthusiasm translates to enthusiastic writing.

Depending on the parameters your teacher has set, your research topic might need to (a) present a specific viewpoint, (b) focus on a specific topic, or (c) focus on a certain theme or set of ideas. It's also possible that your teacher will allow complete autonomy for one or all of your research assignments. Be sure you review any materials your instructor provides and ask clarifying questions to make sure your topic fits the guidelines of their assignment.

To generate ideas, I find it most productive to identify areas of interest, then develop questions of all sizes and types. Eventually, you will zero in on a question or combination of questions as your path of inquiry.

What makes for a good research question or path of inquiry? Of course, the answer to this question will depend on your rhetorical situation. However, there are some common characteristics of a good research question in any situation:

The question is answerable but requires research. Engaging and fruitful research questions require complex, informed answers. They are not simply yes/no or pro/con. However, they shouldn't be so detailed, personal or broad that they simply cannot be answered in the scope of your rhetorical situation. (Depending on your rhetorical situation, you might also ask if your question is arguable, rather than answerable.) Engaging and fruitful research questions require complex, informed answers. However, they shouldn't be so subjective, intricate, or expansive that they simply cannot be answered in the scope of your rhetorical situation. (Teachers also refer to very complex or subjective questions as “not researchable”— so it's likely that your research question will need to be both arguable and researchable.)

It is specific. By establishing parameters on your scope, you can be sure your research is directed and relevant. More discussion of scope and focus continues below, and you can try the exercise titled “Focus: Expanding and Contracting Scope” later in the chapter to learn more.

It matters to someone. Research questions and the rhetoric they inform are valuable only because they have stakes: even if it's a small demographic, the answers to your research question should impact someone.

It allows you to say something new or unique. As discussed earlier in this chapter, inquiry-based research should encourage you to articulate a unique standpoint by synthesizing many different voices, interpreted from your individual perspective, with your life experiences and ideas. What you say doesn't have to be groundbreaking, but it shouldn't just reiterate ideas, arguments, histories, or perspectives.

It is difficult to find a question that hits all these marks on your first try. As you proceed through research, pre-writing, drafting, and revising, you should refine and adjust your question(s). Just like any other part of writing, developing a path of inquiry is iterative: you've got to take a lot of chances and work your way toward different results. The activity titled “Focus: Expanding and Contracting Scope” in this section can help you complicate and develop your question along a variety of axes.

In order to find the best version of your research question, you should develop “working questions”—questions of all sizes and types that are pertinent to your subject. As you can see below, you can start with a handful of simple working questions that will eventually lead to a viable research question.

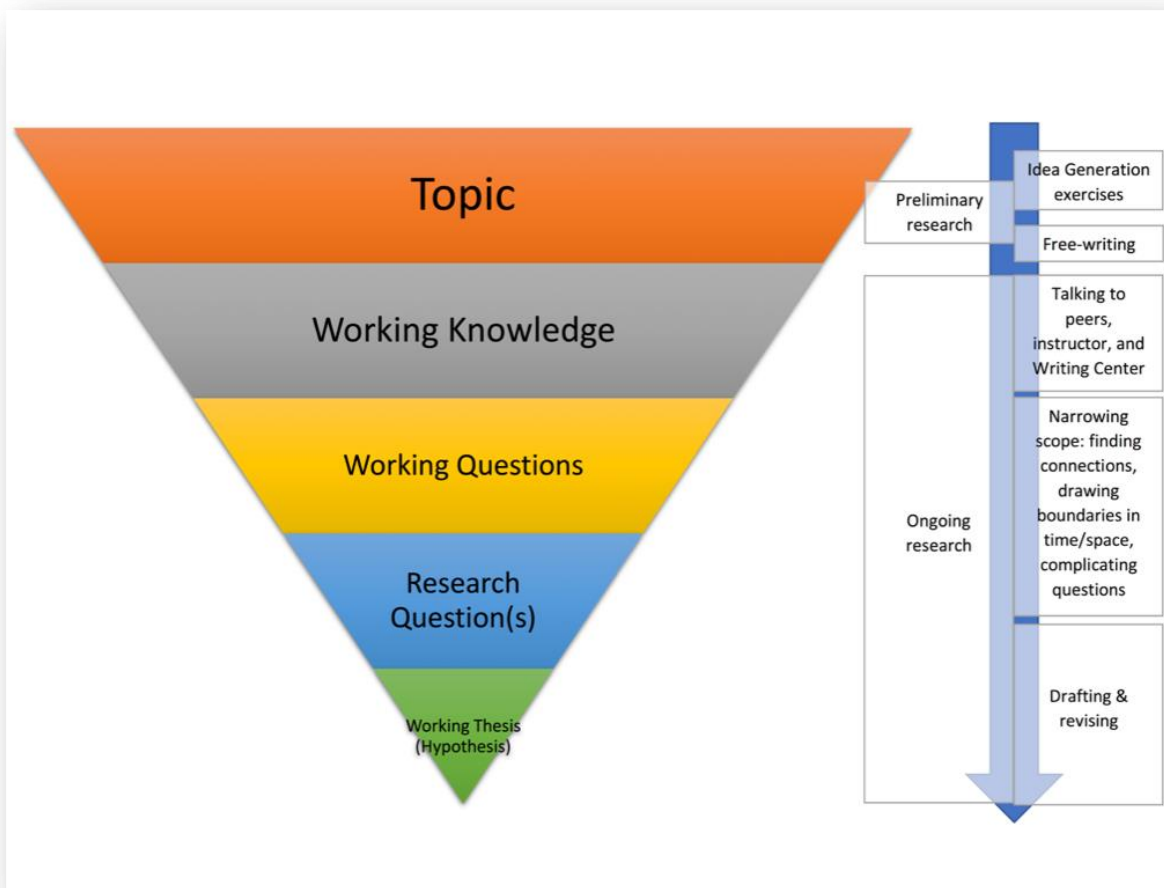
<u>Working Question</u>	<u>Working Research Question</u>	<u>Revised Research Question</u>
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Too easy to answer, low stakes, not specific enough: What do people eat in Vietnam?	Higher stakes, more specific: What does Vietnamese food reflect about Vietnamese culture?	More complex answers, higher stakes, very specific: How does Vietnamese cuisine reflect a history of colonialism?
Too straightforward, not specific enough: Are people in the United States more obese than they used to be?	More specific: Have obesity rates increased in the United States over the last 100 years?	More complex answers, higher stakes, very specific: Is there a correlation between obesity rates and economic instability in the United States over the last 100 years?
Not specific enough, difficult to answer in- depth: What is the role of religion in the Middle East?	More specific, easier to answer: How has religion influenced politics in the Middle East in the last 50 years?	Very specific, higher stakes, more complex answers: How has religion's influence on government impacted the day-to- day lives of Qatari citizens?

As you hone your path of inquiry, you may need to zoom in or out in terms of scope: depending on your rhetorical situation, you will need different degrees of focus. Just like narration, research writing benefits from a careful consideration of scope. Often, a narrower scope is easier to work with than a broader scope—you will be able to write more and write better if your question asks for more complex thinking.

It's important to be flexible throughout your research project.

Be prepared to pivot topics, adjust your research question, change your opinions, and confront unanticipated challenges.



Consider the diagram above. As you build a working knowledge of your topic (get the feel for the conversation that began before you arrived at the party), you might complicate or narrow your working questions. Gradually, try to articulate a research question (or combination of questions). Remember to be flexible as you research though: you might need to pivot, adjust, refocus, or replace your research question as you learn more. Consider this imaginary case study as an example of this process.

Ahmed began his project by identifying the following areas of interest: racism in the U.S.; technology in medicine and health care; and independent filmmaking. After doing some freewriting and preliminary research on each, he decided he wanted to learn more about racially motivated police violence. He developed working questions:

- Are police officers likely to make judgments about citizens based on their race?
- Have police forces instituted policies to avoid racism?
- Who is most vulnerable to police violence?
- Why does it seem like police officers target people of color?
- Who is responsible for overseeing the police?

He realized that he needed to narrow his focus to develop a more viable path of inquiry, eventually ending up with the research question,

- Over the last thirty years, what populations are most likely to experience police violence in the U.S.?

However, after completing more research, Ahmed discovered that his answers came pretty readily: young Black men are significantly more vulnerable to be victims of police violence. He realized that he's not really saying anything new, so he had to tweak his path of inquiry.

Ahmed did some more freewriting and dug around to find a source that disagreed with him or added a new layer to his answers. He discovered eventually that there are a handful of police organizations that have made genuine efforts to confront racism in their practices. Despite the widespread and normalized violence enacted against people of color, these groups were working against racial violence. He reoriented his research question to be,

- Have antiracist police trainings and strategies been effective in reducing individual or institutional racism over the last thirty years?

Writing Strong Research Questions

From [*Choosing & Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research*](#) by Teaching & Learning, Ohio State University Libraries

Since good research starts with good questions, we think it is important to devote an entire section of this chapter to this aspect of the research writing process.

It covers

- The Purpose of Research Questions
- Narrowing a Topic
- Background Reading
- Regular vs. Research Questions
- Influence of a Research Question
- Developing Your Research Question

The Purpose of Research Questions

Both professional researchers and successful student researchers develop research questions. That's because research questions are more than handy tools; they are essential to the research process.

By defining exactly what the researcher is trying to find out, these questions influence most of the rest of the steps taken to conduct the research. That's true even if the research is not for academic purposes but for other areas of our lives.

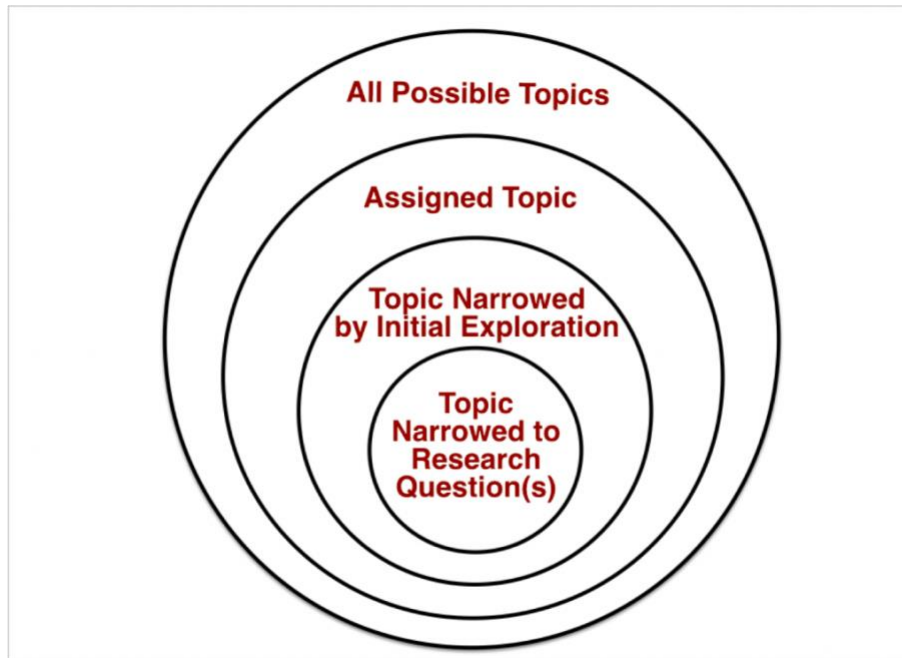
For instance, if you're seeking information about a health problem in order to learn whether you have anything to worry about, research questions will make it possible for you to more effectively decide whether to seek medical help—and how quickly.

Or, if you're researching a potential employer, having developed and used research questions will mean you're able to more confidently decide whether to apply for an internship or job there.

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

Narrowing a Topic

For many students, having to start with a research question is the biggest difference between how they did research in high school and how they are required to carry out their college research projects. It's a process of working from the outside in: you start with the world of all possible topics (or your assigned topic) and narrow down until you've focused your interest enough to be able to tell precisely what you want to find out, instead of only what you want to "write about."



Visualize narrowing a topic as starting with all possible topics and choosing narrower and narrower subsets until you have a specific enough topic to form a research question.

All Possible Topics – You'll need to narrow your topic in order to do research effectively. Without specific areas of focus, it will be hard to even know where to begin.

Assigned Topics – Ideas about a narrower topic can come from anywhere. Often, a narrower topic boils down to deciding what's interesting to you. One way to get ideas is to read background information in a source like Wikipedia.

Topic Narrowed by Initial Exploration – It's wise to do some more reading about that narrower topic to a) learn more about it and b) learn specialized terms used by professionals and scholars who study it.

Topic Narrowed to Research Question(s) – A research question defines exactly what you are trying to find out. It will influence most of the steps you take to conduct the research.

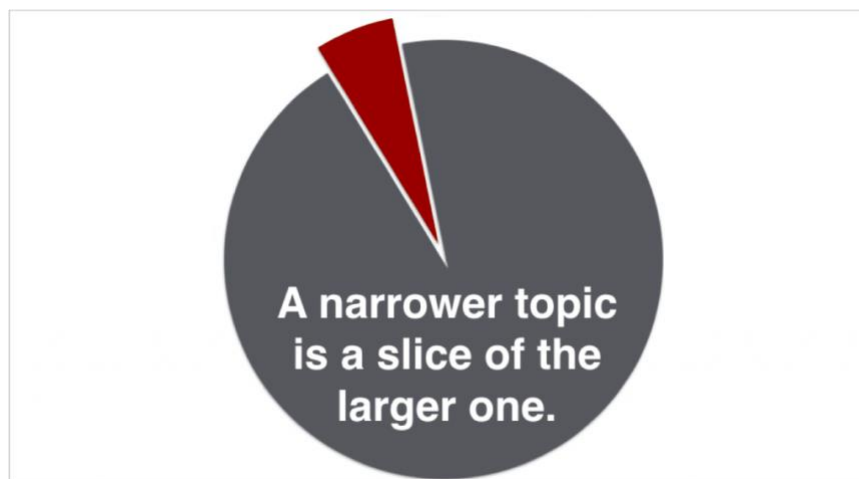
Activity: Which Topic is Narrower?

[Open activity in a web browser.](#)

Why Narrow a Topic?

Once you have a need for research—say, an assignment—you may need to prowl around a bit online to explore the topic and figure out what you actually want to find out and write about.

For instance, maybe your assignment is to develop a poster about “spring” for an introductory horticulture course. The instructor expects you to narrow that topic to something you are interested in and that is related to your class.



Another way to view a narrowed topic is as a sliver of the whole topic.

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

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

Or, instead, if it is spring at the time you could start by just looking around, admire the blooming trees on campus, and decide you'd like your poster to be about bud development on your favorites, the crabapple trees.

Activity:

Anna Narrows Her Topic and Works on a Research Question

The Situation: Anna, an undergraduate, has been assigned a research paper on Antarctica. Her professor expects students to (1) narrow the topic on something more specific about Antarctica because they won't have time to cover that whole topic. Then they are to (2) come up with a research question that their paper will answer.

The professor explained that the research question should be something they are interested in answering and that it must be more complicated than what they could answer with a quick Google search. He also said that research questions often start with either the word "how" or "why."

What you should do:

1. Read what Anna is thinking below as she tries to do the assignment.
2. After the reading, answer the questions at the end of the monologue in your own mind.
3. Check your answers with ours at the end of Anna’s interior monologue.
4. Keep this demonstration in mind the next time you are in Anna’s spot, and you can mimic her actions and thinking about your own topic.

Anna’s Interior Monologue

Okay, I am going to have to write something—a research paper—about Antarctica. I don’t know anything about that place—I think it’s a continent. I can’t think of a single thing I’ve ever wanted to know about Antarctica. How will I come up with a research question about that place? Calls for Wikipedia, I guess.

At <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antarctica>. Just skimming. Pretty boring stuff. Oh, look—Antarctica’s a desert! I guess “desert” doesn’t have to do with heat. That’s interesting. What else could it have to do with? Maybe lack of precipitation? But there’s lots of snow and ice there. Have to think about that—what makes a desert a desert.



It says one to five thousand people live there in research stations. Year round. Definitely the last thing I’d ever do. “...there is no evidence that it was seen by humans until the 19th century.” I never thought about whether anybody lived in Antarctica first, before the scientists and stuff.

Lots of names—explorer, explorer... boring. It says Amundson reached the South pole first. Who’s Amundson? But wait. It says, “One month later, the doomed Scott Expedition reached the pole.” Doomed? Doomed is always interesting. Where’s more about the Scott Expedition? I’m going to use that Control-F technique and type in Scott to see if I can find more about him on this page. Nothing beyond that one sentence shows up. Why would they have just that one sentence? I’ll have to click on the Scott Expedition link.



But it gives me a page called Terra Nova Expedition. What does that have to do with Scott? And just who was Scott? And why was his expedition doomed? There he is in a photo before

going to Antarctica. Guess he was English. Other photos show him and his team in the snow. Oh, the expedition was named Terra Nova after the ship they sailed this time—in 1911. Scott had been there earlier on another ship.

Lots of stuff about preparing for the trip. Then stuff about expedition journeys once they were in Antarctica. Not very exciting—nothing about being doomed. I don't want to write about this stuff.

Wait. The last paragraph of the first section says "For many years after his death, Scott's status as tragic hero was unchallenged," but then it says that in the 20th century people looked closer at the expedition's management and at whether Scott and some of his team could be personally blamed for the catastrophe. That "remains controversial," it says. Catastrophe? Personally blamed? Hmm. Back to skimming. It all seems horrible to me. They actually *planned* to kill their ponies for meat, so when they actually did it, it was no surprise. Everything was extremely difficult. And then when they arrived at the South Pole, they found that the explorer Amundsen had beaten them. Must have been a big disappointment.

The homeward march was even worse. The weather got worse. The dog sleds that were supposed to meet them periodically with supplies didn't show up. Or maybe the Scott group was lost and didn't go to the right meeting places. Maybe that's what that earlier statement meant about whether the decisions that were made were good ones. Scott's diary said the crystallized snow made it seem like they were pushing and pulling the sledges through *dry sand*.

It says that before things turned really bad (*really* bad? You've already had to eat your *horses!*), Scott allowed his men to put 30 pounds of rocks with fossils on the sledges they were pushing and dragging. Now was that sensible? The men had to push or pull those sledges themselves. What if it was those rocks that actually doomed those men?



But here it says that those rocks are the proof of continental drift. So how did they know those rocks were so important? Was that knowledge worth their lives? Could they have known?

Wow—there is drama on this page! Scott's diary is quoted about their troubles on the expedition—the relentless cold, frostbite, and the deaths of their dogs. One entry tells of a guy on Scott's team "now with hands as well as feet pretty well useless" voluntarily leaving the tent and walking to his death. The diary says that the team member's last words were "I am just going outside and may be some time." Ha!

They all seem lost and desperate but still have those sledges. Why would you keep pulling and pushing those sledges containing an extra 30 pounds of rock when you are so desperate and every step is life or death? Then there's Scott's last diary entry, on March 29, 1912. "... It seems a pity but I do not think I can write more." Well.



That diary apparently gave lots of locations of where he thought they were but maybe they were lost. It says they ended up only 11 miles from one of their supply stations. I wonder if anybody knows how close they were to where Scott *thought* they were.



I'd love to see that diary. Wouldn't that be cool? Online? I'll Google it.

Yes! At the British museum. Look at that! I can see Scott's last entry IN HIS OWN HANDWRITING!

Actually, if I decide to write about something that requires reading the diary, it would be easier to not have to decipher his handwriting. Wonder whether there is a typed version of it online somewhere?

Maybe I should pay attention to the early paragraph on the Terra Nova Expedition page in Wikipedia—about it being controversial whether Scott and his team made bad decisions so that they brought most of their troubles on themselves. Can I narrow my topic to just the controversy over whether bad decisions of Scott and his crew doomed them? Maybe it's too big a topic if I consider the decisions of all team members. Maybe I should just consider Scott's decisions.

So what research question could come from that? Maybe: how did Scott's decisions contribute to his team's deaths in Antarctica? But am I talking about his decisions before or after they left for Antarctica? Or the whole time they were a team? Probably too many decisions involved. More focused: How did Scott's decisions after reaching the South Pole help or hurt the chances of his team getting back safely? That's not bad—maybe. If people have written about that.

There are several of his decisions discussed on the Wikipedia page, and I know there are sources at the bottom of that page.

Let me think—what else did I see that was interesting or puzzling about all this? I remember being surprised that Antarctica is a desert. So maybe I could make Antarctica as a desert my topic. My research question could be something like: Why is Antarctica considered a desert? But there has to be a definition of deserts somewhere online, so that doesn't sound complicated enough. Once you know the definition of desert, you'd know the answer to the question. Professor Sanders says research questions are more complicated than regular questions.



What's a topic I could care about? A question I really wonder about? Maybe those rocks with the fossils in them. It's just so hard to imagine desperate explorers continuing to push those sledges with an extra 30 pounds of rocks on them. Did they somehow know how important they would be? Or were they just curious about them? Why didn't they ditch them? Or maybe they just didn't realize how close to death they were. Maybe I could narrow my Antarctica topic to those rocks.



Maybe my topic could be something like: The rocks that Scott and his crew found in Antarctica that prove continental drift. Maybe my research question could be: How did Scott's explorers choose the rocks they kept?

Well, now all I have is questions about my questions. Like, is my professor going to think the question about the rocks is still about Antarctica? Or is it all about continental drift or geology or even the psychology of desperate people? And what has been written about the finding of those rocks? Will I be able to find enough sources? I'm also wondering whether my question about Scott's decisions is too big—do I have enough time for it?

I think my professor is the only one who can tell me whether my question about the rocks has enough to do with Antarctica. Since he's the one who will be grading my paper. But a librarian can help me figure out the other things.

So Dr. Sanders and a librarian are next.



Questions

1. Was Anna's choice to start with Wikipedia a good choice? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever used that Control-F technique?
3. At what points does Anna think about where to look for information?
4. At the end of this session, Anna hasn't yet settled on a research question. So what did she accomplish? What good was all this searching and thinking?

The answers are below:

Our Answers

1. **Was Anna's choice to start with Wikipedia a good choice? Why or why not?** Wikipedia is a great place to start a research project. Just make sure you move on from there, because it's a not a good place to end up with your project. One place to move on to is the sources at the bottom of most Wikipedia pages.
2. **Have you ever used that Control-F technique?** If you haven't used the Control-F technique, we hope you will. It can save you a lot of time and effort reading online material.
3. **At what points does Anna think about where to look for information?** When she began; when she wanted to know more about the Scott expedition; when she wonders whether she could read Scott's diary online; when she thinks about what people could answer her questions.
4. **At the end of this session, Anna hasn't yet settled on a research question. So what did she accomplish? What good was all this reading and thinking?** There are probably many answers to this question. Ours includes that Anna learned more about Antarctica, the subject of her research project. She focused her thinking (even if she doesn't end up using the possible research questions she's considering) and practiced critical thinking skills, such as when she thought about what she could be interested in, when she worked to make her potential research questions more specific, and when she figured out what questions still needed answering at the end. She also practiced her skills at making meaning from what she read, investigating a story that she didn't expect to be there and didn't know had the potential of being one that she is interested in. She also now knows what questions she needs answered and whom to ask. These thinking skills are what college is all about. Anna is way beyond where she was when she started.

Background Reading

Get a good look at your topic through background reading.

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

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

Most sources other than journal articles are good sources for this initial reading, including the *New York Times* or other mainline American news outlets, Wikipedia, encyclopedias for the discipline your topic is in (horticulture for the crabapple bud development topic, for instance), dictionaries for the discipline, and manuals, handbooks, blogs, and web pages that could be relevant.

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

It's worth remembering that reading, scanning, looking at, and listening to information resources is very useful during any step of the process to develop research questions. Doing so can jog our memories, give us details that will help us focus, and help us connect disparate information—all of which will help us come up with research questions that we find interesting.

Regular vs. Research Questions

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

See how they're different by looking over the examples of both kinds below and answering questions about them in the next activity.

EXAMPLES: Regular vs. Research Questions

Regular Question: What time is my movie showing at Lennox on Friday?

Research Question: How do "sleeper" films end up having outstanding attendance figures?

Regular Question: What can I do about my insomnia?

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

Regular Question: How many children in the U.S. have allergies?

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

Regular Question: What year was metformin approved by the U.S. Food and Drug administration?

Research Question: Why are nanomedicines, such as doxorubicin, worth developing?

Regular Question: Could citizens register to vote at branches of the Columbus Public Library in 2016?

Research Question: How do public libraries in the United States support democracy?

Regular Question: What is the Whorfian Hypothesis?

Research Question: Why have linguists cared about the Whorfian hypothesis?

Regular Question: Where is the Apple, Inc. home office?

Research Question: Why are Apple's marketing efforts so successful?

Regular Question: What is Mers?

Research Question: How could decision making about whether to declare a pandemic be improved?

Regular Question: Does MLA style recommend the use of generic male pronouns intended to refer to both males and females?

Research Question: How do age, gender, IQ, and socioeconomic status affect whether students interpret generic male pronouns as referring to both males and females?

ACTIVITY: Which Kind of Question?

In the text, *[Choosing & Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research](#)*, there is a quick quiz to check your understanding of regular and research questions.

You can complete the quiz online to check your answers: [open activity in a web browser.](#)

Influence of a Research Question

Whether you're developing research questions for your personal life, your work for an employer, or for academic purposes, the process always forces you to figure out exactly:

- What you're interested in finding out.
- What it's feasible for you to find out (given your time, money, and access to information sources).
- How you can find it out, including what research methods will be necessary and what information sources will be relevant.
- What kind of claims you'll be able to make or conclusions you'll be able to draw about what you found out.

For academic purposes, you may have to develop research questions to carry out both large and small assignments. A smaller assignment may be to do research for a class discussion or to, say, write a blog post for a class; larger assignments may have you conduct research and then report it in a lab report, poster, term paper, or article.

For large projects, the research question (or questions) you develop will define or at least heavily influence:

Your **topic**, in that research questions effectively narrow the topic you've first chosen or been assigned by your instructor.

What, if any, **hypotheses** you test.

Which **information sources** are relevant to your project.

Which **research methods** are appropriate.

What claims you can make or **conclusions** you can come to as a result of your research, including what **thesis statement** you should write for a term paper or what **results section** you should write about the data you collected in your own science or social science study.



Your research question drives your hypothesis, research methods, sources, and your claims or conclusions.

Influence on Thesis

Within an essay, poster, or term paper, the thesis is the researcher's answer to the research question(s). So as you develop research questions, you are effectively specifying what any thesis in your project will be about. While perhaps many research questions could have come from your original topic, your question states exactly which one(s) *your* thesis will be answering.

For example, a topic that starts out as "desert symbiosis" could eventually lead to a research question that is "how does the diversity of bacteria in the gut of the Sonoran Desert termite contribute to the termite's survival?" In turn, the researcher's thesis will answer that particular research question instead of the numerous other questions that could have come from the desert symbiosis topic.

Developing research questions is all part of a process that leads to greater and greater specificity for your project.

Tip: Don't Make These Mistakes.

Sometimes students inexperienced at working with research questions confuse them with the search statements they will type into the search box of a search engine or database when looking for sources for their project. Or, they confuse research questions with the thesis statement they will write when they report their research. The next activity will help you sort things out.

Activity: From Topic to Thesis Statement

In this activity, you will match the appropriate examples to the correct term. You can [open activity in a web browser](#) to complete.

Influence on Hypothesis

If you're doing a study that predicts how variables are related, you'll have to write at least one hypothesis. The research questions you write will contain the variables that will later appear in your hypothesis(es).

Influence on Resources

You can't tell whether an information source is relevant to your research until you know exactly what you're trying to find out. Since it's the research questions that define that, it's they that divide all information sources into two groups: those that are relevant to your research and those that are not—all based on whether each source can help you find out what you want to find out and/or report the answer.

Influence on Research Methods

Your research question(s) will help you figure out what research methods you should use because the questions reflect what your research is intended to do. For instance, if your research question relates to describing a group, survey methods may work well. But they can't answer cause-and-effect questions.

Influence on Claims or Conclusions

The research questions you write will reflect whether your research is intended to describe a group or situation, to explain or predict outcomes, or to demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship(s) among variables. It's those intentions and how well you carry out the study, including whether you used methods appropriate to the intentions, that will determine what claims or conclusions you can make as a result of your research.

Activity: Quick Check

Check to see to if you are on track to developing your research question. [Open activity in a web browser.](#)

Developing Your Research Question

Because of all their influence, you might worry that research questions are very difficult to develop. Sometimes it can seem that way. But we'll help you get the hang of it and, luckily, none of us has to come up with perfect ones right off. It's more like doing a rough draft and then improving it. That's why we talk about *developing* research questions instead of just writing them.

Steps for Developing a Research Question

The steps for developing a research question, listed below, can help you organize your thoughts.

- Step 1:** Pick a topic (or consider the one assigned to you).
- Step 2:** Write a narrower/smaller topic that is related to the first.
- Step 3:** List some potential questions that could logically be asked in relation to the narrow topic.
- Step 4:** Pick the question that you are most interested in.
- Step 5:** Change that question you're interested in so that it is more focused.

ACTIVITY: Video on Developing Research Questions

As you view this short video on how to develop research questions, think about the steps. Which step do you think is easiest? Which do you think is hardest?

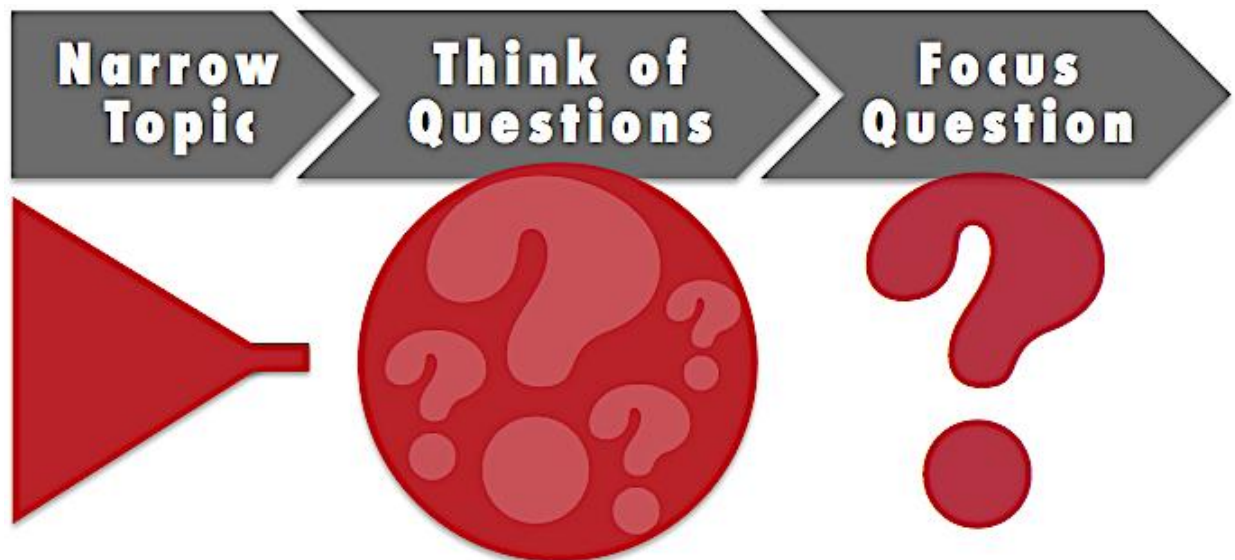
[View Movie](#) | [View Transcript of Video](#)

Practice

Once you know the steps and their order, only three skills are involved in developing a research question:

- Imagining narrower topics about a larger one,
- Thinking of questions that stem from a narrow topic, and
- Focusing questions to eliminate their vagueness.

Every time you use these skills, it's important to evaluate what you have produced—that's just part of the process of turning rough drafts into more finished products.



Three steps for developing a research question

Activity: Developing a Research Question

In this activity, match each textbox to match a step in developing a research question.

[Open activity in a web browser.](#)

Maybe you have a topic in mind but aren't sure how to form a research question around it. The trick is to think of a question related to your topic, but not answerable with a quick search. Also, try to be specific so that your research question can be fully answered in the final product for your research assignment.

Activity: Thinking of Questions

For each of the narrow topics below, think of a research question that is logically related to that topic. (Remember that good research questions often, but not always, start with "Why" or "How" because questions that begin that way usually require more analysis.)

Topics:

- U.S. investors' attitudes about sustainability
- College students' use of Snapchat
- The character Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Nature-inspired nanotechnologies
- Marital therapy

After you think of each research question, evaluate it by asking whether it is:

- Logically related to the topic
- In question form
- Not answerable with a quick Google search
- Specific, not vague

Sometimes the first draft of a research question is still too broad, which can make your search for sources more challenging. Refining your question to remove vagueness or to target a specific aspect of the topic can help.

Activity: Focusing Questions

The first draft research questions below are not focused enough. Read them and identify at least one area of vagueness in each. Check your vagueness with what we identified. It's great if you found more than we did because that can lead to research questions of greater specificity. See below for our answers.

First Drafts of Research Questions:

- Why have most electric car company start-ups failed?
- How do crabapple trees develop buds?
- How has NASA helped America?
- Why do many first-time elections soon after a country overthrows a dictator result in very conservative elected leaders?
- How is music composed and performed mostly by African-Americans connected to African-American history?

Answers to Activity: Focusing Questions

Some answers to the "Focusing Questions" Activity above are:

Question 1: Why have most electric car company start-ups failed?

Vagueness: Which companies are we talking about? Worldwide or in a particular country?

Question 2: How do crabapple trees develop buds?

Vagueness: There are several kinds of crabapples. Should we talk only about one kind? Does it matter where the crabapple tree lives?

Question 3: How has NASA helped America?

Vagueness: NASA has had many projects. Should we should focus on one project they completed? Or projects during a particular time period?

Question 4: Why do many first-time elections soon after a country overthrows a dictator result in very conservative elected leaders?

Vagueness: What time period are we talking about? Many dictators have been overthrown and many countries have been involved. Perhaps we should focus on one country or one dictator or one time period.

Question 5: How is music composed and performed mostly by African-Americans connected to African-American history?

Vagueness: What kinds of music? Any particular performers and composers? When?

Other Resources to Help You Develop Strong Research Questions

[Developing a Research Question](#) (video) from the Steely Library at Northern Kentucky University

[How to Write a Research Question](#) (handout) from The Writing Center at George Mason University.

The Working Thesis

From [Chapter 5 of *The Process of Research Writing*](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- Working with Assigned Topics
- Coming Up with Your Own Idea
- Brainstorming for Ideas
- Brainstorming with Computers
- Moving from Ideas to Topics with the Help of the Library and the World Wide Web
- Writing Your Working Thesis
- Assignment: Writing the Working Thesis
 - A Sample Assignment
 - Questions to Consider with a First Draft
 - Review and Revision
 - A Student Example: "Preventing Drunk Driving by Enforcement" by Daniel Marvins

This section is about finding something to write about in the first place. As I suggested earlier in the introduction and in the section, "Thinking Critically About Research," the process of finding something to write about is complicated. In many ways, you need to think critically about the idea of research, you need to go to the library or the internet and conduct research, and you need to formulate a question or thesis to research all at the same time.

Sometimes, the subject of your research is called a "research question" or "problem statement." I've decided to call this process "the working thesis" exercise to emphasize the idea that embarking on a research writing project involves making "a point" that is also a continually revised "work" in progress. A working thesis is tentative in that it will inevitably change as you go through the process of writing and researching. But if you're more comfortable thinking of the starting point of your research project as being about asking the right questions or finding the right problem, that's okay too.

Working with Assigned Topics

Many times, starting an academic writing assignment is easy: you write about the topic as assigned by the instructor. Of course, it is never a good idea to simply repeat what the instructor says about a particular topic. But in many college classes, the topic of your writing projects will be determined by the subject matter of the class and the directions of the instructor. If you are required to write a research project for your political science class that focuses on the effects of nationalism, chances are an essay on the relaxation benefits of trout fishing would not be welcomed.

So, how do you write about topics assigned by the instructor? The answer to this question depends on the specific assignment and the class, but here are a few questions you should ask yourself and your instructor as you begin to write:

What is the purpose and who is the audience for the essay you are being asked to write? In other words, what do you understand to be the instructor's and your goals in writing? Is the instructor's assignment designed to test your understanding and comprehension of class lectures, discussions, and readings? Is the instructor asking you to reflect and argue about some aspect of the class activities? Is the intended audience for the essay only the instructor, or is the assignment more broadly directed to other students or to a "general reader?"

What do you think about the topic? What's your opinion about the topic assigned by the instructor? If it is a topic that asks you to pick a particular "side," what side are you on? And along these lines: to what extent would it be appropriate for you to incorporate your own feelings and opinions about the topic into your writing?

How much "room" is there within the assigned topic for more specialized focuses? Most assigned topics which at first appear limiting actually allow for a great deal of flexibility. For example, you might think that an assigned topic about the "fuel economy and SUVs" would have little room for a variety of approaches. But the many books and articles about fuel efficient vehicles suggest the topic is actually much larger than it might at first appear.

Does the assignment ask students to do additional research, or does it ask students to focus on the readings assigned in class? Assignments that ask students to do additional library and internet research are potentially much broader than assignments that ask students to focus on class readings.

Coming Up with Your Own Idea

At other times, instructors allow students to pick a topic for their research-based writing projects. However, rarely do instructors allow their students to write research-based essays on **anything** for a lot of good reasons. For example, your composition and rhetoric course might be structured around a particular theme that you are exploring with your other reading assignments, your discussions, and your writing. Other ideas and topics don't really lend themselves to academic research writing. You probably have a special person in your life worth writing about (a parent, a grandparent, a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc.), but it is usually difficult to write a research-based essay on such a person. Some potential topics are too divisive or complex to write about in a relatively short academic research-based essay, or some are topics that have become so overly-discussed that they have become clichés.

Besides the general theme of the course and other potential limitations to ideas for research, you also need to carefully consider your *own* interests in the ideas you are thinking about researching.

If you are allowed to choose your own research project topic, **be sure to choose carefully, especially if it is a topic you will be working with throughout the term.** Don't pick a topic simply because it is the first idea that comes to mind or because you imagine it will be "easy" to research. Focus instead on an idea that meets the goals of the assignment, is researchable, and, most importantly, is a topic that you are interested in learning more about.

Taking the time to develop a good research topic **at the beginning** of the research writing process is critical. Planning ahead can be difficult and time-consuming, and it can be tempting to seize on the first idea that seems "easy." But all too often, these "easy" first ideas end up being time-consuming and difficult projects. In other words, the time you spend turning your research idea into a topic and then a working thesis will pay off when it comes time to actually write the research project assignment.

Activity: Bad Research Topics

Maybe not *bad* topics, but what are some ideas that would NOT make good research projects for this class? Working in small groups, try to come up with a list of items that you all agree would be difficult (if not impossible) to write a research project about for this class.

Are there items that you can add to your list of topics that would NOT make good research projects, ones that are “researchable” but that seem too cliched or controversial to do effectively in one semester?

Brainstorming for Ideas

Whether you are assigned a particular topic or are allowed to choose your own topic within certain guidelines, the next step is to explore the ideas that you might write about in more detail. This process is called “brainstorming,” though some instructors and textbooks might refer to similar techniques as “invention” or “pre-writing.” Regardless of what it’s called, the goal is the same: to lay the foundation for focusing in on a particular topic and the working thesis of a research-writing project.

I recommend you keep three general concepts in mind when trying any approach to brainstorming with your writing:

Not all of these approaches to brainstorming will work equally well for everyone or work equally well for all topics. Your results will vary and that’s okay. If one of these techniques doesn’t work for you, try another and see how that goes.

When trying any of these techniques, you can’t censor yourself. Allow yourself the freedom to brainstorm about some things that you think are bad or even silly ideas. Getting out the “bad” or “silly” ideas has a way of allowing the good ideas to come through. Besides, you might be surprised about how some topics that initially seem bad or silly turn out to actually be good with a little brainstorming.

Even if you know what topic you want to write about, brainstorm. Even if you know you want to write about a particular topic, you should try to consider some other topics in brainstorming because you never know what other things you could have written about if you don’t consider the possibilities. Besides, you still should do some brainstorming to shape your idea into a topic and then focus it into a working thesis.

Freewriting

One of the most common and effective brainstorming techniques for writing classes, freewriting, is also easy to master. All you do is write about anything that comes into your head without stopping for a short time—five minutes or so. The key part of this activity though is **you cannot stop for any reason!** Even if you don’t know what to write about, write “I don’t

know what to write about” until something else comes to mind. And don’t worry—something else usually does come to mind.

Looping or Targeted Freewriting

Looping is similar to freewriting in that you write without stopping, but the difference is you are trying to be more focused in your writing. You can use a more specific topic to “loop” back to if you would like, or, if you do the more open-ended freewriting first, you can do a more targeted freewrite about one of the things you found to be a potentially workable idea. For example, you might freewrite with something general and abstract in mind, perhaps the question “what would make a good idea for a research project?” For a more targeted freewriting exercise, you would consider a more specific questions, such as “How could I explore and write about the research idea I have on computer crime?”

Group Idea Bouncing

One of the best ways we all get different ideas is to talk with others. The same is true for finding a topic for research: sometimes, “bouncing” ideas off of each other in small groups is a great place to start, and it can be a lot of fun.

Here’s one way to do it: name someone in a small group as the recorder. Each person in turn should give an idea for a potential topic, and the recorder should write it down. Every person should take a turn quickly “bouncing” an idea out for the others—no “I don’t know” or “come back to me!” Remember: no ideas are bad or silly or stupid at this point, so do not censor yourself or your group members.

Clustering

Clustering is a visual technique that can often help people see several different angles on their ideas. It can be an especially effective way to explore the details of a topic idea you develop with freewriting or looping. On a blank sheet of paper, write a one- or two-word description of your idea in the middle and circle it. Around that circle, write down one- or two-word descriptions of different aspects or characteristics of your main idea. Draw circles around those terms and then connect them to the main idea. Keep building outward, making “clusters” of the main idea as you go. Eventually, you should get a grouping of clusters that looks something like the illustration here.

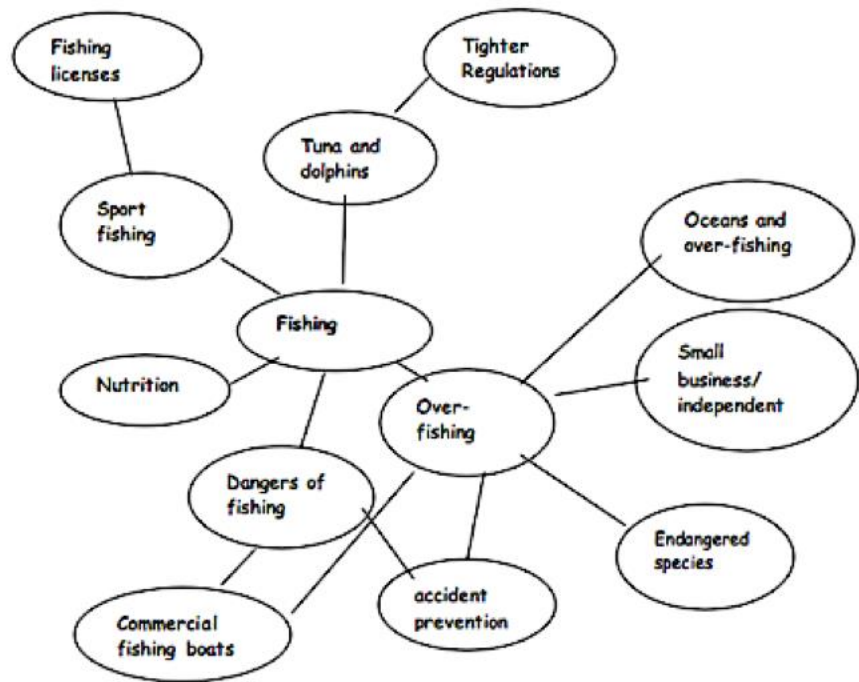


Figure 1: Clustering Example on the topic of fishing.

Journalist Questions

One of the key elements of journalistic style is that journalists answer the basic questions of “What?” “Who?” “Where?” “When?” “How?” and “Why?” These are all good questions to consider in brainstorming for your idea, though clearly, these questions are not always equally applicable to all ideas. Here are some examples of the sort of journalistic questions you might want to ask yourself about your idea:

- What is my idea? What are the key terms of my idea?
- Who are the people involved in my idea? Who is performing the action of my topic? Who are the people affected by my idea?
- Where does my idea take place? Where did it come from? Is it restricted to a particular time and place?
- When did my idea happen? How does it relate to the other events that might have taken place at a similar time? Are there events that happened before or after my idea that might have affected it?
- How did my idea happen, or how is it still happening?
- Why did my idea happen, or why is it still happening?

Brainstorming with Computers

Computers are a great tool for fostering these and other collaborative brainstorming techniques. For example, group idea bouncing can be used effectively with online forums and discussion groups. [Reddit](#) is a popular social media site for sharing and discussing ideas.

You can also collaborate on your brainstorming activities with computers with little more than simple word processing or email. Here are two variations on a similar theme:

Email exchange: This exercise is conducted as an exchange over email. Each person in a small group does a looping/targeted freewriting to discover ideas for things she is interested in doing more research about. Then, each person in the group can post his looping/targeted freewriting to all of the other members of the group simultaneously. Email also allows for members of the group to collaborate with each other while not being in the same place—after all, email messages can be sent over great distances—and not at the same time.

“Musical computers”: This approach is similar to the previous exercise, but instead of exchanging email messages, members of a group of students exchange computer stations in a computer lab. Here’s how it works: a group (up to an entire class of students) does a looping/targeted freewriting at a computer station for a set period of time. When time is up, everyone needs to find a different computer in the fashion of the children’s game “musical

chairs.” Once at the new computer station, the new writer comments on the original freewriting exercise. The process can be repeated several times until everyone has had a chance to provide feedback on four or five different original freewrites.

Blackboard Discussions: In Blackboard, the instructor can set up a discussion group in which you can share and discuss your brainstorming projects with other classmates.

Activity: Brainstorming Research Topics

First, by yourself, work with at least two of the brainstorming techniques described above or other brainstorming techniques described by your instructor.

After you completed your list, working with others in a small group, work with at least two of the brainstorming techniques described above or other brainstorming techniques described by your instructor. For example, have all the members of the small group each complete their own freewriting or clustering activity on the topic of her choice.

Then, compare results. How do each of you react to different exercises? Are some techniques more useful for some?

Moving from Ideas to Topics with the Help of the Library and the World Wide Web

Coming up with an idea, especially using these brainstorming techniques, is not that hard to do. After all, we are surrounded by potential ideas and things that could be researched: teen violence, computer crime, drugs, copyright laws, Las Vegas, dangerous toys. But it can be a little trickier to figure out how ideas can be more specific and researchable topics. Ideas are general, broad, and fairly easy for all of us to grasp. Topics, on the other hand, are more specific, narrow, and in need of research. For example:

"Idea"	"Topics"
Computer crime	credit card fraud, computer stalking, "helpful" hackers
water pollution	Pacific garbage patch, fish farms, plastic pollution, EPA laws
Pharmaceutical drugs	prescriptions, medical advances, advertising, disease prevention

In other words, a topic is a step further in the process of coming up with a researchable project for academic writing.

Chances are, your brainstorming activities have already helped you in the process of developing your idea into a topic. But before you move onto the next step of developing a working thesis, you should consider two more helpful topic developing techniques: a quick library subject search and a internet engine search.

A quick library subject search is just what it sounds like: using the computerized catalog system for your library, you can get a sense about the sort of ways other researchers have already divided up your idea into different topics.

For example, imagine your brainstorming has led you to the general idea "fisheries" and the potential problem of over-fishing in some part of the world. While this seems like it might be a potentially good and interesting thing to write about and to research, "fisheries" is an idea that could be narrowed down. If you conduct a subject search on your library's book catalog for "fisheries," you might find the library keeps track of different books in several categories. Some examples of these categories include:

- Fisheries, Atlantic Ocean.
- Fisheries, Canada.
- Fisheries, Environmental Aspects.

You might also want to use the [LCSC Library databases](#) for some quick keyword searches. For example, a keyword search for “computer crime” in Academic OneFile (Gale) or Academic Search Premier (EBSCO) returns article titles like “Demands for Coverage Increase as Cyber-terrorism Risk is Realized” and “Making Sense of Cyber-exposures” (which are both articles about the concern businesses and insurance companies have about cybercrime), and also articles like “Meet the Hackers,” an insider’s view of computer hacking that disputes it being a “crime.” At this point in the research process, you don’t need to look up and read the sources you find, though you will probably want to keep track of them in case you end up needing them later for your research project.

Another great place to go to brainstorm ideas into topics using [Google](#) and [Google Scholar](#). Google is effective for general searches and Google Scholar can help find additional academic sources. There is detailed information on how use Google to help with searching for ideas later in this book.

Like a quick library keyword search, doing a quick keyword search on the web can give you some good direction about how to turn your idea into a topic. However, keep these issues in mind when conducting your Google searches:

- Search engine searches are done by computer programs, which means that they will not sort out for you what is “relevant” from what is “irrelevant” for your search. This is where you will need to both assess relevancy, as well as separate appropriate from inappropriate sources.
- Most search engines and search directories offer an “advanced search” option that explains how to do a “smarter” search. Read these instructions and you will be on your way to better searches. These can help you focus your searches for government sources, as well as others.
- Different search engines index and collect information in different ways. Therefore, you should do keyword searches with the same phrase with a few different search engines. You might be surprised how your results will differ.
- If you aren’t having much luck with the keywords of your general idea, try a couple of synonyms. For example, with “computer crime,” you might want to try “internet crime,” or a related term such as “computer hacking.”

Activity: Practicing Internet Searches

With an idea in mind, try doing a quick keyword search on the library's computer system and on Google.

- Write down a list of keywords that you think might help you find the answers to your research questions.
- What sort of differences are there in the information you get back from doing a quick keyword search at the library versus doing one on the web?
- Next, can you come up with any synonyms for your keywords? Try a search with the mix of keywords.
- What are your results?

Writing a Working Thesis

The next step, developing a “working thesis,” can be a difficult and time-consuming process. However, as was the case when considering different ideas for research in the first place, spending the time now on devising a good working thesis will pay off later.

For our purposes here (and for most college classes), **a thesis advocates a specific and debatable issue.** In academic writing (including the writing done by your professors), the thesis is often stated fairly directly in the first third or so of the writing, though not usually at the end of the first paragraph where students are often told to place it. The sentence or two that seems to encapsulate the issue of the essay is called a “thesis statement.”

Frequently, theses are implied—that is, while the piece of writing clearly has a point that the reader understands, there may not be a specific sentence or two that can easily be identified as the “thesis statement.” For example, theses are often implied in newspapers and magazines, along with a lot of the writing that appears on webpages.

The point is a thesis is a point.

Theses are not statements of facts, simple questions, or summaries of events. They are positions that you as the writer take on and “defend” with evidence, logic, observations, and the other tools of discourse. Most kinds of writing—and particularly academic writing—have a thesis, directly stated or implied. Even most of the writing we largely think of as “informational” has a directly stated or implied thesis.

Theses also tend to lend a certain organization to written arguments since what you include (or exclude) in a written text is largely controlled by the thesis. The main goal of the thesis (either as a specific statement or as an implied statement) is to answer two key questions that are concerns of all readers: “what’s your point?” and “why should I care?”

Now, a **working thesis** is more or less a **temporary** thesis you devise in the beginning of the research process in order to set some direction in your research. However, as I noted earlier, you should remember:

Like your research questions, a working thesis is temporary and should change as you research, write, and learn more about your topic.

Think of the working thesis as the scaffolding and bracing put up around buildings when they are under construction: these structures are not designed to forever be a part of the building. Just the opposite. But you couldn’t build the building in the first place if you didn’t have the scaffolding and bracing that you inevitably have to tear away from the finished building.

Here’s another way of thinking of it: while the journey of 1000 miles begins with just one step (so the saying goes), you still have to pick some kind of direction in the beginning. That’s the purpose of a working thesis. You might change your mind about the direction of your research as you progress through the process, but you’ve got to start somewhere.

What does a working thesis look like? Before considering some potentially “good” examples of working theses, read through these **BAD** examples of statements, ones that **ARE NOT** theses, at least for the purposes of academic writing:

- Computer crime is bad.
- Fisheries around the world are important.
- *The Great Gatsby* is an American novel.

None of these sentences would make effective theses because each one is more or less a statement of fact. Of course, we could debate some of the details here. But practically speaking, most people would assume and believe these statements to be true. Because of that, these statements don’t have much potential as working theses.

These statements **ARE NOT** really theses either:

- There are many controversial ways of dealing with computer crime.

- There are many things that could be done to preserve fisheries around the world.
- *The Great Gatsby* is a wonderful novel for several different reasons.

These revised working thesis statements are better than the previous examples, but they are not quite working theses yet. The problem with these possible working theses is that they are hopelessly vague and give no idea to the reader where the essay is going. Also, while these statements are a bit more debatable than the previous group of examples, they are still statements that most people would more or less accept as facts.

While this next group of statements is yet another step closer, these statements **ARE NOT** really good working theses either:

- This essay will be about the role computer hackers play in computer crime committed on the internet.
- This essay will discuss some of the measures the international community should take in order to preserve fisheries around the world.
- My essay is about the relevance today of *The Great Gatsby's* depiction of the connection between material goods and the American dream.

Each of these statements is close to being a working thesis because each is about an idea that has been focused into a specific topic. However, these statements are not quite working thesis statements because they don't offer a position or opinion that will be defended in some way. To turn these topics into working theses, the writer needs to take a side on the issues suggested in the statements.

Now, these revised statements **ARE** examples of possible working theses:

- While some computer hackers are harmless, most of them commit serious computer crimes and represent a serious internet security problem.
- The international community should enact strict conservation measures to preserve fisheries and save endangered fish species around the world.
- *The Great Gatsby's* depiction of the connection between material goods and the American dream is still relevant today.

If you compare these possible working theses with the statements at the beginning of this section, you will hopefully see the differences between the "bad" and "good" working theses, and hopefully you can see the characteristics of a viable working thesis.

Each of the “good” working thesis statements:

- takes a stand that is generally not considered a “fact;”
- is specific enough to give the writer and potential reader some idea as to the direction the writing will take; and
- offers an initial position on the topic that takes a stand.

Another useful characteristic of a good working thesis is that it can help you as writer to determine what your essay will **NOT** be about. For example, the phrasing of the working thesis on computer hackers suggests to both the reader and the researcher that the essay will NOT be about the failure of “dot com” business, computer literacy, or computer software. Certainly these issues are *related* to the issue of computer hackers and computer crime, but these other issues will not become the *focus* of the essay.

Activity: Thesis Development

Working with the topic you’ve chosen, create a working thesis similar to the above examples. Try to ensure that your working thesis is focused and to the point by keeping it to only one sentence. Creating a working thesis can be tricky, so be sure to devote some time to try out different possible working thesis statements. And don’t forget: a working thesis is the temporary scaffolding that will help you build your essay. It will and should change in the process of writing, so it doesn’t need to be “perfect” at this stage.

After you have individually formed working theses, get together with a small group of classmates to share and revise them.

Assignment: Writing a Working Thesis Essay

The process of writing a working thesis essay can take many forms. Sometimes, topic proposals are formal essays written according to fairly strict guidelines and offering exhaustive detail. At other times, your writing about your topic might be more personal and briefer in form. Here is an example of a working thesis essay assignment:

Write a brief narrative essay where you discuss the topic you have decided to research and write about. Tell your audience, your fellow classmates and your instructor how you arrived at this topic, some of the other ideas you considered in your brainstorming activities, and the

working thesis you have settled on for the start of your project. Also, be sure to let us know about some of the initial library research you have conducted.

Questions to consider as you write your first draft of a working thesis essay

- Is the research topic one assigned by the instructor? Is it focused on a specific group of texts, questions, or ideas that have to do with a specific class?
- Are you expected to come up with your own idea for research? Since it is unlikely you will be able to write about just anything, what are some of the guidelines given to you by your instructor for what you can and can't write about?
- What are some of the ideas for research that you rejected as possibilities? Why did you reject some of these ideas?
- What ideas did you decide to brainstorm about? **Remember!** Be sure to brainstorm about more than one idea! What brainstorming techniques did you use to explore these ideas? Which ones seemed to work the best?
- What are some of the research topics that make up your research idea? In other words, when you begin to narrow your idea into different topics, what are some of the different research topics that interest you?
- What results did you get from a quick library keyword search? Be sure the keyword search you do of your library's databases examines books, periodicals, and newspapers to see a full range of possibilities for research. Also, be sure to consider as many synonyms as possible for the keyword terms you are using for your research topic.
- What results did you get from a keyword search on the internet? Be sure to conduct a keyword search using more than one search engine since different services compile their data in different ways. Also, as was also the case with your library keyword search, be sure to consider as many synonyms as possible.
- Given these steps in the process, what is your working thesis? What variations of your working thesis did you consider along the way?

Review and Revision

As you will read again and again in this book, the first draft is only the beginning, the "raw materials" you create in order to really *write* your essay. That's because the most important step in the process of writing is showing your work to others—your instructor, your classmates, readers you trust, your friends, and so forth—and making changes based on your impressions of their feedback.

When you have a first draft of your working thesis essay complete and you are ready to show it to readers, ask them to think about these sorts of questions as they give you feedback on your writing:

- Is the topic of the topic proposal essay clear and reasonable to your readers?
- What's the working thesis? What sort of suggestions does your reader have to make the working thesis clearer? Is it clear to your readers that your working thesis is about a debatable position? Who might disagree with your position? What do you think are some of the arguments against your position?
- What do your readers think is your main goal as a writer in pursuing this research project? Do your readers think you have made your purposes in writing this topic proposal and research project clear?
- Do your readers understand what library and internet research you have already done on your topic? Are there particular examples of the library and internet-based research that your readers think seem particularly useful or important?

Be careful to not limit your ideas for change to the things that are “easy” to fix (spelling, incomplete sentences, awkward phrases, and so forth). If you begin your process of revision by considering the questions suggested here (and similar questions you, your classmates, other readers, and your instructor might have), many of these “easy fix” problems will be fixed along the way. So as you go through the process of revision, think about it as a chance to really “re-see” and “re-imagine” what the whole writing project could look like.

A Student Example

“Preventing Drunk Driving by Enforcement” by Daniel Marvins

The assignment that was the basis for this essay asked students to write a “first person narrative” about the research project they would be working on for the semester. “It was really important to me think about a lot of different ideas and topics because I was worried that I might not be able to find enough research or stick with it,” Marvins said. “This project helped me think this through.”

Preventing Drunk Driving by Enforcement

Despite the fact that Americans are more aware of the problems of drunk driving than we were in the past, it is still a serious problem in the U.S. While educating everyone about the

dangers of drunk driving is certainly important, I am interested in researching and writing about different ways to more strictly enforce drunk driving laws.

My working thesis for my research project is “While stronger enforcement measures to control drunk driving might be controversial and a violation of individual rights, they have to be enacted to stop drunk driving deaths.” By “stronger enforcement measures,” I mean things like police check points, lower legal levels of blood-alcohol, required breathalyzer tests, less control on police searching cars, and stronger jail sentences.

I got the idea to focus on this topic by working on some of the different brainstorming techniques we talked about in class. I tried several different brainstorming techniques including freewriting and clustering. For me, the most useful technique was making a list of ideas and then talking it over with the other students in my group.

We all agreed that drunk driving would be a good topic, but I thought about writing about other topics too. For example, I think it would also be interesting to write about gun control laws, especially how they might affect deaths with kids and guns. I also thought it might be interesting to do research on the tobacco business and the lawsuits different states are conducting against them.

But I am more interested in exploring issues about drunk driving for a couple of different reasons. First, I think drunk driving is an issue that a lot of people can relate to because most people know that it is dangerous and it is a bad idea. For example, we hear and read messages about not driving drunk in a lot of different advertisements. Still, even though everyone knows it is a bad idea, there are still a lot of deaths and injuries that result from drunk driving.

Second, I’m interested in doing research on stronger enforcement of drunk driving laws because I am not sure I have made my own mind up about it. Like everyone else, I of course think drunk driving is bad and police and society should do everything they can do to prevent people from driving drunk. On the other hand, I also think it’s bad for police to pull over everyone they think might be drunk even when they don’t know for sure. Strong enforcement might stop a lot of drunk driving, but it also gives police more chances to violate individual liberties and rights.

I have done a little bit of research already and I don’t think I’m going to have any problem finding evidence to support my topic. Drunk driving seems to be a pretty common topic

with a lot of different things written about it. I did a quick search of the library's databases and the World Wide Web and I found thousands of different articles. I skimmed the titles and it seemed like a lot of them would be very relevant and useful for my subject.

Drunk driving is a serious problem and everyone agrees that we should do something about it. The question is what should "it" be? My hope is that through my research, I will learn more about how stronger enforcement of drunk driving laws can curtail drunk driving, and I hope to be able to convince my readers of this, too.

Writing a Research Proposal

From Chapter 8 of *EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers* | Shane Abrams | 2018

Bigger research projects often require additional steps in preparation and process. Before beginning an extended meditation on a topic—before rushing into a long-term or large-scale research project—it’s possible that your teacher will ask you to write a research proposal. The most effective way to make sure your proposal is on the right track is to identify its rhetorical purpose. Are you trying to process ideas? Compile and review initial research? Demonstrate that you’re pursuing a viable path of inquiry? Explain the stakes of your subject?

Although every rhetorical audience will value different parts of the proposal, there are a handful of issues you should try to tackle in any proposal.

Your subject. Introduce your topic with a general introduction to your topic— not too general, but enough to give the reader a sense of grounding.

Too general: Education is something that happens in every facet of our lives.

Better: Access to education is a major concern for people living in a democratic society.

Your occasion. When you developed your research question, you chose an issue that matters to someone, meaning that it is timely and important. To establish the significance of your topic, explain what’s prompting your writing and why it matters.

Since Betsy DeVos’ nomination for U.S. Secretary of Education, the discussion surrounding school choice has gained significant momentum. Socioeconomic inequality in this country has produced great discrepancies in the quality of education that young people experience, and it is clear that something must be done.

Your stakes and stakeholders. Although you may have alluded to *why* your question matters when introducing your occasion, you might take a sentence or two to elaborate on its significance. What effect will the answer(s) you find have, and on whom?

Because educational inequality relates to other forms of injustice, efforts to create fairness in the quality of schools will influence U.S. racial politics, gender equality, and socioeconomic stratification. For better or for worse, school reform of any kind will

impact greater social structures and institutions that color our daily lives as students, parents, and community members.

Your research question or path of inquiry. After introducing your subject, occasion, and stakes, allow the question guiding your research to step in.

Some people believe that school choice programs are the answer. But is it likely that people of all socioeconomic backgrounds can experience parity in education through current school voucher proposals?

Your position as a working thesis. Articulate your position as a (hypo)thesis— a potential answer to your question or an idea of where your research might take you. This is an answer which you should continue to adjust along the way; writing it in the proposal does not set your answer(s) in stone.

In my research, I will examine whether school choice programs have the potential to create more equitable schooling experiences for all students. Even though proponents of school choice use the language of freedom and equality to justify school vouchers, recent propositions for school choice would likely exacerbate inequality in education and access.

The difficulties you anticipate in the research and writing process and how you plan to address them. In your proposal, you are trying to demonstrate that your path of inquiry is viable; therefore, it is important to show that you're thinking through the challenges you might face along the way. Consider what elements of researching and writing will be difficult, and how you will approach those difficulties.

There are a vast number of resources on school choice, but I anticipate encountering some difficulty in pursuing my guiding question. For example, many people discussing this topic are entrenched in their current viewpoints. Similarly, this issue is very politicized, dividing people mostly along party lines. I also need to do more preliminary research: I'm not certain if there have been school choice experiments conducted on any significant scale, in the U.S. or elsewhere. Finally, it is difficult to evaluate complex social phenomena of inequality without also considering race, gender, disability status, nationality, etc.; I'll need to focus on socioeconomic status, but I cannot treat it as a discrete issue.

Optional, depending on your rhetorical situation: **A working list of sources consulted in your preliminary research.** I ask my students to include a handful of sources they have encountered as they identified their topic and path of inquiry: this shows that they are working toward understanding their place in an ongoing conversation.

Works Cited

- Worsnop, Richard L. "School Choice: Would It Strengthen or Weaken Public Education in America?" *CQ Researcher*, vol. 1, 10 May 1991, pp. 253-276. *CQ Researcher Online*, <http://library.cqpress.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/cqresearcher/cqresrre 1991051000>.
- Zornick, George. "Bernie Sanders Just Introduced His Free College Tuition Plan." *The Nation*, The Nation Company LLC, 3 April 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/bernie-sanders-just-introduced-his-free-college-tuition-plan/>.

Combining these examples, we can see our proposal come together in a couple of paragraphs:

School Vouchers: Bureaucratizing Inequality

Access to education is a major concern for people living in a democratic society. Since Betsy DeVos's nomination for U.S. Secretary of Education, the discussion surrounding school choice has gained significant momentum. Socioeconomic inequality in this country has produced great discrepancies in the quality of education that young people experience, and it is clear that something must be done. Because educational inequality relates to other forms of injustice, efforts to create fairness in the quality of schools will influence U.S. racial politics, gender equality, and socioeconomic stratification. For better or for worse, school reform of any kind will impact greater social structures and institutions that color our daily lives as students, parents, and community members. Some people believe that school choice programs are the answer. But is it likely that people of all socioeconomic backgrounds can experience parity in education through current school voucher proposals?

In my research, I will examine whether school choice programs have the potential to create more equitable schooling experiences for all students. Even though proponents of school choice use the language of freedom and equality to justify school vouchers, recent propositions for school choice would likely exacerbate inequality in education and access.

There are a vast number of resources on school choice, but I anticipate encountering some difficulty in pursuing my guiding question. For example, many people discussing this topic are entrenched in their current viewpoints. Similarly, this issue is very politicized, dividing people mostly along party lines. I also need to do more preliminary research: I'm not certain if there

have been school choice experiments conducted on any significant scale, in the U.S. or elsewhere. Finally, it is difficult to evaluate complex social phenomena of inequality without also considering race, gender, disability status, nationality, etc.; I'll need to focus on socioeconomic status, but I cannot treat it as a discrete issue.

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As you develop your own proposal, I encourage you to follow these steps, answering the questions listed above. However, in order to create a more cohesive proposal, be sure to revise for fluency: your proposal shouldn't read like a list of answers, but like a short essay.

Chapter 2

Finding Sources

Overview

Type your search terms into Google and get thousands of great resources, right? Well, maybe! But probably not. The quest for good quality sources takes a lot of time, patience, and energy. And while an internet search engine can be one tool, it's usually not the best place to find highly credible, peer-reviewed resources. In this chapter, you will learn how to find the best information available on your topic; you will learn how to locate and curate the most relevant material for background, facts, statistics, real-life stories, expert testimony, and studies--the evidence that will support claims within your paper.

The following section includes readings and exercises on:

- Primary vs. secondary research
 - Ethics of primary research
 - Choosing a data collection method
 - Eliminating bias
 - Observation
 - Surveys
 - Interviews: How-to, methods, preparation and planning
- How and where to research
 - The library vs the internet
 - How to use the library
 - Asking questions
 - Utilizing databases
 - Google Scholar
 - Internet research
 - Netiquette
 - About Wikipedia
 - Additional resources
- Exercise: How to use the library; access databases and other sources for research.

Primary vs. Secondary Research

In Chapter 1, you were introduced to primary and secondary sources. We review and expand upon them here. You can also refer to pages 47-49 for further information.

You may hear sources referred to as “primary” or “secondary” and wonder what that means or why you should care. Let’s take a minute to review those terms before you dive into your research.

Primary and secondary sources provide different information and have different purposes. Primary sources include original photos, documents, or data. Additionally, primary research occurs when you, the investigator, goes out and gathers information yourself. That might mean observing people or situations; it might mean creating and distributing a survey; or it might mean conducting an interview (or several). In each of these cases, you are going to the source to obtain your information. Secondary research, then, is everything else. These are sources that analyze primary sources in some way. Secondary sources include nearly everything you find in the library and online. Examples include scholarly articles, film reviews, news articles, and even brochures you get from businesses or government offices.

Let’s look at primary research first. After we understand what that means, we will look at secondary research in the library, online, and more.

Primary Research: What Is It?

from “[Introduction to Primary Research: Observations, Surveys, and Interviews](#)” by Dana Lynn Driscoll in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Vol. 2.

Primary research is often based on principles of the scientific method, a theory of investigation first developed by John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century in his book *Philosophy of the Scientific Method*. Although the application of the scientific method varies from field to field, the general principles of the scientific method allow researchers to learn more about the world and observable phenomena. Using the scientific method, researchers develop research questions or hypotheses and collect data on events, objects, or people that is measurable, observable, and replicable. The ultimate goal in conducting primary research is to learn about something new that can be confirmed by others and to eliminate our own biases in the process.

Overview

Primary research occurs in four stages: planning, collecting, analyzing, and writing. After the four stages comes an introduction to three common ways of conducting primary research in first-year writing classes:

- **Observations.** Observing and measuring the world around you, including observations of people and other measurable events.
- **Interviews.** Asking participants questions in a one-on-one or small group setting.
- **Surveys.** Asking participants about their opinions and behaviors through a short questionnaire.

Ethics of Primary Research

The following should be carefully considered when conducting primary research:

- *Voluntary participation.* *The Belmont Report* suggests that, in most cases, you need to get permission from people before you involve them in any primary research you are conducting. If you are doing a survey or interview, your participants must first agree to fill out your survey or to be interviewed. Consent for observations can be more complicated, and is discussed later in the essay.
- *Confidentiality and anonymity.* Your participants may reveal embarrassing or potentially damaging information such as racist comments or unconventional behavior. In these cases, you should keep your participants' identities anonymous when writing your results. An easy way to do this is to create a "pseudonym" (or false name) for them so that their identity is protected.
- *Researcher bias.* There is little point in collecting data and learning about something if you already think you know the answer! Bias might be present in the way you ask questions, the way you take notes, or the conclusions you draw from the data you collect.

The above are only three of many considerations when involving human participants in your primary research. For a complete understanding of ethical considerations please refer to [*The Belmont Report*](#) on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website.

Choosing a Data Collection Method

Once you have formulated a research question or hypothesis, you will need to make decisions about what kind of data you can collect that will best address your research topic. To choose a data collection method for your research question, read through the next sections on observations, interviews, and surveys.

Observations

Observations have led to some of the most important scientific discoveries in human history. Charles Darwin used observations of the animal and marine life at the Galapagos Islands to help him formulate his theory of evolution that he describes in *On the Origin of Species*. Today, social scientists, natural scientists, engineers, computer scientists, educational researchers, and many others use observations as a primary research method.

Observations can be conducted on nearly any subject matter, and the kinds of observations you will do depend on your research question. You might observe traffic or parking patterns on campus to get a sense of what improvements could be made. You might observe clouds, plants, or other natural phenomena. If you choose to observe people, you will have several additional considerations including the manner in which you will observe them and gain their consent.

If you are observing people, you can choose between two common ways to observe: participant observation and unobtrusive observation. Participant observation is a common method within ethnographic research in sociology and anthropology. In this kind of observation, a researcher may interact with participants and become part of their community. Margaret Mead, a famous anthropologist, spent extended periods of time living in, and interacting with, communities that she studied. Conversely, in unobtrusive observation, you do not interact with participants but rather simply record their behavior. Although in most circumstances people must volunteer to be participants in research, in some cases it is acceptable to not let participants know you are observing them. In places that people perceive as public, such as a campus food court or a shopping mall, people do not expect privacy, and so it is generally acceptable to observe without participant consent. In places that people perceive as private, which can include a church, home, classroom, or even an intimate conversation at a restaurant, participant consent should be sought.

The second issue about participant consent in terms of unobtrusive observation is whether or not getting consent is feasible for the study. If you are observing people in a busy airport, bus station, or campus food court, getting participant consent may be next to impossible.

Eliminating Bias in Your Observation Notes

The ethical concern of being unbiased is important in recording your observations. You need to be aware of the difference between an observation (recording exactly what you see) and an

interpretation (making assumptions and judgments about what you see). When you observe, you should focus first on only the events that are directly observable. Consider the following two example entries in an observation log:

1. The student sitting in the dining hall enjoys his greasy, oil-soaked pizza. He is clearly oblivious of the calorie content and damage it may do to his body.
2. The student sits in the dining hall. As he eats his piece of pizza, which drips oil, he says to a friend, "This pizza is good."

The first entry is biased and demonstrates judgment about the event. First, the observer makes assumptions about the internal state of the student when she writes "enjoys" and "clearly oblivious to the calorie content." From an observer's standpoint, there is no way of ascertaining what the student may or may not know about pizza's nutritional value nor how much the student enjoys the pizza. The second entry provides only the details and facts that are observable. To avoid bias in your observations, you can use something called a "double-entry notebook." This is a type of observation log that encourages you to separate your observations (the facts) from your feelings and judgments about the facts.

Observations are only one strategy in collecting primary research. You may also want to ask people directly about their behaviors, beliefs, or attitudes—and for this you will need to use surveys or interviews.

Interview or Survey?

How do you choose between conducting a survey or an interview? It depends on what kind of information you are looking for. You should use surveys if you want to learn about a general trend in people's opinions, experiences, and behavior. Surveys are particularly useful to find small amounts of information from a wider selection of people in the hopes of making a general claim. Interviews are best used when you want to learn detailed information from a few specific people. Interviews are also particularly useful if you want to interview experts about their opinions. In sum, use interviews to gain details from a few people, and surveys to learn general patterns from many people.

Surveys

Other than the fact that they both involve asking people questions, interviews and surveys are quite different data collection methods. Creating a survey may seem easy at first, but developing a quality survey can be quite challenging. When conducting a survey, you need to focus on the following areas: survey creation, survey testing, survey sampling, and distributing your survey.

Survey Creation: Length and Types of Questions

One of the keys to creating a successful survey is to keep your survey short and focused. Participants are unlikely to fill out a survey that is lengthy, and you'll have a more difficult time during your analysis if your survey contains too many questions. In most cases, you want your survey to be something that can be filled out within a few minutes. The target length of the survey also depends on how you will distribute the survey. If you are giving your survey to other students in your dorm or classes, they will have more time to complete the survey. Therefore, five to ten minutes to complete the survey is reasonable. If you are asking students as they are walking to class to fill out your survey, keep it limited to several questions that can be answered in thirty seconds or less.

Use closed questions to your advantage when creating your survey. A closed question is any set of questions that gives a limited amount of choices (yes/no, a 1–5 scale, choose the statement that best describes you). When creating closed questions, be sure that you are accounting for all reasonable answers in your question creation. For example, asking someone "Do you believe you eat healthy?" and providing them only "yes" and "no" options means that a "neutral" or "undecided" option does not exist, even though the survey respondent may not feel strongly either way. Therefore, on closed questions you may find it helpful to include an "other" category where participants can fill in an answer. It is also a good idea to have a few open-ended questions where participants can elaborate on certain points or earlier responses. However, open-ended questions take much longer to fill out than closed questions.

Survey Creation: Testing Your Survey

To make sure your survey is an appropriate length and that your questions are clear, you can "pilot test" your survey. Prior to administering your survey on a larger scale, ask several classmates or friends to fill it out and give you feedback on the survey. Keep track of how long the survey takes to complete. Ask them if the questions are clear and make sense. Look at their answers to see if the answers match what you wanted to learn. You can revise your survey questions and the length of your survey as necessary.

Sampling and Access to Survey Populations

"Sampling" is a term used within survey research to describe the subset of people that are included in your study. It is very challenging to get a truly representative sample. Part of the reason that sampling is a challenge is that you may find difficulty in finding enough people to take your survey. In thinking about how get people to take your survey, consider both your

everyday surroundings and also technological solutions. Another possibility is to conduct an online survey. Online surveys greatly increase your access to different kinds of people from across the globe, but may decrease your chances of having a high survey response rate. An email or private message survey request is more likely to be ignored due to the impersonal quality and high volume of emails most people receive.

Interviews

Interviews can help provide specific details about your research and give specific context to your research topics.

How to Interview

From *Information Strategies for Communicators* by Kathleen A. Hansen and Nora Paul.

Method: Face-to-Face

Conducting an interview in person is certainly the preferred method for communicators, whether they are interviewing for a news story or conducting focus groups.

Figure 2 adabara – Interview – CCo



Advantages of face-to-face interviews

- Picking up clues about the person, beyond what they say (tone of voice, body language).
- Holding the interview in the interviewee's "space" allows you to observe their environment, giving clues about the person and providing "color" for the story
- Interviewee can be recorded.
- Longer, more complex question strategy can be used.
- Interviewee can respond to visual images or objects.
- Non-verbal responses to questions or displayed objects can be part of the information gathered.
- Interviews can be edited but still maintain the feel of a live interview.

Disadvantages

- Labor and transportation costs for the interviewer's training and travel to and from the respondents' locations can be high.
- Interviewees can be reluctant to allow strangers into their homes or offices.
- Interviewer's appearance, age, race, sex, dress, or nonverbal behavior may affect respondents' answers to survey questions.

Method: Telephone or Skype

For writers who need to get information from busy or distant experts, the telephone interview is the second favorite method for interviewing. It is a widely used approach for advertisers and public relations professionals who need to speak to clients about the message campaign, or to potential audience members to get the prevailing opinion about a topic or product.

Advantages of telephone interviews:

- Still get the verbal clues of tone of voice and emotion.
- Convenience for interviewer (no travel required) and interviewee (no stranger in your space).
- Interviews can be recorded (if agreed on by the interviewee).



Figure 3 Steven Depelo – CC BY 2.0

Disadvantages:

- Visual clues from the interpersonal interaction are missing (unless you are using Skype or some other live video link).
- Easier for the interviewee to cut short a phone interview by hanging up if it becomes uncomfortable or confrontational versus if someone is in your physical space.

- For strategic communicators, the way that tele-marketing phone calls have tainted phone interviews can lower the response rate to phone requests.

Method: Email

Interviewing by email is becoming a popular method for initial contact with a prospective interviewee.

Advantages of digital interviews:

- It is easy to establish basic information exchange without playing “phone tag.”
- Some interviewees are more comfortable and feel more in control of what they say by writing out a response to a question rather than saying something “off the cuff”.



- If the interviewee shares his/her social network additional information about the person’s activities, friends/colleagues and preferences.

Figure 4 stevebp – Typing – CC

Disadvantages:

- It can be hard to ensure the person from whom you want the response is actually the one responding.
- Visual and auditory clues are missing making the information gathered through the written word interview easier to misinterpret.
- For surveys, digital requests for response can be seen as spam and either filtered or easily discarded.

Preparing for an Interview

The information strategy is critical in helping you identify people who might be good sources of information for your message and, therefore, good interviewees. But it is also important to arm yourself with background information on the topic of the interview so you can go to the interview prepared.

Pre-interview information backgrounding will help you:

- Identify key issues to raise in the interview
- Uncover conflicting opinions or perspectives for clarification by your interviewee
- Ground yourself in the basic terminology and concepts of the topic so you don’t ask “teach me the topic” or uninformed (i.e. stupid) questions

- Identify the areas in which the interviewee would have substantive information to share
- Understand what has already happened, who the “players” are

This background check might be as basic as reviewing a Wikipedia entry about the topic of the interview. This can give you key dates, data, and terminology and provide you with an historical and/or geographical perspective about the issue. But remember that if you intend to use the information in Wikipedia in your message, you must “second source” it.

Scholarly or scientific topics require a background check in the relevant literature of that discipline. This will give you a head start on decoding the jargon that is likely to be used by interviewees, and will alert you to the current state of knowledge on that subject or where there might be controversies.

For topics currently in the news, checking news archives will give you a sense of some of the coverage of the topic and the key events or angles that you might want to address with your interviewee.

You might want to check the social networking sites to see if there is a Facebook page of supporters (or detractors) on the topic to see what the “buzz” is, check prevailing opinions or see the kinds of issues that are being raised that you might want your interviewee to address. Checking a Twitter feed on the topic (*by using a “hashtag” like #theatershooting or #globalwarming*) might lead you to resources that people recommend or provide some insights into people’s views.

Planning the Interview

Once the interview roster is ready, you can determine the willingness and availability of the sources. Some potential interviewees may be unavailable – out of town or tied up with other responsibilities. Others may be unwilling to be interviewed. Some may have research results that they do not wish to make public yet. Others may prefer to send you a copy of their testimony before Congress and save the time an interview would take. Some specialists who are unavailable will suggest others as substitutes. However, a good percentage of people on a well-constructed source list should be available.

Careful planning of interviews involves a number of steps and almost innumerable considerations.

Interviewee’s conditions: In some cases, the interviewee stipulates some conditions for the interview which can include:

- Amount of time they will talk with you
- Interview method (face-to-face, telephone conversation or online)
- Permission (or not) to record the conversation
- Request that another person be present (their lawyer or agent)

- Request that they review the material before you may publish or use it
- The “contract” for the way the information will be used in the message (see more about this below)

Review your own material: Looking over material gathered earlier in the information process will help you devise a strategy for using the interview to fill in questions, corroborate information, or to discover new angles to take.

- What is disputed? Can inconsistencies be explained or resolved? What is the significance of the disputed facts?
- What unexplored aspects of the subject should be developed? What is “new” that should be reflected in my questions?
- What questions are appropriate to each interviewee?
- What sensitivities and special perspectives should I be aware of in asking questions of each interviewee?
- What information in my files may need updating or confirming?
- What human-interest information can be elicited from the interviewee?

Consider interviewee “inhibitors:” Interview preparation also involves getting ready for the social and psychological aspects of the interview. Before you draft your questions, consider the situation of the interviewee. People may have competing demands for their time. They may have painful memories of the topic you want to explore with them. They may not trust your motives in seeking the interview. This might make some interviewees unwilling to share information.

Other factors may affect the interviewee’s ability to share accurate information (as opposed to their willingness to do so). The person’s memory may have faded, they may not accurately recall the sequence of events, they may be confused by your questions. All of these inhibitors affect the way you approach your subject and the types of questions you ask.

Interview Questions

Having assessed both the information needs and the interviewee’s potential to respond, you are ready to develop an agenda of questions. These should be a comprehensive list of questions, setting forth everything you would like to know. The interviewer might ask some of these questions of a number of respondents while other questions might be designed only for a particular interviewee.

Types of questions

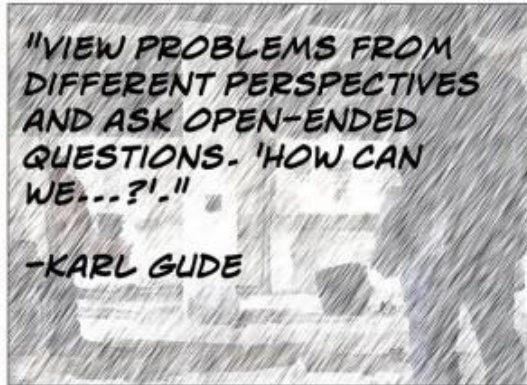


Figure 5 Ken Whytock – Invite open ended questions – CC BY-NC 2.0

Except in survey research interviews, **open-ended questions** are most effective. An example of an open-ended question is when the focus group interviewer asks, “Now that you’ve tried our new product, tell me what you think about it.” Open-ended questions have the advantages of inviting interviewees to provide more specificity and depth in their response. In journalistic interviews, open-

endedness is stressed, for it leads to spontaneity, interpretation by sources, cues for additional questions, and quotable phrases. An open-ended question in a journalistic setting might be, “What do you think about the new tax proposal?”

In the **closed-ended question**, the respondent must select one of a set of responses provided by the interviewer. For example, most questions asked in Gallup and other polls are closed-ended: “How do you feel about the economy of the United States at this time?” “Very optimistic,” “somewhat optimistic,” “neutral,” “somewhat pessimistic,” or “very pessimistic.” One advantage of closed-ended questions is that a large number of interview responses can be analyzed relatively quickly and inexpensively.

Closed-ended questioning in the journalistic context is usually problematic. Compare the closed-ended question, “Do you think the new tax proposal is good?” with the open-ended, “What do you think about the new tax proposal?” Which will elicit more information and opinion from the interviewee?

Question Order

Arranging the questions into an effective agenda is the next step. Many interviewers use a strategy of beginning with reassuringly easy questions. Some may be questions verifying that what has been learned through earlier parts of the strategy is, indeed, still accurate and up-to-date. While the opening questions may be simple, experienced interviewers avoid overly broad questions that send the interviewee off the topic or set off an avalanche of irrelevances.

Generally, experience suggests that embarrassing, touchy, or ego-threatening questions best be kept until late in the interview. By then, the context is well established and you have had a chance to develop a persona as a fair, accurate, and sensitive individual. Touchy questions always bring about the possibility that the subject will declare the interview to be at an end. In that event, at least you have the earlier portions of the conversation for the record.

Each question in the interview agenda can give rise to additional questions. Some of these are follow-ups, such as requests for more information based on the idea just stated by the source. If you are too tightly tied to your own interview agenda, you may neglect to use appropriate follow-ups.

But don't forget your original question agenda once the follow-ups begin. Rigidly adhering to the question agenda promotes one kind of completeness at the expense of expanding the topic and developing its new dimensions. Experienced interviewers learn, in time, to walk the line between the two hazards.

How and Where to find Secondary Research

From [Chapter 2](#), *The Process of Research Writing* by Steven D. Krause, 2007.

Defining "The Library" and "The Internet:" An Introduction

You might think the answers to the questions "what is a library?" and "what is the internet?" are pretty obvious. But actually, it is easy to get them confused, and there are a number of research resources that are a bit of both: library materials available over the internet or internet resources available in the library.

Understanding the differences between the library and the internet and knowing where your research comes from is crucial in the process of research writing because **research that is available from libraries (either in print or electronic form) is generally considered more reliable and credible than research available only over the internet.** Most of the publications in libraries (particularly in academic libraries) have gone through some sort of review process. They have been read and examined by editors, other writers, critics, experts in the field, and librarians.

In contrast, anyone with appropriate access to the internet can put up a web page about almost anything without anyone else being involved in the process: no editors, other writers, critics, experts, or anyone else review the credibility or reliability of the evidence.

However, the line between what counts as library research and what counts as internet research is becoming blurred. Plenty of reliable and credible internet -based research resources are available: online academic and popular journals, web-based versions of online newspapers, the homepages of experts in a particular field, and so forth.

Let's begin with the basics of understanding the differences between libraries and the internet.

Libraries are buildings that house and catalog books, magazines, journals, microfilm, maps, government documents, and other resources. As you might expect, libraries at community colleges, colleges, and universities tend to specialize in scholarly materials, while public libraries tend to specialize in non-scholarly materials. You are more likely to find *People* magazine or the latest best-selling novels in a public library and a journal like *College English* and scholarly books in a college library.

While we tend to see the library as a “place,” most people see the **internet** as something less physically tangible (though still somehow a “place”). Basically, the internet is the international network of computers that makes things like email, the World Wide Web, blogs, and online chat possible. In the early 1970s, the beginnings of the internet (then known as “ARPANET”) consisted of about a half-dozen computers located at research universities in the United States. Today, the internet is made up of tens of millions of computers in almost every part of the world. The World Wide Web appeared in the mid-1990s and has dramatically changed the internet.

In the simplest sense, the differences between libraries and the internet is clear: buildings, books, magazines, and other physical materials, versus computers everywhere connected via networks, the World Wide Web, and other electronic, digitized, or “virtual” materials.

First, almost all university, college, and community college libraries provide patrons access to the internet on their campuses. Being able to access almost anything that is available on the internet at computers in your library has the effect of blurring the border between library and non-library resources. And just because you happened to find your research on a webpage while you were physically in the library obviously doesn’t make your web-based research as credible as the materials housed within the library.

Second, many libraries use the internet to provide access to electronic databases, some of which even contain “full text” versions of print publications. This will be covered in more detail in the next section of this chapter, “Finding Research in the Library: An Overview;” however, generally speaking, the research from these resources (even though it *looks* a lot like what you might find on a variety of internet -based sources) is considered as reliable and credible as more traditional print sources.

Third, most libraries allow for patrons to search their collections via the internet. With an adequate internet connection, you don’t have to actually go to the library to use the library.

Researching in the Library

The best source for information about how to find things in your library will come directly from the librarians who can answer your questions. But here is an overview of the way most academic libraries are organized and some guidelines for finding materials in the library.

Almost all libraries have a **circulation desk**, where patrons can check out items. Most libraries also have an **information or reference desk** that is staffed with reference librarians to answer your questions about using reference materials, about the databases available for research, and other questions about finding materials in the library. Libraries usually have a place where you can make photocopies for a small cost and they frequently have computer labs available to patrons for word processing or connecting to the internet.

Many libraries still have a centralized area with computer terminals that are connected to the library's computerized databases, though increasingly, these terminals are located throughout the building instead of in one specific area. (Very few libraries still actually have card catalogs, and when they do, these catalogs are usually for specialized and small collections of materials.) You will want to get familiar with your library's database software because it will be your key resource in finding just about anything in the building.

Libraries tend to have particular reading rooms or places where they keep current newspapers and periodicals, and where they keep bound periodicals, which are previous editions of journals and magazines bound together by volume or year and kept on the shelf like books. Many libraries also have specialized areas where they keep government documents, rare books and manuscripts, maps, video tapes, and so forth.

How do you find any of these things in the library? Here are some guidelines for finding books, journals, magazines, and newspapers using the [LCSC SuperSearch](#) of the Library Catalog .

Books or DVDs. You will need to use the library's computerized catalog to find books the library owns. Most library database systems allow you to conduct similar types of searches for books. Typically, you can search by:

Author or editor. Usually, this is a "last name first" search, as in "Krause, Steven D." If you are looking for the name of a writer who contributed a chapter to a collection of essays, try using a "keyword" search instead.

Title. Most library databases will allow you to search by typing in the complete title or part of the title.

Keyword. This is different from the other types of searches in that it is a search that will find whatever words or phrases you type in.

Whatever you type into a keyword search is what you're going to get back. For example, if you typed in "commercial fishing" into a keyword search, you are likely to get results about the commercial fishing industry, but also about "commercials" (perhaps books about advertising) and about "fishing" (perhaps "how to" books on fly fishing, or a reference to the short story collection *Trout Fishing in America*).

Most library computer databases will allow you to do more advanced keyword searches that will find phrases, parts of words, entries before or after a certain date, and so forth. You can also increase the quality of your results by doing more keyword searches with synonyms of the word or words you originally have in mind. For example, if you do a keyword search for "commercial fishing," you might also want to try searching for "fish farming," "fisheries," or "fishing industry."

Library of Congress Subject. Chances are, your university, college, or community college library arranges their books according to the same system used by the U.S. Library of Congress (LOC). (The other common system, the Dewey Decimal System, is sometimes the organizational system used at public libraries and high school libraries.) The Library of Congress system has a long but specific list of subjects that is used to categorize every item. For example, here are some Library of Congress subjects that might be of interest to someone doing research on the ethical practices of the pharmaceutical industry:

- Pharmaceutical ethics.
- Pharmaceutical ethics, United States.
- Pharmaceutical industry.
- Pharmaceutical industry, Corrupt practices, United States.

Each one of these categories is actually a Library of Congress subject that is used to categorize books and materials. In other words, when a new book on pharmaceuticals comes into the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., a librarian categorizes it according to previously determined subject categories and assigns the book a number based on that category. These "official" categories and the related Library of Congress Call Numbers (more on that in a moment) are the way that libraries that use the Library of Congress system keep track of their books.

Call Number. Most academic library database systems will allow you to search for a book with a particular call number. However, this feature is probably only useful to you if you are trying to find out if your library has a specific book you want for your research.

When you are first searching for books on a research idea or topic at your library, you should begin with keyword searches instead of author, title, or subject searches. However, once you

find a book that you think will be useful in your research, you will want to note the different authors and subjects the book fits into and search those same categories.

Here's an example of a book entry from the LCSC Library computer database with the most important parts of the entry labeled:



The image shows a library catalog entry for the book "Plastic soup: an atlas of ocean pollution". On the left is a small thumbnail of the book cover. To the right of the cover, the text reads: "BOOK Plastic soup : an atlas of ocean pollution" followed by "Michiel Roscam Abbing author. Tessera Translations, translator. 2019". Below this, it says "Available at Lewis-Clark State College Stacks (TD427.P62 R6713 2019) >". Two red arrows point from text labels on the right to the title and the availability information. The first arrow points to the title and is accompanied by the text "Title of book, with the authors and year published." The second arrow points to the availability information and is accompanied by the text "Information about availability in the library and the Library of Congress Call Number". A "TOP" link is visible at the bottom left of the entry.

At the LCSC Library, to retrieve this book, you need to find it on one of the book shelves, or, as they are often known, the "stacks." Most of the books are on the 2nd floor. While the LOC number is rather long, finding a book on a shelf is no more complicated than finding a street address.

The Library of Congress Call Number—in this example, RM 302.5 .C64 2001—is essentially the "address" of that book within the library. To get to it, you will first want to find out where your library keeps the books. This might be very obvious in many libraries, and not at all obvious in others. When in doubt, check with a librarian.

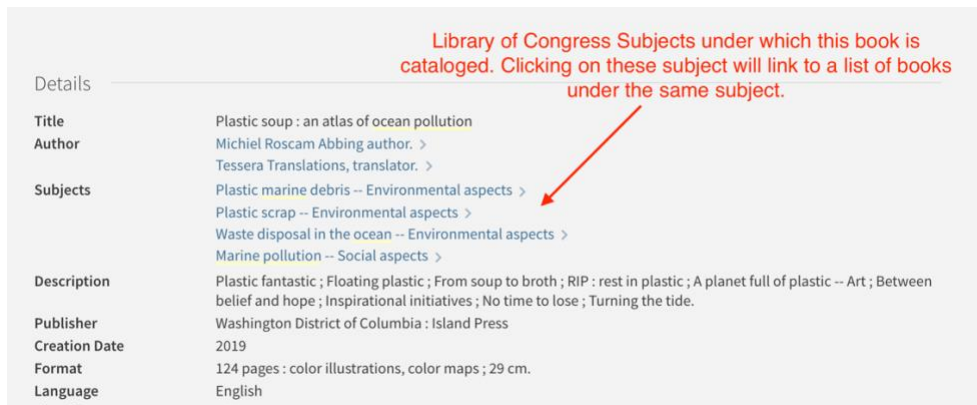
The Library of Congress Call Number system works alphabetically and then numerically, so to find the book in our example, you need to find the shelf (or shelves) where the library keeps books that begin with the call letters "RM." Again, this will be very obvious in many libraries, and less obvious in others. At smaller academic libraries, finding the location of the "RM" books might be quite easy. But at some large academic libraries, you might need to find out what floor or even what building houses books that begin with the call letters "RM."

If you were looking for the book in our example (or any other with a call number that began with "RM"), you can expect it to be somewhere between where they keep books that begin with the call letters "RL" and "RN." Once you find where the "RM"s are, you'll need to find the next number, 302.5. Again, this will be on the shelf numerically, somewhere between books with a call number that begins with "RM 302.4" and "RM 302.6." By the time you get to this point, you are getting close. Then you'll want to locate the ".C64" part, which will be between ".C63" and ".C65," then the next ".D7", and then finally the 2001.

If you go to the shelf and are not able to locate the book, there are three possible explanations: either the book is actually checked out, you have made a mistake in looking the book up, or the library has made a mistake in cataloging or shelving the book. It's very easy to make a mistake

and to look for a book in the wrong place, so first double-check yourself. However, libraries do make mistakes either by mis-shelving an item or by not recording that it has been checked out. If you are sure you're right and you think the library has made a mistake, ask a librarian for help.

You will also want to look at the "Subjects" further down in the listing.



Library of Congress Subjects under which this book is cataloged. Clicking on these subject will link to a list of books under the same subject.

Details	
Title	Plastic soup : an atlas of ocean pollution
Author	Michiel Roscam Abbing author. > Tessera Translations, translator. >
Subjects	Plastic marine debris -- Environmental aspects > Plastic scrap -- Environmental aspects > Waste disposal in the ocean -- Environmental aspects > Marine pollution -- Social aspects >
Description	Plastic fantastic ; Floating plastic ; From soup to broth ; RIP : rest in plastic ; A planet full of plastic -- Art ; Between belief and hope ; Inspirational initiatives ; No time to lose ; Turning the tide.
Publisher	Washington District of Columbia : Island Press
Creation Date	2019
Format	124 pages : color illustrations, color maps ; 29 cm.
Language	English

The "Subjects" information might be particularly helpful for you to find other books and materials on your topic. For example, if you did a subject search for "ocean pollution," you would find this book plus other related books that might be useful in your research.

One last tip: when you find the book you are looking for, take a moment to scan the other books on the shelf near it. Under the Library of Congress system, books about similar subjects tend to be shelved near each other. You can often find extremely interesting and useful books by looking around on the shelf like this.

Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers

Libraries group journals, magazines, and newspapers into a category called "periodicals," which, as the name implies, are items in a series that are published "periodically." Periodicals include academic periodicals that are perhaps published only a few times a year, quarterly and monthly journals, or weekly popular magazines. Newspapers are also considered periodicals.

Periodical Databases

Your key resource for finding articles in periodic materials for your research project will be some combination of the many different indexes that are available. The LCSC Library lists all of their periodical databases under "[Databases and More.](#)"

Many databases are quite broad in their scope—*Academic OneFile (Gale)* and *Academic Search Premier (EBSCO)* examples—while others are quite specific, like *The MLA International*

Bibliography (which covers literature, language, linguistics, and folklore) and *ABI/INFORM* (which indexes materials that have to do with business and management).

It is *crucial* that you examine different databases as you conduct your research: different databases will lead you to different articles that are relevant for your research idea or topic.

While databases frequently overlap with each other, using different ones will give you a wider variety of results. Some library computer systems make this easy to do by allowing you to search multiple databases at the same time. While the LCSC SuperSearch is able to search some databases, not all are searchable, so you should also go to individual databases that are appropriate for your topic.

Ask Questions

From [*EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers*](#) by Shane Abrams, 2019.

Below are some questions to consider as you explore the LCSC library.

- Does the site have an FAQ, student support, Librarian Chat, or DIY link in case you have questions?
- Does the site have an integrated search bar (i.e., a search engine that allows you to search some or all databases and the library catalogue simultaneously)?
- How do you access the “advanced search” function of the library’s search bar?
- Does your account have an eShelf or reading list to save sources you find?
- Is your library a member of a resource sharing network, like ILLiad or SUMMIT? How do you request a source through this network?
- Does your library subscribe to multimedia or digital resource services, like video streaming or eBook libraries?
- Does the site offer any citation management support software, like Mendeley or Zotero? (You can find links to these tools in the Additional Recommended Resources appendix.)

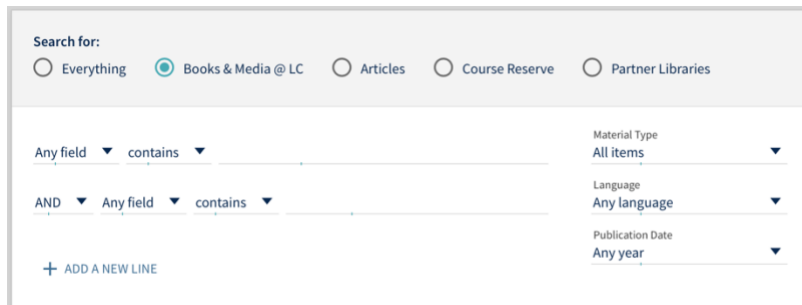
Utilizing Library Databases

It is worth noting that most library websites use an older form of search technology. You have likely realized that day-to-day search engines like Google will predict what you’re searching, correct your spelling, and automatically return results that your search terms might not have exactly aligned with. (For example, I could google *How many basketball players on Jazz roster* and I would still likely get the results I needed.) Most library search engines don’t do this, so you need to be very deliberate with your search terms. Here are some tips:

Consider synonyms and jargon that might be more likely to yield results. As you research, you will become more fluent in the language of your subject. Keep track of vocabulary that other scholars use, and revise your search terms based on this context-specific language.

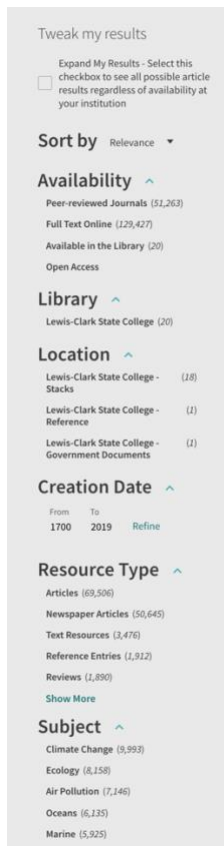
Use the Boolean operators ? and * for expanded results: wom?n yields results for woman, women, womyn, etc. medic* yields results for medic, medicine, medication, medicinal, medical, etc.

Use the advanced search feature to combine search terms, exclude certain results, limit the search terms' applicability, etc. When using library search engines, be very deliberate with your search terms.



The image shows a screenshot of an advanced search interface. At the top, there is a "Search for:" section with five radio button options: "Everything", "Books & Media @ LC" (which is selected), "Articles", "Course Reserve", and "Partner Libraries". Below this, there are two rows of search criteria. The first row has "Any field" and "contains" dropdown menus. The second row has "AND" and "Any field" dropdown menus, followed by a "contains" dropdown menu. To the right of these rows are three more dropdown menus: "Material Type" with "All items" selected, "Language" with "Any language" selected, and "Publication Date" with "Any year" selected. At the bottom left of the search area, there is a "+ ADD A NEW LINE" button.

Advanced search fields like the one above allow you to put more specific constraints on your search. Your library website's search feature will likely allow you to limit the results you get by year of publication, medium, genre or topic, and other constraints.



You may also be able to refine your first set of results using filters (found on the left side of the page as seen here.). For instance, if your teacher requires you to use a peer-reviewed source, your library database may allow you to limit your results to only peer-reviewed journals, as illustrated here.

Google Scholar

From [Writing in College](#) by Amy Guptill

An increasingly popular article database is [Google Scholar](#). It looks like a regular Google search, and it aspires to include the vast majority of published scholarship. Google doesn't share a list of which journals they include or how Google Scholar works, which limits its utility for scholars. Also, because it's so wide-ranging, it can be harder to find the most appropriate sources. However, if you want to cast a wide net, it's a very useful tool.

Here are three tips for using Google Scholar effectively:

Add your field (economics, psychology, French, etc.) as one of your keywords. If you just put in "crime," for example, Google Scholar will return all sorts of stuff from sociology, psychology, geography, and history. If your paper is on crime in French literature, your best sources may be buried under thousands of papers from other disciplines. A set of search terms like "crime French literature modern" will get you to relevant sources much faster.

Don't ever pay for an article. When you click on links to articles in Google Scholar, you may end up on a publisher's site that tells you that you can download the article for \$20 or \$30. Don't do it! You have access to virtually all the published academic literature through your library resources. Write down the key information (authors' names, title, journal title, volume, issue number, year, page numbers) and go find the article through your library website. If you don't have immediate full-text access, you may be able to get it through [LCSC's InterLibrary Loan](#) service.

Use the "cited by" feature. If you get one great hit on Google Scholar, you can quickly see a list of other papers that cited it. For example, the search terms "crime economics" yielded this hit for a 1988 paper that appeared in a journal called *Kyklos*:

The economics of crime deterrence: a survey of theory and evidence
 S Cameron - *Kyklos*, 1988 - [Wiley Online Library](#)
 Since BECKER [1968] economists have generated, a large literature on **crime**. Deterrence effects have figured prominently; few papers [eg HOCH, 1974] omit consideration of these. There are two reasons why a survey of the **economics** of deterrence is timely. Firstly, there ...
[Cited by 392](#) [Related articles](#) [All 5 versions](#) [Cite](#) [Save](#)

Figure 6 Google Scholar

1988 is nearly 30 years ago; for a social-science paper you probably want more recent sources. You can see that, according to Google, this paper was cited by 392 other sources. You can click on that "Cited by 392" to see that list. You can even search within that list of 392 if you're trying to narrow down the topic. For example, you could search on the term "cities" to see which of those 392 articles are most likely to be about the economic impact of crime on cities.

Comments about Google Scholar

from [EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers](#) by Shane Abrams, 2019

Google Scholar will often bring up citations for books, articles, and other texts that you don't have access to. If you are on the LCSC campus, the search engine should provide links to "Find it @ LCSC." If you find a citation, article preview, or other text via Google Scholar but can't access it easily, you can return to your library website and search for it directly. It's possible that you can also get it through [LCSC's InterLibrary Loan](#) service.

Accessing an Article in the Library

from [*Understanding and Using the Library and the Internet for Research, Chapter 2, The Process of Research Writing*](#)
by Steven D. Krause, Spring 2007

To find the article, you first have to determine if your library has the particular periodical. This is a key step. **Just because an item is listed in an index you have available to you in your library doesn't mean that your library subscribes to that particular periodical.** If you know it is an article that is critical to your research and it is in a periodical your library doesn't carry, you might want to discuss your options with a librarian. You still might be able to get access to the article through LCSC's Interlibrary Loan service, but you may have to wait a few days for an article or even weeks if it is a book, and your library might charge you a fee. (For English 102, you do not need to purchase any articles for your research. When it asks how much you are willing to spend, select the \$0 option.)

The process of how to find out if your library subscribes to a particular periodical varies from library to library. At many libraries, you can learn whether or not a particular periodical is available by doing a "title" search of the library's main electronic catalog. At other libraries, you have to conduct a search with a different electronic database.

You will also want to figure out whether or not the article you are looking for appears in a more current issue of the periodical. Most libraries keep the current magazines, journals, and newspapers in a reading room of some sort that is separate from where they keep older issues of periodicals. What counts as "current" depends on the periodical and your particular library's practices. For daily newspapers, libraries might only make a few weeks of the current editions available, while they might consider all of a year's worth of a journal that is only published three or four times a year as current.

If your library does carry the particular periodical publication where the article appears, your next step is to figure out *how* the library carries the item. Unlike books, libraries store periodical materials in several different ways. Ask your librarian how you can find out how your library stores particular periodicals, though this information is usually provided to you when you find out if your library carries the periodical in the first place.

Bound periodicals. Most libraries have shelves where they keep bound periodicals, which are groups of individual issues of a periodical that are bound together into book form. Individual issues of a magazine or journal (usually a year's worth) are made into one large book with the title of the periodical and the volume or year of editions of the periodical printed in bold letters on the spine of the book.

Microfilm/microfiche. Libraries also store periodicals by converting them to either microfilm or microfiche because it takes much less room to store these materials. Newspapers are almost always stored in one of these two formats or online. Microfilms are rolls of film where a black-and-white duplicate of the periodical publication appears, page for page as it appeared in the original. Microfiche are small sheets of film with black-and-white duplications of the original. To read these materials, library patrons must use special machinery that projects the images of the periodical pages onto a screen. Check with a librarian in your library about how to read and make copies of articles that are stored on microfilm or microfiche.

Electronic periodicals. Most college and university libraries also make periodicals available electronically through database subscriptions. Some articles are available as just text, which means any illustrations, charts, or photographs that might have accompanied the article as it was originally published won't be included. However, most online databases provide articles in PDF format, which you can then either download or email to yourself.

Some Tips

Scan or print out your articles. Most academic libraries won't let you check out periodicals. This means you will need to scan a copy of the article. The LCSC Library has scanners for this purpose. While it takes some time, your instructor may require you have a copy for annotation, as well as being able to return to the article later on when you're actually doing your writing.

Write down all the citation information before you leave the library. When you start using the evidence you find in journals, magazines, and newspapers to support your points in your research writing projects, you will need to give your evidence credit.

The key pieces of information to note about your evidence before you leave the library include the:

- type of periodical (a journal, a magazine, or a newspaper)
- title of the publication
- author or authors of the article
- title of the article
- date of the publication
- page numbers of the article

Recording all of this information does take a little time, but it is much easier to record that information when you first find the evidence than it is to try to figure it out later on.

Other Library Materials

Chances are, the bulk of your library research will involve books and periodicals. But libraries have many other types of materials that you might find useful for your research projects as well. Here are some examples and brief explanations of these materials.

Government Documents. Most college and university libraries in this country collect materials published by the United States federal government. Given the fact that the U.S. government releases more publications than any other organization in the world, the variety of materials commonly called “government documents” is quite broad. They include transcripts of congressional hearings and committee meetings; reports from almost every government office, agency and bureau; and pamphlets, newsletters, and periodic publications from various government sponsored institutes and associations. If your research project is about any issue involving an existing or proposed federal law, a government reform or policy, a foreign policy, or an issue on which the U.S. Congress held hearings about, chances are the federal government has published something about it.

The LCSC Library has resources for the Idaho, United States and international governments. You can find links under Databases & More -> [Government Information](#).

Interlibrary Loan. As mentioned earlier, the LCSC Library provides students and faculty ways to borrow materials from other libraries. The nature of this service, called *interlibrary loan* or ILL for short, is a series of partnerships with other libraries to make a loan of books and even periodicals quite easy and convenient. But since the library treats each interlibrary request as a special case, means it frequently is not quick and should not be counted on for assignments with short due dates.

Rare books and other special collections. Many college and university libraries have collections of unusual and often valuable materials that they hold as part of a special collection. Most of these special collections consist of materials that can be loosely classified as rare books: books, manuscripts, and other publications that are valuable because of their age, their uniqueness, the fame of the author, and so forth. Your research project probably won't require you to use these unusual collections, but rare book and other special collection portions of the library can be interesting.

Researching on the Internet

The great advantage of the internet is it is a fast and convenient way to get information on almost anything. It has revolutionized how all academics conduct research and practice writing. However, while the internet is a tremendous research resource, **you are still more likely to find detailed, accurate, and more credible information in the library than on the web.** Books and journals are increasingly becoming available online, but most are still only available in libraries. This is particularly true of academic publications. You also have a much better chance of finding credible and accurate information in the library than on the internet. It is easy to imagine a time when most academic journals and even academic books will be available only electronically. But for the time-being, you should view the library and the internet as tools that work together and that play off of each other in the process of research. Library research will give you ideas for searches to conduct on the internet, and internet research will often lead you back to the more traditional print materials housed in your library.

Netiquette

Netiquette is simply the concept of courtesy and politeness when working on the internet. The common sense “golden rule” of everyday life—“do unto others as you would want them to do to you”—is the main rule to keep in mind online as well.

But there are two reasons why practicing good netiquette in discussion forums is more difficult than practicing good etiquette in real life. First, many people new to the internet and its discussion forums aren’t aware that there are differences between how one behaves online versus how to behave in real life. Folks new to the internet in general or to a specific online community in particular often are inadvertently rude or inconsiderate to others. It is a bit like traveling to a different country: if you are unfamiliar with the language and customs, it is easy to unintentionally do or not do something that is considered wrong or rude in that culture.

Second, the internet is a volatile and potentially combative discussion space where people can find themselves offending or being offended by others quickly. The main reason for this is the internet lacks the visual cues of “face-to-face” communication or the oral cues of a phone conversation. We convey a lot of information with the tone of our voice, our facial expression, or hand gestures. A simple question like “Are you serious?” can take on many different meanings depending on how you emphasize the words, whether or not you are smiling or frowning, whether or not you say it in a laughing tone or a loud and angry tone, or whether or not you are raising your hand or pointing a finger at the speaker.

The lack of visual or oral cues is also a problem with writing, of course, but online writing tends to be much more like speaking than more traditional forms of writing because it is usually briefer and much quicker in transmission. It's difficult to imagine a heated argument that turns into name calling happening between two people writing letters back and forth, but it is not at all difficult to imagine (or experience!) an argument that arose out of some sort of miscommunication with the use of email messages that travel from writers to readers in mere seconds.

Here are some basic guidelines for practicing good netiquette:

Be courteous . Always remember that real people are on the other side of the email or newsgroup message you are responding to or asking about. As such, remember to try and treat people as you would want them to treat you.

Don't type in all capital letters. "All caps" is considered shouting on the internet. Unless you mean to shout something, don't do this.

Look for, ask for, and read discussion group FAQs. Many discussion groups have a "Frequently Asked Questions" document for their members. Before posting to an internet group, try to read this document to get an idea about what is or isn't discussed in the forum.

Read some of the messages before posting to your electronic group. Make sure you have a sense of the tone and type of conversation that takes place in the forum before posting a message of your own.

Do not send advertisements, chain letters, or personal messages to a discussion group.

Ask permission to quote from others on the list. If someone writes something in a newsgroup or an emailing list discussion forum you think might be useful to quote in your research project, send a private email to the author of the post and ask for permission. Along these lines, do not post copyrighted material to the internet without getting permission from the holder of the copyright to do so.

Make sure your email messages and other discussion forum posts have subjects. Keep the subject line brief and to the point, but be sure to include it. If your message is part of an ongoing conversation, make sure your subject is the same as the other subject lines in the conversation.

Searching the Internet or Using Google Effectively

Search engines are software-driven websites that allow users to search by entering in a word, a phrase, or even another websites address. Search engines are “for profit” enterprises which come and go in the fast-paced world of the internet.

The most well-known search engine and the one that dominates the market is Google. Search engines make money by advertising and listing those sponsors first—Google and other search engines note that these are “Sponsored Links.” In addition, search engine searches are conducted by machines. Unlike a library catalog, which is created by people, search engine databases are created and searched through by powerful algorithms that constantly scans the ever-growing websites to include in its database. Software can catalog materials faster than people, but it cannot prioritize or sort the material as precisely as people. As a result, a search engine search will frequently return tens of thousands of matches, most of which have little relevance to you.

But to get the most out of a search engine search, you have to “search smart.” Typing in a word or a phrase into any search engine will return results, but you have a much better chance of getting better results if you take the time conduct a good search engine search.

Read through the “advanced search” tips or “help” documents. All of the major search engines provide information about conducting advanced searches, which you should read for at least two reasons. First, the advanced search tips or help documents explain the specific rules for conducting more detailed searches with that particular search engine. Different search engines are similar, but not identical. Some search engines will allow a search for a word root or truncation—in other words, if you type in a word with an asterisk in some search engines (“bank*” for example), you will do a search for other forms of the word (banks, banker, banking, etc.). Some search engines don’t allow for this feature.

Second, many search engines have features that you wouldn’t know about unless you examined the advanced search or help documents.

Advanced Search

Find pages with...		To do this in the search box
all these words:	<input type="text"/>	Type the important words: tricolor rat terrier
this exact word or phrase:	<input type="text"/>	Put exact words in quotes: "rat terrier"
any of these words:	<input type="text"/>	Type OR between all the words you want: miniature OR standard
none of these words:	<input type="text"/>	Put a minus sign just before words you don't want: -rodent, -"Jack Russell"
numbers ranging from:	<input type="text"/> to <input type="text"/>	Put 2 periods between the numbers and add a unit of measure: 10..35 lb, \$300..\$500, 2010..2011

Then narrow your results by...

language:	<input type="text" value="any language"/>	Find pages in the language you select.
region:	<input type="text" value="any region"/>	Find pages published in a particular region.
last update:	<input type="text" value="anytime"/>	Find pages updated within the time you specify.
site or domain:	<input type="text"/>	Search one site (like wikipedia.org) or limit your results to a domain like .edu, .org or .gov
terms appearing:	<input type="text" value="anywhere in the page"/>	Search for terms in the whole page, page title, or web address, or links to the page you're looking for.
SafeSearch:	<input type="text" value="Filter explicit results"/>	Tell SafeSearch whether to filter sexually explicit content.
file type:	<input type="text" value="any format"/>	Find pages in the format you prefer.
usage rights:	<input type="text" value="not filtered by license"/>	Find pages you are free to use yourself.

[Advanced Search](#)

If you click on the [Advanced Search](#) option on the Google homepage, you are taken to this page that offers a variety of ways to refine your search. For example, you can search for an exact phrase, for "at least one word" in a phrase, and for pages that do not contain a particular phrase.

Try using as many different synonyms and related terms for your search as possible. For example, instead of using only the term "drug advertising" in your search, try using "pharmaceutical advertising," "prescription drug promotions," "television and prescription drugs," and so forth.

This is extremely important because there is no systematic way to categorize and catalog information similar to the way it is done in libraries. As a result, there is no such thing as a "subject" search on a search engine, certainly not in the way you can search subjects with the Library of Congress system. Some websites might refer to drunk driving as "drunk driving," while other websites might refer to drunk driving as "driving while intoxicated."

Take your time and look past the first page of your search results. If you do a search for "drug advertising" with a search engine, you will get thousands of matches. Most search

engines organize the results so that the pages that are most likely to be useful in your search will appear first. However, it is definitely worthwhile to page through several pages of results. Search engines like Google support basic Boolean search commands (and, and/or, not, etc.), and a lot of other even more sophisticated commands. For example, Google allows you to search for synonyms for a term by typing “~” in front of it. For example, the search “~corporal punishment” also returns information about web sites that use the synonym “spanking.”

About Wikipedia

from *EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers* by Shane Abrams, 2019

A quick note on [Wikipedia](#): many instructors forbid the use of Wikipedia as a cited source in an essay. Wikipedia is a great place for quick facts and background knowledge, but because its content is user-created and -curated, it is vulnerable to the spread of misinformation characteristic of the broader internet. Wikipedia has been vetting their articles more thoroughly in recent years, but only about 1 in 200 are internally rated as “good articles.” There are two hacks that you should know in order to use Wikipedia more critically:

It is wise to avoid a page has a warning banner at the top, such as:

- This article needs to be updated,
- The examples and perspective in this article deal primarily with the United States and do not represent a worldwide view of the subject,
- The neutrality of this article is disputed,
- This article needs additional citations for verification,
- This article includes a list of references, but its sources remain unclear because it has insufficient inline citations.

If your Wikipedia information is crucial and seems reliable, use the linked citation to draw from instead of the Wikipedia page, as pictured below. This will help you ensure that the linked content is legitimate (dead links and suspect citations are no good) and avoid citing Wikipedia as a main source.

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Additional Techniques for Discovering Sources

All it takes is one or two really good sources to get you started. You should keep your perspective wide to catch as much as you can—but if you've found a handful of good sources, there are four tools that can help you find even more:

The author of that perfect article probably got some of their information from somewhere else, just like you. Citation mining is the process of using a text's citations, bibliography, or notes to track down other similar or related sources. Look at the end of the article to see what sources the author used to help with their research. These can be very helpful at finding other connected research.

You can also do a reverse citation search in [Google Scholar](#). The Google Scholar search engine specifically searches for academic journal articles. As you can see below, the article also mentions how many times it was cited as part of someone else's research. Looking at the list of articles may also lead to new research on your topic.

Stream, lake, estuary, and ocean pollution

NL Nemerow - 1991 - osti.gov

This book, an updated version of the 1985 edition, contains thirteen chapters, beginning with a preface which provides the objective of the book. The primary objective is to offer a comprehensive survey of the biological, hydrological, mathematical, and biochemical ...

☆  [Cited by 202](#) [Related articles](#) [All 5 versions](#) 

Bootstrapping is another technique that works best on search engines with detail features, like the LCSC Library or Lewiston City Library search engine. As was pointed out earlier, these search engines tag each text with certain subject keywords. By clicking on those keywords, you can link to other texts tagged with the same keywords, typically according to Library of Congress standards.

[WorldCat](#) is a tremendous tool that catalogs the most citations of any database I've ever seen. Even though you can't always access texts through WorldCat, you can figure out which nearby libraries might be able to help you out. The first and most important piece of advice I can offer you as you begin to dig into these sources: stay organized. By taking notes and keeping record of where each idea is coming from, you save yourself a lot of time—and avoid the risk of unintentional plagiarism.

Chapter 3

Analyzing Data for a Research Essay

Overview

Now that you have found sources (primary and secondary), it is important to ask yourself a few questions: a) do I have enough sources (quantity) b) are the sources good enough (quality) and c) do the sources pertain to the scope of my argument or analysis, or will I need to find additional sources that have a more narrowed angle? These are all questions that will help you determine the most valuable sources for your paper and initially aid in drafting an annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography is a dynamic, working document that not only helps you organize your sources for reference but reminds you and your reader as to why and how you are using these articles, books, and multimedia sources.

The analyzing stage is also often the time when you weed out sources that simply repeat what another source says but does so better. It's important, too, to ensure that you understand the content of the sources that you have. Often scholarly, peer-reviewed sources, while higher quality, require more attention and critical reading than a popular source, such as a newspaper or magazine article.

Once you have gone through the tedious but rewarding process of reading, understanding, and documenting your sources, you're reading to begin using them. This means transitioning from critical reading to critical writing. So let's go!

Chapter Contents

The Analyzing chapter includes readings and exercises on:

- Compiling an annotated bibliography
- Categorizing and evaluating your sources
- Critiquing and summarizing your sources
- Writing a summary-response
- Synthesizing your sources
- Writing a literature review

The Annotated Bibliography

From Chapter 6 of *The Process of Research Writing* | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- What is an Annotated Bibliography?
- Why Write Annotated Bibliographies?
- “How many sources do I need?”
- Using Computers to Write Annotated Bibliographies
- The Process of Writing the Annotated Bibliography
 - * A Sample Assignment
 - * The Annotated Bibliography and Collaboration
 - * Questions to Ask while Writing and Researching
 - * Review and Revision

What is an Annotated Bibliography?

As you develop a working thesis for your research project and begin to collect different pieces of evidence, you will soon find yourself needing some sort of system for keeping track of everything. The system discussed in this chapter is an **annotated bibliography**, which is a list of sources on a particular topic that includes a brief summary of what each source is about. This writing assignment is a bit different from the others in that isn't an “essay” per se; rather it is an ongoing writing project that you will be “building” as you discover new pieces of evidence for your research project.

Here is an example of an entry from an annotated bibliography in MLA style:

Parsons, Matt. “Protecting Children on the Electronic Frontier: A Law Enforcement Challenge.” FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin 69.10 (2000): 22-26.

This article is about an educational program used by the U.S. Navy to educate people in the Navy and their families about some of the things that are potentially dangerous to children about the internet. Parsons says that the educational program has been effective.

Annotated bibliography entries have two parts. The top of the entry is the **citation**. It is the part that starts “Parsons, Matt” and that lists information like the name of the writer, where the evidence appeared, the date of publication, and other publishing information.

For guidelines on how to properly write citations for your annotated bibliographies, see the Purdue OWL [APA Style](#) or [MLA Style](#) handbook for up-to-date details.

The second part of the entry is the **summary** of the evidence being cited. A good annotated bibliography summary provides enough information in a sentence or two to help you and others understand what the research is about in a neutral and non-opinionated way.

Tip!

Although we are not covering it here, please note that there are also other forms of annotated bibliographies, such as summary/evaluation bibliographies. You can find descriptions and samples of summary/evaluation bibliographies here at [OWL Purdue](#).

Remember to always read your instructor's assignment guidelines carefully so that you know their expectations regarding the specific type of annotated bibliography you should write. And if you have any questions, be sure to ask!

The first two sentences of this annotation are an example of this sort of very brief, "just the facts" sort of summary. In the brief summaries of entries in an annotated bibliography, stay away from making evaluations about the source—"I didn't like this article very much" or "I thought this article was great." The most important goal of your brief summary is to help you, colleagues, and other potential readers get an idea about the subject of the particular piece of evidence.

Summaries can be challenging to write, especially when you are trying to write them about longer and more complicated sources of research. Keep these guidelines in mind as you write your own summaries.

Keep your summary short. Good summaries for annotated bibliographies are not "complete" summaries; rather, they provide the highlights of the evidence in as brief and concise a manner as possible, no more than a sentence or two.

Don't quote from what you are summarizing. Summaries will be more useful to you and your colleagues if you write them in your own words. Instead of quoting directly what you think is the point of the piece of evidence, try to paraphrase it. (For more information on paraphrasing your evidence, see Chapter 3, "Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism").

Don't "cut and paste" from database abstracts. Many of the periodical indexes that are available as part of your library's computer system include abstracts of articles. Do not "cut" this abstract material and then "paste" it into your own annotated bibliography. For one thing, this is plagiarism. Second, "cutting and pasting" from the abstract defeats one of the purposes of writing summaries and creating an annotated bibliography in the first place, which is to help you understand and explain your research.

Different writers will inevitably write slightly different summaries of the same evidence. Some differences between different writers' summaries of the same piece of evidence result from different interpretations of what is important in the research; there's nothing wrong with that.

However, two summaries from different writers should both provide a similar summary. In other words, it's not acceptable when the difference of interpretation is the result of a lack of understanding of the evidence.

Why write Annotated Bibliographies?

An annotated bibliography is an excellent way to keep track of the research you gather for your project. Make no mistake about it— **it is extremely important that you keep track of all of your evidence for your research project, and that you keep track of it from the beginning of the process of research writing.**

There's nothing more frustrating than finding an excellent article or book chapter you are excited about incorporating into your research project, only to realize you have forgotten where you found the article or book chapter in the first place. This is extremely frustrating, and it's easily avoided by doing something like writing an annotated bibliography.

You could use other methods for keeping track of your research. For example, you could use note cards and write down the source information as a proper citation, then write down the information about the source that is important. If the material you know you want to use from a certain source is short enough, you might even write a direct quote, which is where you write down word for word what the source says exactly as it is written. At other times, you can write a paraphrase, which is where you write down what the source means using your own words.

While note cards and other methods have their advantages, annotated bibliographies are an extremely useful tool for keeping track of your research. An annotated bibliography:

- Centralizes your research into one document that you can keep track of both as a print-out of a word-processed file and as a file you save electronically.
- Allows you to “copy and paste” citation information into the works cited part of your research project.

An annotated bibliography also gives you the space to start writing and thinking a bit about how some of your research might fit into your project. Consider these two sample entries from an annotated bibliography from a research project on pharmaceutical advertising:

Siegel, Marc. “Fighting the Drug (ad) Wars.” *The Nation* 17 June 2002: 21.

Siegel, who is a doctor himself, writes about how drug advertising has undermined the communication between doctors and patients. He says that drug ads have driven up the costs of prescription drugs, particularly big selling drugs like those for cholesterol.

Wechsler, Jill. "Minority Docs See DTC Ads as Way to Address 'Race Gap.'" *Pharmaceutical Executive* May 2002: 32, 34. *WilsonSelect Database*. Eastern Michigan University Halle Library. 20 October 2002. <<http://www.emich.edu/halle>>.

This article is about a study that said that African-American doctors saw advertising of prescription drugs as a way of educating their patients. The ads are useful because they talk about diseases that affect African-Americans.

Even from the limited amount of information available in these entries, it's clear that a relationship between these articles exists. Both are similar articles about how the doctor/patient relationship is affected by drug advertising. But both are also different. The first article is from the newspaper *The Nation*, which is in many ways similar to an academic journal and which is also known for its liberal views. The second article is from a trade journal (also similar to academic journals in many ways) that obviously is an advocate for the pharmaceutical industry.

In other words, in the process of compiling an annotated bibliography, you are doing more than keeping track of your research. You are starting to make some comparisons and beginning to see some relationships between your evidence, a process that will become increasingly important as you gather more research and work your way through the different exercises that lead to the research project.

But remember: However you decide to keep track of your research as you progress through your project—annotated bibliography, note cards, or another method—**the important thing is that you need to keep track of your research as you progress through your project!**

How many sources do I need?

Inevitably, students in research writing classes always ask how many sources they need to include in their research projects. In one sense, "how many sources do I need?" is a utilitarian question, one usually attached to a student's exploration of what it will take to get a particular grade. Considered more abstractly, this question is also an effort to explore the scope of a research project. Like a certain page or word count requirement, the question "how many sources do I need?" is an effort to get a handle on the scope of the research project assignment. In that sense, asking about the number of sources is probably a good idea, a little like asking how much something weighs before you attempt to pick it up.

But ultimately, there is no right or wrong answer to this question. Longer research projects tend to have evidence from more different sources than shorter projects, but there is no cut-and-dry formula where "X" number of pages will equal "X" number of sources.

However, an annotated bibliography should contain significantly more entries than you intend or expect to include in your research project. For example, if you think you will need or if your instructor requires you to have research from about seven different sources, you should probably have about 15 different entries on your annotated bibliography.

The reasons you need to find twice as many sources as you are likely to use is that you want to find and use the *best* research you can reasonably find, not the *first* pieces of research you can find. Usually, researchers have to look at a lot more information than they would ever include in a research writing project to begin making judgements about their research. And by far the worst thing you can do in your research is to stop right after you have found the number of sources required by the instructor for your project.

Using Computers to Write Annotated Bibliographies

Personal computers, word-processing software, and the internet can make putting together an annotated bibliography more useful and a lot easier. If you use word-processing software to create your annotated bibliography, you can dramatically simplify the process of creating a “works cited” or “references” page, which is a list of the sources you quote in your research project. All you will have to do is “copy and paste” the citation from the annotated bibliography into your research project—that is, using the functions of your computer and word processing software, “copy” the full citation that you have completed on your annotated bibliography page and “paste” it into the works cited page of your research project.

This same sort of “copy and paste” function also comes in handy when doing research on the web. For example, you can usually copy and paste the citation information from your library’s online database for pieces of evidence you are interested in reading. In most cases, you should be able to “copy and paste” information you find in your library’s online database into a word processing file. Many library databases—both for books and for periodicals—also have a feature that will allow you to email yourself results from a search.

Keep two things in mind about using computers for your annotated bibliographies:

1. You will have to reformat whatever information you get from the internet or your library’s databases in order to meet MLA or APA style.
2. *Don’t use the copy and paste feature to plagiarize!* Simply copying things like abstracts defeats one of the important purposes for writing an annotated bibliography in the first place, and it’s cheating.

Assignment: Writing an Annotated Bibliography

As you conduct your research for your research writing project, compile an annotated bibliography with 15-20 entries. Each entry in your annotated bibliography should contain a citation, a brief summary of the cited material. You will be completing the project in phases and a complete and revised version of it will be due when you have completed your research.

You should think of your annotated bibliography as having roughly twice as many sources as the number of sources you will need to include for the research project, but your instructor might have a different requirement regarding the number of sources required.

Also, you should work on this assignment in parts. Going to the library and trying to complete this assignment in one sitting could turn this into a dreadful writing experience. However, if you complete it in stages, you will have a much better understanding of how your resources relate to each other.

You will probably need to discuss with your instructor the style of citation you need to follow for your research project and your annotated bibliography. Following a citation style isn't difficult to do, but you will want to be consistent and aware of the "rules" from the beginning. In other words, if you start off using MLA style, don't switch to APA style halfway through your annotated bibliography or your research project.

For an explanation of the differences of and the guidelines for using both MLA and APA style, see information on the [Purdue OWL Research and Citation Resources](#).

Last, but not least, you will need to discuss with your instructor the sorts of materials you need to include in your research and your annotated bibliography. You may be required to include a balance of research from scholarly and non-scholarly sources, and from "traditional" print resources (books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and so forth) and the internet.

Questions to Ask while Writing and Researching

- Would you classify the material as a primary or a secondary source? Does the research seem to be difficult to categorize this way?
- Is the research from a scholarly or a non-scholarly publication? Does the research seem difficult to categorize this way?

- Is the research from the internet—a web page, an email message, etc.? Remember: while internet research is not necessarily “bad” research, you do need to be more careful in evaluating the credibility of internet-based sources.
- Do you know who wrote the material you are including in your annotated bibliography? What qualifications does your source say the writer has?
- Why do you think the writer wrote it? Do they have a self-interest or a political viewpoint that might make them overly biased?
- Besides the differences between scholarly, non-scholarly, and internet sources, what else do you know about where your research was published? Is it an academic book? An article in a respected journal? An article in a news magazine or newspaper?
- When was it published? Given your research topic, how important do you think the date of publication is?
- Are you keeping your summaries brief and to the point, focusing on the point your research source is trying to make?
- If it’s part of the assignment, are you including a sentence or two about how you see this piece of research fitting into your overall research project?

Revision and Review

Because of its ongoing nature, revising an annotated bibliography is a bit different than the typical revision process. Take opportunities as you compile your annotated bibliography to show your work in progress to your classmates, your instructor, and other readers you trust. If you are working collaboratively on your research projects, you will certainly want to share your annotated bibliography with classmates who are working on a similar topic. Working together like this can be a very useful way to get more ideas about where your research is going.

It is best to approach the annotated bibliography in smaller steps—five or six entries at a time. If that’s how you’re approaching this project, then you will always be in a process of revision and review with your classmates and your instructor. You and your readers (your instructor and your classmates) should think about these questions as you revise, review, and add entries:

- Are the summaries you are including brief and to the point? Do your readers understand what the cited articles are about?
- Are you following a particular style guide consistently?
- If you are including a sentence or two about each of your resources, how do these sentences fit with your working thesis? Are they clarifying parts of your working thesis that were previously unclear? Are they suggesting changes to the approach you took when you began the research process?

- Based on the research you have so far, what other types of research do you think you need to find?

Categorizing and Evaluating Your Research

From [Chapter 9 of The Process of Research Writing](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

The Categorization and Evaluation Exercise

- Revisiting your Working Thesis Again
- Why Categorize and Evaluate Evidence?
- Dividing, Conquering, Categorizing: A Few Rules to Follow
- Some Sample Categories
- Charting Your Categories
- Assignment: Writing the Categorization and Evaluation Exercise
- Questions to Consider as You Write Your First Draft
 - Review and Revision
 - A Student Example: "Categorizing My Research on Drug Advertising" by Jeremy Stephens

Revisiting your Working Thesis Again

Before you start working on the categorization and evaluation exercises, you should revisit the progress of your working thesis. Your instructor may ask you to complete the antithesis essay, outlined later in this book, by encouraging you to first take a moment to take stock of the current version of your working thesis. It's important to embark on research projects with some sense of where you're going, and the main advantage and goal of a working thesis is it establishes a direction for you to pursue your research.

As I've also said before, your working thesis will almost inevitably change a bit as you work your way through the process of research writing and the exercises in this book. You begin in one place with some sense of direction about what you want to research, but when you start gathering and examining your evidence and as you work through the exercises, it's important to be willing and able to change directions. In other words, a working thesis is where you start your research project, but it isn't necessarily where you end your research project.

Activity: Evaluate Your Working Thesis

Either as a short writing exercise or with a group of your peers, consider once again the evolution of your working thesis.

- Where did it start out and how has it changed to what it is now?

- What sparked these changes in your working thesis and your point of view on your topic? If your working thesis has not changed yet, why do you think this is the case? Why or why not?

Why Categorize and Evaluate Evidence?

We divide things into categories in order to make some sense of and interpret all sorts of different things. Stores are arranged according to categories that tend to make sense of what's in them for shoppers—for example, department stores divide their merchandise up into categories like women's clothing, hardware, sporting goods, housewares, and so forth.

We also expect things to be categorized in a descriptive and sensible way. Department stores tend to arrange things by what you might use them for and who might use them: kitchen things are in one part of the store, sheets in another, women's clothing in one part, and men's clothing in still another part. These categories aren't the only way the department store owners could arrange things. They could arrange things by color—all of the blue things in one part of the store (blue cookware, blue sheets, blue shirts, etc.), all of the white things in another part of the store, and so forth. While that might make for a visually interesting store, it would be very difficult for customers to find anything in such an arrangement.

Categorizing your research will:

- Help you (and eventually your readers) make better sense of what sort of evidence you have.
- Enable you to compare and contrast different pieces of evidence and to evaluate your research, which is an essential step in the process of research writing.
- Give you get a clearer sense of the evidence that you have and the evidence you are lacking.

Dividing, Conquering, Categorizing: A Few Rules to Follow

While there are no formal rules for categorizing your research, there are a few guidelines that you need to consider as you begin to categorize your research for the purposes of writing about and evaluating it.

You have to have a significant body of research to categorize in the first place. Hopefully, you have started compiling an annotated bibliography, and you have been working on adding to your annotated bibliography as you have progressed through the other exercises and projects in *Say it Well* by gathering materials from the library, the internet, interviews, and so

forth. If you haven't done these things yet, you probably aren't ready for the categorization and evaluation essay exercise.

Each piece of research has to fit into a category. No matter how you decide to categorize your research, be sure that all of it can be put into at least one category.

As you try to meet this guideline, be careful to follow the next one as well:

As much as possible, each category should have at least two pieces of research. Avoid having categories with just one item. One item categories don't allow you to make comparisons or generalizations about how things might be similar; they only demonstrate how things are different, which is only one of the functions of categorizing your research. Also, if you allow yourself one item categories, it can often be a little too tempting to make too many one item categories.

If you get completely stuck with what categories to put some of your evidence in, you can create a "miscellaneous" category, though I would encourage you to avoid it if you can. Having categories that are more specific than "miscellaneous" will help you in writing about these categories and what they mean for your research.

Categories should be as distinct and different from each other as possible. If there is no difference between the items that you put in the category "from newspapers" and those from the category "from nonacademic sources," then put all of the sources from both categories into only one category.

Last but not least, categories should make sense and tell you and potential readers about what you think of your evidence. It probably wouldn't make much sense and wouldn't be very meaningful to have a category consisting of articles that appeared on page four of newspapers, or a category consisting of articles that were published in journals with titles that begin with the letter "R."

Sometimes, categories that might seem to be illogical actually make sense once they are explained. It might not seem to make much sense for a writer to categorize his evidence according to the gender of the authors. But if the writer is trying to make a point about how men and women hold different attitudes about the topic of the research, it might make quite a bit of sense to have at least one category that examines the gender of the source.

Sample Categories

Beyond the few general rules I just described, categorizing things can be a very idiosyncratic and specific activity. But to get you started in coming up with categories of your own, I'd like to suggest a few ways to categorize your research that should be applicable for most research projects:

Categories of the Author

- Academic or scholarly writer
- Non-expert writer (a magazine writer or writers with no stated credentials, for example)
- Non-writers (that is, pieces of evidence where no author is named)

Categories of Source

- Primary Sources
- Secondary Sources
- Academic journal or book
- Non-academic or popular press magazine or book
- Newspapers
- Internet-based resources
- Interviews (or other primary research you may have conducted)

Other Potentially Useful Categories

- Date of publication—either a particular year, before or after a particular event, etc. For example, if your working thesis was about gun control and teen violence, it might be significant to compare the research you have that was published before the 1999 Columbine High School shootings to the research that was published after the shootings.
- Research that generally supports your working thesis.
- Research that generally supports antithetical arguments to your working thesis.

Of course, not all of these sample categories will work equally well for all research projects, and it is possible that the categories you will find most useful for this exercise are ones that are very specific to your own research project.

Activity : Identifying Categories

- Which of the previous sample categories seem to be most potentially useful for your research project?
- What other ideas do you have for other categories on your research?
- Working alone or in small groups, consider as many categories for your evidence as possible.

Charting Your Categories

Once you have some ideas about what categories you think will be useful for dividing your evidence, you have to figure out how you want to do it. I recommend you create a table or chart, either by taking advantage of the table function of your word processor, using a spreadsheet software, or just good old-fashioned paper and pen or pencil. Write your categories across the top and some basic citation information—author, title, publication, etc.—about each piece of your evidence along the left side of the table. In each “cell” of the table or chart created by this arrangement, indicate if the article falls into that category and make any other notation that you think will help explain how the article fits into that category.

The example below is part of a categorization chart that explores the topic of computer crime and computer hacking. The writer’s current working thesis at this stage of the project was “While many hackers commit serious computer crimes and represent a serious internet security problem, they can also help law enforcement officials to solve and prevent crime.” The left-hand column lists the title of the articles that the writer is categorizing, while the categories themselves are listed across the top row.

There are other possibilities for categories not included here of course, and I would encourage you to come up with as many categories as you can for this step in the process of writing a categorization essay. There are ten different pieces of evidence being categorized here. You could do more or less, though again, though for this exercise to be effective, you should chart at least five or six pieces of evidence.

As you can also see here, most of the entries include at least a few extra notes to explain why they are in different categories. That’s okay, and these notes might be helpful to the writer later on when he puts together his categorization and evaluation essay.

Example: A Categorization Chart

Evidence:	Web-based Sources	Academic/Trade Sources	Gov. Doc Sources	Popular Sources	Hackers always bad	Hackers sometimes good	Enforcement/fighting crime
Brenner, Susan cybercrimes.net, 01	XX	XX (Law school)			XX (Legal issues/laws against)		XX (courts, laws, etc.)
Cameron, Al "Fighting Internet Freud" <i>Business Credit</i> , 02		XX (Trade Pub)			XX (Money & business)		XX (cops, company software)
"Cybercrime.gov" US. Gov., 02	XX		XX (Dept. of Justice)		XX (terrorism, fraud)		XX (FBI, etc.)
"Cybercrime soars" <i>Info Management Jrn</i> , 02		XX (Trade pub)			XX		
Markoff, John. "New Center..." <i>NYT</i> , 10/99				XX	XX (business)		XX (private business)
Neighly, Patrick "Meet the hackers" <i>America's Network</i> , 00		XX (??)				XX ("hanging out" with hackers)	
Palmer, CC. "Ethical Hacking" <i>IBM Sys. J</i> , 01		XX (Trade pub)				XX (can help with business)	XX (hackers fighting crime)
Sauer, Geoffrey "Hackers, Order, Control" <i>Bad Subjects</i> 2/96		XX (Culture studies)				XX (the "culture" of hacking)	
Speer, David "Redefining Borders:" <i>C, L & S C</i> , 00		XX (Crimin-ology)			XX (business but individuals, too)		XX (abstract ideas)
"World Cybercrime..." <i>CNN</i> , 10/02	XX (CNN web site)			XX	XX (business, terrorism)		XX (international effort)

Presumably, you are not familiar with the specifics about these pieces of evidence; but for the purposes of this example, it's more important that you understand the categories and the

process the writer must have gone through to come up with this chart. The number of observations that can be made from a chart like this could be explored in more detail in a categorization and evaluation essay. You'll use your own chart to complete such an essay later in this chapter.

While the reasons for the articles for being put into the category "Hackers always bad" are similar (fear of damage to business and the potential for terrorism), the reasons why the articles were put into the category "Hackers sometimes good" vary. The Palmer essay suggests that hackers might be beneficial (when they work "ethically," as the title says) in order to help protect business from the attacks of "bad" hackers. While both the Neighly and Sauer articles make distinctions between "good" and "bad" hackers, these essays are more focused on hackers as people than as criminals.

All of this suggests that if the writer wanted to continue exploring this idea of "hacking," it might be wise for the researcher to carefully consider how hacking is discussed. For example, how does each article define "hacking?" How does each article assess the potential threat or potential benefit of computer hacking?

With the possible exception of the Neighly essay, the three essays that describe computer hacking as something that is sometimes good are from academic or "trade" publications. The writer put question marks in his chart in the "Academic/Trade Sources" category next to the Neighly essay because it was a difficult to categorize source that seemed to fit best here. . Interestingly enough, one of the "hackers sometimes good" publication was produced by the computer company IBM. The professional and trade publications that suggest computer hacking is always bad focus on the issues of the law, law enforcement, or criminology.

Almost all of the evidence included here is concerned with enforcing the laws and fighting against cybercrime, but there seems to be little consensus as to how to do it. Some of the resources are advocating for tougher U.S. federal laws; one is advocating international action; and some are suggesting that enforcement must come mainly from the internet business community.

There is only one government publication listed on this categorization chart, which suggests that either the U.S. government has not published many documents on computer crime and hacking, or the researcher ought to consider conducting some more research that focuses on government documents.

The same can be said in some ways about Web-based resources: all of the Web-based research portrays computer hacking as an unlawful and criminal act. Considering the fact that the World Wide Web is a space with many divergent views (especially about topics like computer crime and computer hacking), it seems logical that there may be worthwhile to see what other evidence is available on the web.

This process of charting your categories is one that can go much further than suggested here. For example, perhaps your initial categories have prompted you to consider new ways to categorize your evidence, which might lead to additional relationships between your sources. You might also include more evidence, which again might lead to different observations about your evidence.

Ultimately, you have to write about the results of your categorization in the form of an essay. I will describe this in more detail in the next section of this chapter, but you might want to consider two strategies as you move from the “charting” phase of this exercise to the “drafting” phase:

You will have to explain the significance of your different categories and groupings of evidence in your essay for this exercise, perhaps more than you might think. As the writer, the division of the evidence might make perfect sense to you, but that “sense” often is not as accessible to your readers. This potential of missing your audience is possible with any writing project, but it is something to be especially mindful about with this exercise.

Charting of evidence will probably yield many different and interesting points of comparison and evaluation, but you should focus on the points of comparison you think are the *most significant*. In other words, you probably shouldn’t talk about each and every category you chart.

Activity: Create a Categorization Chart

Try creating a categorization chart of your own. Working alone or in small collaborative groups, group your sources according to categories that make sense to you, perhaps the ones you developed in the previous exercise.

On a piece of paper or on a computer using a spreadsheet or table-making software, create a chart that looks similar to the one in this section. Do you notice similarities or differences between your evidence you didn’t notice before? Are there any short-comings or other imbalances between your categories that might help you better target what you need in any additional research? What other sorts of observations can you make about your research?

Assignment: Writing the Categorization and Evaluation Essay

Write an essay that categorizes the evidence you have up to this point in order to assess the strengths and weakness of various types of evidence, to draw some conclusions about your evidence and topic, and to take inventory of your research. Be sure to explain the categories you establish for comparing and contrasting your evidence and to make some sort of conclusion based on your criteria.

In this writing exercise you need to be especially careful about understanding your audience. If your main audience for this project is a group of readers who are already familiar with the evidence you will be comparing (because they are classmates that you've been collaborating with all semester, for example) and the purposes of your comparison, then you may not have to provide much summary of the research you are categorizing and evaluating.

On the other hand, if your main audience for this project is not already familiar with your research or the process you've gone through to categorize your evidence, you might have to provide both a detailed explanation of the process you went through to categorize your evidence and a summary of the evidence you are categorizing. When in doubt, you should assume that your readers are not familiar with the process of categorization or the evidence being categorized and evaluated.

Another important part of this writing exercise is focusing in on just a few categories in order to make an overall evaluation of the evidence. Remember: the goal of categorizing your evidence the way you have here is to make evaluations of your evidence that are interesting to you and potential readers.

In the example discussed in the previous section of this chapter, there are five different "observations" or points that could be the focus of evaluation. While some of these observations could be combined for the purposes of an essay for this project, it would be very difficult for the writer to talk about *all* of these points and still have a focused and clear essay.

Questions to Consider as You Write Your First Draft

Have you revisited your working thesis yet again? Based on the research and the writing that you have done, has it changed since the beginning of your project? Has it changed since chapter four? How?

Have you gathered enough research to effectively categorize and evaluate it, at least five or six different pieces of evidence (and ideally more)?

What sorts of categories are you using to “divide and conquer” your evidence? Which of your categories seem unique to your research project? Have you considered some of the categories suggested in the “Some Sample Categories” section of this chapter?

Have you followed the guidelines discussed in the “Dividing, Conquering, and Categorizing: A Few Rules to Follow” section of this chapter? Can you fit all of your research into at least one of your categories? Have you avoided single item categories or “miscellaneous” categories? Is there a clear difference between your categories? Do your categories help you and your potential readers make sense of the evidence you are comparing?

Did you chart your categories using a word processor’s table function, a spread sheet, or paper and pen/pencil as suggested in the “Charting Your Categories” section? Would additional evidence or categories make your comparisons more useful? If you didn’t create a chart similar to the example in this chapter, how did you decide to categorize your research in order to evaluate it?

What observations did you make about your categorization chart? Were there relationships, comparisons, contrasts, or other connections between evidence and categories that you were expecting? Were there ones you weren’t? Did your categorization chart give you a better sense of the kinds of evidence you have? Did you get a sense of the kinds of evidence that you don’t have and perhaps need to research further?

What sort of evaluations can you make about your evidence based on these categorizations? Do you notice any patterns within categories or between different categories? Did you find yourself making evaluative statements similar to the examples at the end of the “Charting Your Categories” section of this chapter?

What do you think your audience will see as the one or two most important points of evaluation that you’ve learned from categorizing your evidence?

Revision and Review

If you made a chart to categorize your evidence as you wrote a draft of your essay, you might want to share that with your peers in the revision process. They might see something about the relationship between your pieces of evidence that you haven't noted in your essay.

Here are some questions you and your classmates want to consider as you revise your critique essays (of course, you and your teachers might have other ideas and questions to ask in review too!):

Is the writer's evaluation and comparison of the research clear to readers? Do readers understand the point the writer is trying to make with this categorization and evaluation essay project? What would make this evaluation clearer?

Is the writer providing sufficient summary and explanation of the research being categorized and evaluated for this group of readers? What additional information might some readers need to understand the writer's point? Is there too much summary for the writer's intended audience?

Does the writer explain the categorization process they went through in evaluating their research? Do the categories make sense in understanding the research? As a reader, do you have any other suggestions for ways the writer could categorize their research?

A Student Example

"Categorizing My Research on Drug Advertising" by Jeremy Stephens

For this assignment, Jeremy was required to write an essay similar to the assignment outlined above, to categorize his research and to draw some conclusions about his evidence based on these categories. "This was a hard assignment, and I'm not sure if I did it right," Jeremy wrote in a memo that introduced this project. "It did help me to see more clearly what evidence I had and what I needed."

Categorizing My Research on Drug Advertising

When I started to take a closer look at the different sorts of evidence I had gathered for my research project on the problems of drug advertising on television, I noticed several different trends. To get a better understanding of the evidence, I began by categorizing all of my evidence by the type of media—books, web sites, articles from academic and professional sources, and

articles from more popular sources. From there, I divided the evidence into two additional categories: those that supported my working thesis on limiting drug advertisements and those that did not support my working thesis.

One of the things I noticed is that I had not realized how much evidence I had from trade and professional sources, things that weren't really academic but that weren't from popular sources either. I've decided to focus on these sources and some web site sources too because they have made me think more carefully about my topic.

My working thesis is that drug commercials on television ought to be severely limited because they are misleading and make false or exaggerated claims about the benefits of the drugs. Some of the articles in professional and trade publications disagreed with this thesis. For example, Carol Rados wrote an article called "RX Ads Come of Age," published in *FDA Consumer*, which is a publication of the Food and Drug Administration. Rados wrote "There seems to be little doubt that DTC advertising can help advance the public health by encouraging more people to talk with health care professionals about health problems, particularly undertreated conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol" (22). While Rados does note that there has been a lot of criticism of drug ads on TV, she makes it clear that the benefits actually outweigh the harms of these ads.

However, many of the professional sources agreed with my thesis. For example, Emma Dorrey's brief article in *Chemical and Industry* titled "FDA sends 23 warning letters to drug companies" supported my thesis because it points out that there have been a number of problems with the ads. Dorrey reports that the drug industry claims to work hard at self-regulating and that the companies say the ads educate consumers. However, despite the laws and the efforts of the FDA, there are still a lot of misleading ads:

One of the problems, according to Barbara Mintzes of the Center for Health Services and Policy Research at the University of British Columbia in Canada, is that the FDA can only regulate after the fact. And "companies do not face any sanctions other than needing to withdraw the ad if the information is inaccurate or misleading" (6).

I also noted that I had two articles from trade publications that focused on media, publishing, and advertising, both of which supported my working thesis. The first came from the publication *Broadcasting and Cable*, which I accessed via the WilsonSelect database. In the article titled "Relaxed Rules on Drug Ads Find Allies," Bill McConnell reports on a move by the

FDA to relax the rules for drug companies to list the side effects of their medications, a move that would help the drug companies.

The second was an editorial by Allan Wolper in *Editor and Publisher* titled “Accepting Drug Ads a Risky Proposition.” Wolper tells the story of a controversial cholesterol medication that was being simultaneously criticized and advertised in *The New York Times* in November 2004. As Wolper points out, “pharmaceutical ads present an ethical problem for newspaper sales acceptability departments, which love the revenue the ads bring in but worry that the claims associated with them will hurt the credibility of their news organization” (22). Both of these articles were published in trade journals for the media, which benefits by the money drug companies pay them to advertise their products. However, both of these articles express how these ads can ultimately hurt their credibility, too.

Almost all of the web sites I came across supported my working thesis too. I looked at a lot of different sites, but I rejected any site that did not name the author or who had an author that wasn’t familiar to me because I just wasn’t sure if they were credible. I also rejected web sites created by drug companies because of the obvious bias of these sites.

Instead, I focused on web sites maintained by news organizations or other organizations I had heard of and that seemed credible. For example, I came across an article on the Consumer Reports web site called “Free rein for drug ads?” The article, published in February 2003, says that there has been a decrease in the number of drug ads being reviewed by the FDA, and this drop-off of the number of letters sent from the FDA to drug companies about their ads “has raised concerns among some legislators and policy researchers because it leaves potentially false or misleading drug information in the public eye for longer periods.”

I also read a transcript of an internet chat with Dr. Jeffery Kahn, who was CNN.com’s bioethics columnist. Kahn chatted over the internet with all kinds of different people about drug advertising. Kahn said that he thought drug companies were “overzealous in how they market, leading to misunderstanding and confusion for patients.” Judging from the rest of the transcript, it appears that most of the participants agreed with Kahn. One of the things that I thought was interesting about this piece of evidence was how the source made it more credible. If it had just been a chat session somewhere out on the internet, it wouldn’t have been as good of a source.

Categorizing my evidence was a helpful exercise for me. I knew that I had evidence from a variety of different kinds of sources, but by focusing on trade publications and credible internet

sources, I feel like I am in a good place to start my research project. Looking again at these professional publications and web sites has made me think about my working thesis more carefully.

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Critiquing and Summarizing Sources

From [Chapter 7 of The Process of Research Writing](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- What’s a Critique and Why Does it Matter?
- Selecting a Text to Critique
- Starting With a “Close Reading”
- Criteria: Your Reasons for Evaluation
- Assignment: Writing a Critique Essay
- Questions to consider as you write your first draft
- Review and Revision
- A Student Example: “A Critique of ‘Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students’” by Ashley Nelson

What’s a Critique and Why Does it Matter?

Critiques evaluate and analyze a wide variety of things (texts, images, performances, etc.) based on reasons or criteria. Sometimes, people equate the notion of “critique” to “criticism,” which usually suggests a negative interpretation. These terms are easy to confuse, but I want to be clear that critique and criticize don’t mean the same thing. A negative critique might be

said to be “criticism” in the way we often understand the term “to criticize,” but critiques can be positive too.

We’re all familiar with one of the most basic forms of critique: reviews (film reviews, music reviews, art reviews, book reviews, etc.). Critiques in the form of reviews tend to have a fairly simple and particular point: whether or not something is “good” or “bad.”

Academic critiques are similar to the reviews we see in popular sources in that critique writers are trying to make a particular point about whatever it is that they are critiquing. But there are some differences between the sorts of critiques we read in academic sources versus the ones we read in popular sources.

The subjects of academic critiques tend to be other academic writings and they frequently appear in scholarly journals.

Academic critiques frequently go further in making an argument beyond a simple assessment of the quality of a particular book, film, performance, or work of art. Academic critique writers will often compare and discuss several works that are similar to each other to make some larger point. In other words, instead of simply commenting on whether something was good or bad, academic critiques tend to explore issues and ideas in ways that are more complicated than merely “good” or “bad.”

The main focus of this chapter is the value of *writing* critiques as a part of the research writing process. Critiquing writing is important because in order to write a good critique you need to *critically read*: that is, you need to closely read and understand whatever it is you are critiquing, you need to apply appropriate criteria in order to evaluate it, you need to summarize it, and to ultimately make some sort of point about the text you are critiquing.

These skills—critically and closely reading, summarizing, creating and applying criteria, and then making an evaluation—are key to the process of research writing, and they should help you as you work through the process of research writing.

In this chapter, I’ve provided a “step-by-step” process for making a critique. I would encourage you to quickly read or skim through this chapter first, and then go back and work through the steps and exercises described.

Selecting the Right Text to Critique

The first step in writing a critique is selecting a text to critique. For the purposes of this writing exercise, you should check with your teacher for guidelines on what text to pick. If you are doing an annotated bibliography as part of your research project, then you are might find more materials that will work well for this project as you continuously research.

Short and simple newspaper articles, while useful as part of the research process, can be difficult to critique since they don't have the sort of detail that easily allows for a critical reading. On the other hand, critiquing an entire book is probably a more ambitious task than you are likely to have time or energy for with this exercise. Instead, consider critiquing one of the more fully developed texts you've come across in your research: an in-depth examination from a news magazine, a chapter from a scholarly book, a report on a research study or experiment, or an analysis published in an academic journal. These more complex essays usually present more opportunities for issues to critique.

Depending on your teacher's assignment, the "text" you critique might include something that isn't in writing: a movie, a music CD, a multimedia presentation, a computer game, a painting, etc. As is the case with more traditional writings, you want to select a text that has enough substance to it so that it stands up to a critical reading.

Activity: Text Critique

Pick out at least three different possibilities for texts that you could critique for this exercise. If you've already started work on your research and an annotated bibliography for your research topic, you should consider those pieces of research as possibilities. Working alone or in small groups, consider the potential of each text. Here are some questions to think about:

- Does the text provide in-depth information? How long is it? Does it include a "works cited" or bibliography section?
- What is the source of the text? Does it come from an academic, professional, or scholarly publication?
- Does the text advocate a particular position? What is it, and do you agree or disagree with the text?

Starting with a "Close Reading"

The next and most important step in the process of critique writing is reading very carefully whatever it is you are going to critique. The type of "close reading" that is essential to the process of writing a good critique should not be confused with the sort of casual reading we do when reading the newspaper in the morning over coffee, surfing the internet, or browsing through a magazine.

Close reading is a type of reading where the reader *critically* engages with the text in order to understand it, question it, evaluate it, and form an opinion about it. This is a method of reading where the reader has to slow down and think along each step of the way. The reader furthers her understanding of the text by writing as she reads and by stopping to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Ultimately, once done with a close reading of a text, the reader has begun to form an opinion about the text and is ready to make an evaluation of it.

Close reading is not difficult to do, but it is an academic skill that can be challenging, time-consuming, and even *exhausting* to those who aren't used to doing it. Learning to closely read is challenging at first, similar in many ways to the experience many of us have when we first start an exercise program. If you have not previously trained as a runner and are not in good physical condition from some other sort of athletic training, you would find it challenging if not impossible to run five miles. But if you start small, keep training, and learn and practice good habits, chances are that what once was impossible (running five miles) is now within your grasp.

The same is true with close reading: it can be a difficult and frustrating process, but with practice and patience, anyone can become a good close reader.

Here are some basic steps to help you in your close reading:

Write while you read. This is the most essential part of closely reading.

Writing and reading are closely related activities, and when you write about your reading *as* you are reading (even *in* what you are reading), you inevitably understand what you are reading better than you do if you read without writing.

Close reading includes taking notes: writing down the most important points of the text, paraphrasing, summarizing, and so forth. Note taking is also an important part of the process of creating and maintaining an annotated bibliography and as part of the overall process of writing research.

But mostly, what I mean when I suggest you write as you read is much messier and less systematic than note taking. I'm thinking of activities where you write *in* what you are reading by writing in the margins, underlining key sentences and phrases, starring and circling text, and so forth.

What sort of things should you underline as you read and what sorts of things should you write "in" your reading? Generally speaking, you should underline key sentences and phrases and write comments in the margins that clarify the passage for you, that raise questions, that remind you that a passage contains a particularly important quote or idea, or that points out where you might agree or disagree with the text.

Explain the main points of the text in your own words. When you put something in your own words, what you are essentially doing is "translating" the text you are critiquing into your own language and your own way of understanding something. This is an especially useful technique when you are closely reading complex and long texts—books or more complicated academic articles that you are having a hard time understanding. You might want to put the main points in your own words on a separate sheet of paper. Using a separate sheet of paper makes it easier to note questions or other points about the text as you read.

As well as helping you better understand a complex text, explaining the main points in your own words can create a sort of outline of the text you are critiquing, which is another way of understanding the text. I'm not suggesting you create what I would call a "formal" outline,

complete with Roman numerals and appropriate letters underneath each heading. But if you put down on a separate sheet of paper a few sentences for the main points of the text, you will automatically have an outline of sorts, with each sentence describing the subject of a particular part of the reading.

Use a dictionary. Chances are, you have had teachers tell you to do this all throughout your schooling. And if you are anything like me, you resisted using a dictionary while you read something for years because it slowed you down, because you couldn't take a dictionary wherever you wanted to go, and because it just seemed like tedious busy work. But trust me: using a dictionary (even a small, paperback one) can be really useful in close reading because it can help you understand keywords and phrases, especially words you can't get from context.

Sometimes, I look up complex or abstract words (ideology, justice, democracy, etc.) in the dictionary, even if I know what they mean, because dictionary definitions will often expand or even change the way that I understand the term. If it's a particularly important or puzzling word, I will even go so far as to look it up in different dictionaries. The slight differences in definitions can often help create a more full understanding of a term.

Form an opinion as you read. The two main goals of a close reading are to fully understand what the text means and to form an opinion about whatever it is you are closely reading. If you follow the steps for close reading I outline here, you will inevitably end up with a more informed opinion about the text that can be a starting point toward writing critically about the text.

Certainly you don't need to have a completely and neatly formed and complete opinion after you finish closely reading. But if you find yourself completing a close reading but still having *no* opinion about what it is you are closely reading, or if you have a vague and somewhat weak opinion about what it is you are closely reading ("it's okay," "there were some good points," "I liked his main idea," and so forth), then you probably have not read closely enough.

Keep questioning the text. As you go along in your close reading, keep asking questions about the text: what is the point? do I agree or disagree with the text? why? what parts of the text am I confused about? how can I find answers to the questions you have? and how do I see it fitting into my research project? Keep asking these kinds of questions as you read and you will soon understand the text you are critiquing a lot better.

Activity: Close Reading

Following the guidelines I offer here, do a close reading of one of the pieces of research you have found. Be sure to write “in” the text as you read (either in the margins or with post-it notes), explain the main points in your own words, look up keywords or words you don’t understand in the dictionary, and closely read toward an opinion. Be sure to bring the work of your close reading to class to share and discuss with your classmates and your teacher.

If you are working collaboratively with classmates on a research project, you can individually do close readings of a common text and compare your reactions. Once an agreed upon text is selected, each member of the collaborative group should individually closely read the same text. Bring to class in the work of your close reading to compare and discuss each of your group members’ readings.

Criteria: Your Reasons for Your Evaluation

If you do a thorough close reading of your text (taking notes, writing things in the margins, highlighting key points, looking up things in the dictionary, etc.), then you will start to develop opinions about the text, and you will obviously have reasons for these opinions. In the most basic sense, the reasons you have for forming your opinion is the **criteria** you are using to form your evaluation.

Criteria are systems or standards for evaluation, rules or tests we use to make a judgment. We use criteria all the time. Take the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) rating system, for example: films are assigned ratings of G, PG, PG-13, etc., by an MPAA board based on specific criteria (violence, language, adult themes, sexual content, etc.).

In many college courses, students are asked to evaluate texts based on more or less predetermined criteria. For an example, an essay test question that asks you to critique a novel based on its depiction of women and children within the given historical contexts more or less has created criteria for you. If you decided instead to evaluate this novel based on some other criteria, your teacher might be interested in your reading, but he might also be disappointed in your response, especially given that it was a question on a test.

More often than not though (and probably for your purposes here), writers choose their own criteria to the extent that they are appropriate for the text being critiqued. Suggesting that an article in an academic source is "bad" because it goes into too much detail, is written for a specialized audience, and doesn't include any glossy pictures would be unfair, because, as I discussed in some detail earlier, these criteria are not usually part of the goals or purposes of academic articles. The same could be true of an article you found in a popular magazine. Suggesting it was "bad" because it seemed directed at too general of an audience and it simplified certain details about the topic would be unfair as well.

So, if there are no definite standard criteria to consider in a critique, how do you come up with criteria? Well, most of the questions suggested earlier on testing the credibility and reliability of your evidence might be used as criteria for your critique:

- Who wrote the text and what are their qualifications?
- What do you think motivated the writer to write the text?
- Is the information in the text accurate and specific?
- Has the author interpreted the material fairly?
- Has the author defined terms clearly?

- Does the writer seem to support her point with good research and reasoning?
- Where was the text published?
- When was it published?

Activity: Practicing Critique

Take a look at a text you will potentially critique. If you've already done a close reading of a text for your critique, be sure to use the text you used for that exercise. Either individually or collaboratively, come up with a list of possible criteria for critiquing the text. List as many criteria as you can, keeping in mind that you will certainly not be considering all of the criteria you come up with in your critique essay. On a sheet of paper or in a word processing file, create two columns. List the possible criteria in one column. In the other column, note the parts of the text that you think of as support for your criteria. Here's a sample of a few entries:

Criteria	Support
Written by an expert	Speer in Marquette Poli/Sci department
Supports ideas logically	Throughout, in the reference section, etc.
From a respected, credible and current source	Crime, Law, and Social Change academic source; article published in 2000.

Working individually or collaboratively, come up with a list of criteria that you think would NOT apply to the text you are considering for your critique. What sorts of possible criteria seem not fitting with the piece you are considering for your critique?

Summarizing Your Research

Critiques usually include one other important component: a summary of the text being critiqued. As I discussed previously, the most obvious reason to summarize the text you are critiquing is your readers are probably not familiar with it. After all, one of the main reasons why potential readers (your classmates, your teacher, and other readers interested in your topic) might read your critique is to find out what it is you (the writer) think about the text being critiqued so the reader can decide whether or not to read it themselves.

When writing your summary, keep in mind:

Summaries don't contain your opinion or feelings about whatever it is you are summarizing. Explain the key points and ideas of whatever it is you are summarizing, but save your opinions and reactions to your subject for the other parts of your critique.

Generally, summaries don't include quotes from the original source. The goal of the summary is to explain the key points in your own words. However, you will want to use the quotes from the original in your critique to support your own opinion of whatever it is you are critiquing.

Summaries are short. Like this item.

Figuring out how much summary to provide in a critique can be tricky because it depends on factors like the text you are critiquing, your purposes in your critique, how much you can expect your readers to know about whatever it is you are summarizing, and so forth.

But keep in mind that the goal of almost any summary (in a critique or in other types of writing) is to **get your reader familiar enough with whatever it is you are talking about so that you can go on to make your point.**

Activity: Summary

Write a brief summary of the text you intend to write your critique about, preferably one which you have already examined with a close reading and for which you have developed a list of possible criteria. For the purposes of this exercise, keep the summary brief—no more than 100 words or so—and be sure to strive for a summary that focuses as much as possible on “just the facts.” Show your summary to readers who haven't read the text that you are summarizing and ask them if they understand what the text is generally about and if they have any questions about the text.

With a group of collaborators and your teacher, decide on a text that you will all summarize. Individually, write a brief summary for readers you assume haven't read the article. Keep the summaries short—less than 100 words or so—and be sure to strive for a summary that focuses as much as possible on “just the facts.” Come together in small groups to discuss each group members' individually written summary. What similarities are there between each person's summary? What are some of the notable differences between summaries?

Assignment: Writing a Critique Essay

If you have been doing the exercises and following through the process I've outlined in this chapter then you should be well on your way in the process of writing an effective critique. As

you work on the writing assignment for this chapter, put to work your new knowledge of the process of critiquing.

Critique a selection of writing you have found in your research as part of the ongoing research project. The main goal of this critique is to provide a detailed review of the particular selection of writing that will help your audience learn about your position on the writing selection and also to help your audience decide for themselves whether or not the writing selection is something they might be interested in reading.

Questions to consider as you write your first draft

If you are asked to choose your own text to critique, did you spend some time carefully considering possibilities? Why did you select the text that you did? Why did you rule out others?

As part of your close reading, did you write both about and “in” the text that you are critiquing? What sort of marginal notes did you make? What are some of the key phrases or ideas that seemed important to you as you read that you underlined or noted with post-it notes in the margins? What kinds of questions about your reading did you write down as you read?

How did you explain the main points of the text you closely read? What do you see as the main points of the text?

Did you use a dictionary to look up words that you didn’t understand and couldn’t understand in context? Did you look up any complex or abstract terms? Did the dictionary definition of those terms help further your understanding of the word and the context where they occurred? Did you look up any terms that you saw as particularly important in different dictionaries? Did you learn anything from the different definitions?

When you finished your close reading, what was your opinion of the text you closely read? Beyond a simple “good” or “bad” take on the reading, what are some of the reasons for your initial opinion about your reading?

What criteria seem most appropriate for the text you are critiquing? Why? What would be an example of a criteria that would probably be inappropriate for this text? Did you consider some of the criteria that are similar to the tests for evidence suggested previously?

Have you explained for the reader somewhere in the first part of the essay what your main point is? In other words, do you introduce the criteria you will be using to critique your text early on in your essay?

Have you noted key quotes and passages that would serve as evidence in order to support your criteria? What passages are you considering quoting instead of paraphrasing? Are there other reasons you are turning to as support for your criteria?

Have you written a summary of your text? How familiar do you think your audience is with whatever it is you are critiquing? How has that affected your summary?

Review and Revision

Considering the recommendations of classmates in a peer review group and of other readers is especially important for this project. After all, if the goal of a critique essay is to give readers an idea about what it is you think of a particular reading, their direct feedback can help ensure that you are actually accomplishing these goals.

Here are some questions you and your classmates want to consider as you revise your critique essays (of course, you and your teachers might have other ideas and questions to ask in review too!):

Do your readers understand (generally speaking) the text that you are critiquing? Of course, how much your readers understand the essay you are critiquing will depend on how familiar they are with it, and as the writer of the critique, you will probably know and understand the text better than your readers. But do they understand enough about the text to make heads or tails of the critique?

Is there too much summary and not enough critique? That is, do the comments you are receiving from your readers suggest that they do fully understand the article you are critiquing, but they are not clear on the point you are trying to make with your critique? Have you considered where you are including summary information in different parts of your essay?

Do your readers understand the main point you are trying to make in your criteria? Have you provided some information and explanation about your criteria in the beginning part of your essay?

Do your readers seem to agree with you that your criteria are appropriate for whatever it is you are critiquing? Do they have suggestions that might help clarify your criteria? Do your readers have suggestions about different or additional criteria?

Are you quoting and paraphrasing the text you are critiquing effectively? Are there places where your readers have indicated they need more information from the critiqued text? Are there places where your readers think you might be relying too heavily on quotes or paraphrases from the critiqued text and wish they could read more about your opinion?

As your readers understand the article you are critiquing and the points you are making about it, do you think you have created any interest in your readers in actually reading the article themselves?

A Student Example

“A Critique of ‘Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students’ by Ashley Nelson

The assignment for this student was similar to the one described earlier in this chapter, to write a brief critique essay about an important piece of research. Ashley’s topic was on the use (and misuse) of drugs to treat attention deficit disorders in adult-aged patients. Ashley’s essay begins with an introduction that explains how this exercise fits into her overall research project and a brief summary of the article she is critiquing. But most of her essay focuses on her critique of the article.

A Critique of “Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students: Cross-Gender and Cross-National Prevalence,” by George J. DuPaul, Elizabeth A. Schaughency, Lisa L. Weyandt, Gail Tripp, Jeff Kiesner, Kenji Ota, and Heidy Stanish

While researching my topic, I came across many article that were interesting and that I thought could be useful for me with my research topic. When I read “Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students: Cross-Gender and Cross-National Prevalence,” by George J. DuPaul et al, I knew it would be a good article to critique, too.

The article explains the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and describes an experiment with university students in the United States, New Zealand, and Italy. 1,209 students took two different self-reported surveys. The goal of the survey was to examine the percentage of students who have ADHD symptoms, if symptoms vary between gender and country, and also to find out if symptom patterns agree with the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The DSM creates the criteria to diagnose ADHD in young children. Most of the research on ADHD has been conducted with young children; therefore understanding the symptoms in college students has not been widely studied (370).

The results showed that gender was not a big factor in the United States. However, in Italy and New Zealand women had about a ten percent increase in the hyperactive-impulsive category. The results also proved that using the age adjusted diagnostic criteria, compared to the DSM, more college students reported having either one symptom or both.

I think this article is good for several reasons. DuPaul and his colleagues explain what ADHD is and why it is important for college students to be diagnosed with the right criteria. The authors are also clearly experts in their fields. I also liked this article because the authors provide very good details about the results of their study.

DuPaul et al explain that ADHD “is characterized by developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention and impulsivity, and motor activity” (370). ADHD begins usually in early childhood. If a child is not treated for the disease, the symptoms will still appear in adulthood. These factors lead to “university students being at a higher risk for academic impairment and underachievement relative to their counterparts without ADHD” (370). Despite the risks to college students, according to DuPaul et al, most of the research on ADHD has focused on children, which is one of the motivations for this study in the first place.

The authors of this article were clearly qualified to conduct this study, too. Most of the researchers are college professors in psychology departments around the country and around the world. Further, most of the researchers specialize in issues having to do with ADHD (370). I think the authors’ qualifications show that they are all motivated and dedicated to help people with this disease. This experience and dedication makes me believe that these writers conducted a credible study.

I also like this article because the authors do a good job of explaining their research and the results. They provide lots of information about the results throughout the article, and they also provide a number of useful tables, too. The authors believe that the DSM’s standards of criteria for what counts as ADHD are wrong for young adults because it was created for children. So the researchers constructed a 24 item survey called the Young Adult Rating Scale that was based on traditional ADHD symptoms and on symptoms that would appear in college-aged young people (372).

The researchers point out that there were a variety of limitations with their study. For example, the students who participated in the survey were only from five different universities. In addition, the students were not asked any personal questions that could have effected the outcome of the survey (378). However, DuPaul and his colleagues believe that this study helps to pave the way for future students which “would provide a better understanding of the age-related changes associated with ADHD symptoms and the relevance of these changes to diagnostic criteria for ADHD in university students and other adults” (378).

I think that “Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students” is an informative and interesting article, one I would certainly recommend to anyone interested in learning more about ADHD in young adults. DuPaul and his colleagues explained and interpreted the results of their survey very effectively.

Work Cited

DuPaul, George; Elizabeth A. Schaugency, Lisa L. Weyandt, Gail Tripp, Jeff Kiesner, Kenji Ota, and Heidy Stanish. "Self-Report of ADHD Symptoms in University Students: Cross-Gender and Cross-National Prevalence." Journal of Learning Disabilities. 34.4 (July/August 2001). 370-379.

Summary and Response

From [EmpoWord, Section 2 Text Wrestling, Ch. 5 Summary and Reader-Response](#) by Shane Abrams, 2019

As you sharpen your analytical skills, you might realize that you should use evidence from the text to back up the points you make. You might use direct quotes as support, but you can also consider using summary.

A **summary** is a condensed version of a text, put into your own words. Summarizing is a useful part of the analytical process because it requires you to read the text, interpret and process it, and reproduce the important points using your own language. By doing so, you are (consciously or unconsciously) making choices about what matters, what words and phrases mean, and how to articulate their meaning.

Often (but not always), **response** refers to a description of a reader's experience and reactions as they encounter a text. Response papers track how you feel and what you think as you move through a text. More importantly, responses also challenge you to evaluate exactly *how* a text acts upon you—to make you feel or think a certain way—using language or images. While a response is not an analysis, it will help you generate ideas for the analytical process.

Vocabulary

direct quote —the verbatim use of another author's words. Can be used as evidence to support your claim, or as language to analyze/close-read to demonstrate an interpretation or insight.

paraphrase—author reiterates a main idea, argument, or detail of a text in their own words without drastically altering the length of the passage(s) they paraphrase. Contrast with summary.

response—a mode of writing that values the reader's experience of and reactions to a text.

summary—a rhetorical mode in which an author reiterates the main ideas, arguments, and details of a text in their own words, condensing a longer text into a smaller version. Contrast with paraphrase.

Techniques

Identifying Main Points, Concerns, and Images

If you ever watch TV shows with a serial plot, you might be familiar with the phrase "Previously, on _____." The snippets at the beginning of an episode are designed to remind the viewer of the important parts of previous episodes—but how do makers of the

show determine what a viewer needs to be refreshed on? And why am I watching full episodes if they'll just tell me what I need to know in the first minute of the next episode?

Typically, the makers of the show choose short, punchy bits that will be relevant in the new episode's narrative arc. For instance, a "Previously, on *The Walking Dead*" might have a clip from ten episodes ago showing zombies invading Hershel's farm if the new episode focuses on Hershel and his family. Therefore, these "previously ons" hook the viewer by showcasing only exciting parts and prime the viewer for a new story by planting specific details in their mind. Summaries like this are driven by purpose, and consequently have a specific job to do in choosing main points.

You, too, should consider your rhetorical purpose when you begin writing summary. Whether you are writing a summary essay or using summary as a tool for analysis, your choices about what to summarize and how to summarize it should be determined by what you're trying to accomplish with your writing.

As you engage with a text you plan to summarize, you should begin by identifying main points, recurring images, or concerns and preoccupations of the text. (You may find the Engaged Reading Strategies appendix of this book useful.) After reading and rereading, what ideas stick with you? What does the author seem distracted by? What keeps cropping up?

Tracking Your Reactions

As you read and reread a text, you should take regular breaks to check in with yourself to track your reactions. Are you feeling sympathetic toward the speaker, narrator, or author? To the other characters? What other events, ideas, or contexts are you reminded of as you read? Do you understand and agree with the speaker, narrator, or author? What is your emotional state? At what points do you feel confused or uncertain, and why?

Try out the double-column note-taking method. As illustrated below, divide a piece of paper into two columns; on the left, make a heading for "Notes and Quotes," and on the right, "Questions and Reactions." As you move through a text, jot down important ideas and words from the text on the left, and record your intellectual and emotional reactions on the right. Be sure to ask prodding questions of the text along the way, too.

<u>Notes and Quotes</u>	<u>Questions and Reactions</u>

Writing Your Summary

Once you have read and re-read your text at least once, taking notes and reflecting along the way, you are ready to start writing a summary. Before starting, consider your rhetorical situation: What are you trying to accomplish (purpose) with your summary? What details and ideas (subject) are important for your reader (audience) to know? Should you assume that they have also read the text you're summarizing? I'm thinking back here to the "Previously on..." idea: TV series don't include everything from a prior episode; they focus instead on moments that set up the events of their next episode. You too should choose your content in accordance with your rhetorical situation.

I encourage you to start off by articulating the "key" idea or ideas from the text in one or two sentences. Focus on clarity of language: start with simple word choice, a single idea, and a straightforward perspective so that you establish a solid foundation.

The authors support feminist theories and practices that are critical of racism and other oppressions.

Then, before that sentence, write one or two more sentences that introduce the title of the text, its authors, and its main concerns or interventions. Revise your key idea sentence as necessary.

In "Why Our Feminism Must Be Intersectional (And 3 Ways to Practice It)," Jarune Uwuajaren and Jamie Utt critique what is known as 'white feminism.' They explain that sexism is wrapped up in racism, Islamophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, and other systems of oppression. The authors support feminist theories and practices that recognize intersectionality.

Your next steps will depend largely on the reasons you are summarizing. Has your teacher asked you to summarize objectively, reproducing the ideas of the text without adding your own ideas or reactions? Have they asked you to critique the article, by both showing understanding and then pushing back against the text? Follow the parameters of your assignment; they are an important element of your rhetorical situation.

In most summary assignments, though, you will be expected to draw directly from the article itself by using direct quotes or paraphrases in addition to your own summary.

Paraphrase, Summary, and Direct Quotes

Summarizing requires you to make choices about what matters, what words and phrases mean, and how to articulate their meaning.

Whether you're writing a summary or broaching your analysis, using support from the text will help you clarify ideas, demonstrate your understanding, or further your argument, among other things. Three distinct methods, which Bruce Ballenger refers to as "The Notetaker's Triad," will allow you to process and reuse information from your focus text. (*1)

A **direct quote** might be most familiar to you: using quotation marks (" ") to indicate the moments that you're borrowing, you reproduce an author's words verbatim in your own writing. Use a direct quote if someone else wrote or said something in a distinctive or particular way and you want to capture their words exactly.

Direct quotes are good for establishing *ethos* and providing evidence. In a text wrestling essay, you will be expected to use multiple direct quotes: in order to attend to specific language, you will need to reproduce segments of that language in your analysis.

Paraphrasing is similar to the process of summary. When we paraphrase, we process information or ideas from another person's text and put it in our own words. The main difference between paraphrase and summary is scope: if summarizing means rewording and condensing, then paraphrasing means rewording without drastically altering length. However, paraphrasing is also generally more faithful to the spirit of the original; whereas a summary requires you to process and invites your own perspective, a paraphrase ought to mirror back the original idea using your own language.



Whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, you must *always* include an appropriate citation.

For support on citations, visit the LCSC Writing Center, access the Purdue OWL, or ask your teacher and classmates for support.

Paraphrasing is helpful for establishing background knowledge or general consensus, simplifying a complicated idea, or reminding your reader of a certain part of another text. It is also valuable when relaying statistics or historical information, both of which are usually more fluidly woven into your writing when spoken with your own voice.

Summary, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is useful for "broadstrokes" or quick overviews, brief references, and providing plot or character background. When you summarize, you reword and condense another author's writing. Be aware, though, that summary also requires individual thought: when you reword, it should be a result of you processing the idea yourself,

and when you condense, you must think critically about which parts of the text are most important. As you can see in the example below, one summary shows understanding and puts the original into the author's own words; the other summary is a result of a passive rewording, where the author only substituted synonyms for the original.

<i>"On Facebook, what you click on, what you share with your 'friends' shapes your profile, preferences, affinities, political opinions and your vision of the world. The last thing Facebook wants is to contradict you in any way" (Filloux). (*2)</i>	Original Quote
<i>On Facebook, the things you click on and share forms your profile, likings, sympathies, governmental ideas and your image of society. Facebook doesn't want to contradict you at all (Filloux).</i>	
<i>When you interact with Facebook, you teach the algorithms about yourself. Those algorithms want to mirror back your beliefs (Filloux).</i>	

Each of these three tactics should support your summary or analysis: you should integrate quotes, paraphrases, and summary with your own writing. Below, you can see three examples of these tools. Consider how the direct quote, the paraphrase, and the summary each could be used to achieve different purposes.

Original Passage

It has been suggested (again rather anecdotally) that giraffes do communicate using infrasonic vocalizations (the signals are verbally described to be similar—in structure and function—to the low-frequency, infrasonic “rumbles” of elephants). It was further speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production. Moreover, particular neck movements (e.g. the neck stretch) are suggested to be associated with the production of infrasonic vocalizations. (*3)

Quote	Paraphrase	Summary
Some zoological experts have pointed out that the evidence for giraffe hums has been “rather anecdotally” reported (Baotic et al. 3). However, some scientists have “speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production” (Ibid. 3).	Giraffes emit a low-pitch noise; some scientists believe that this hum can be used for communication with other members of the social group, but others are skeptical because of the dearth of research on giraffe noises. According to Baotic et al., the anatomy of the animal suggests that they may be making deliberate and specific noises (3).	Baotic et al. conducted a study on giraffe hums in response to speculation that these noises are used deliberately for communication.

The examples above also demonstrate additional citation conventions worth noting:

- A parenthetical in-text citation is used for all three forms. (In MLA format, this citation includes the author’s last name and page number.) The purpose of an in-text citation is to identify key information that guides your reader to your Works Cited page (or Bibliography or References, depending on your format).
- If you use the author’s name in the sentence, you do not need to include their name in the parenthetical citation.
- If your material doesn’t come from a specific page or page range, but rather from the entire text, you do not need to include a page number in the parenthetical citation.
- If there are many authors (generally more than three), you can use “et al.” to mean “and others.”
- If you cite the same source consecutively in the same paragraph (without citing any other sources in between), you can use “Ibid.” to mean “same as the last one.”

Activities

Summary and Response: TV Show or Movie

Practice summary and response using a movie or an episode of a television show. (Although it can be more difficult with a show or movie you already know and like, you can apply these skills to both familiar and unfamiliar texts.)

1. Watch it once all the way through, taking notes using the double-column structure above.
2. Watch it once more, pausing and rewinding as necessary, adding additional notes.
3. Write one or two paragraphs summarizing the episode or movie as objectively as possible. Try to include the major plot points, characters, and conflicts.
4. Write a paragraph that transitions from summary to response: what were your reactions to the episode or movie? What do you think produced those reactions? What seems troubling or problematic? What elements of form and language were striking? How does the episode or movie relate to your lived experiences?

Everyone's a Critic: Food Review

Food critics often employ summary and response with the purpose of reviewing restaurants for potential customers. You can give it a shot by visiting a restaurant, your dining hall, a fast-food joint, or a food cart. Before you get started, consider reading some food and restaurant reviews from your local newspaper. (Yelp often isn't quite thorough enough.)

Bring a notepad to your chosen location and take detailed notes on your experience as a patron. Use descriptive writing techniques (see Chapter 1 in *Because You Have Something to Say*), to try to capture the experience.

- What happens as you walk in? Are you greeted? What does it smell like? What are your immediate reactions?
- Describe the atmosphere. Is there music? What's the lighting like? Is it slow, or busy?
- Track the service. How long before you receive the attention you need? Is that attention appropriate to the kind of food-service place you're in?
- Record as many details about the food you order as possible.

After your dining experience, write a brief review of the restaurant, dining hall, fast-food restaurant, or food cart. What was it like, specifically? Did it meet your expectations? Why or

why not? What would you suggest for improvement? Would you recommend it to other diners like you?

Digital Media Summary and Mini-Analysis

For this exercise, you will study a social media feed of your choice. You can use your own or someone else’s Facebook feed, Twitter feed, or Instagram feed. Because these feeds are tailored to their respective user’s interests, they are all unique and represent something about the user.



After closely reviewing at least ten posts, respond to the following questions in a brief essay:

- What is the primary medium used on this platform (e.g., images, text, video, etc.)?
- What recurring ideas, themes, topics, or preoccupations do you see in this collection? Provide examples.
- Do you see posts that deviate from these common themes?
- What do the recurring topics in the feed indicate about its user? Why?
- Bonus: What ads do you see popping up? How do you think these have been geared toward the user?

Sample Texts by Student Authors

Maggie as the Focal Point

Shanna Greene Benjamin attempts to resolve Toni Morrison’s emphasis on Maggie in her short story “Recitatif”. While many previous scholars focus on racial codes, and “the black-and-white” story that establishes the racial binary, Benjamin goes ten steps further to show “the brilliance of Morrison’s experiment” (Benjamin 90). Benjamin argues that Maggie’s story which is described through Twyla’s and Roberta’s memories is the focal point of “Recitatif” where the two protagonists have a chance to rewrite “their conflicting versions of history” (Benjamin 91).

More so, Maggie is the interstitial space where blacks and whites can engage, confront America's racialized past, rewrite history, and move forward.

Benjamin highlights that Maggie's story is first introduced by Twyla, labeling her recollections as the "master narrative" (Benjamin 94). Although Maggie's story is rebutted with Roberta's memories, Twyla's version "represent[s] the residual, racialized perspectives" stemming from America's past (Benjamin 89). Since Maggie is a person with a disability her story inevitably becomes marginalized, and utilized by both Twyla and Roberta for their own self-fulfilling needs, "instead of mining a path toward the truth" (Benjamin 97). Maggie is the interstitial narrative, which Benjamin describes as a space where Twyla and Roberta, "who represent opposite ends of a racial binary", can come together to heal (Benjamin 101). Benjamin also points out how Twyla remembers Maggie's legs looking "like parentheses" and relates the shape of parentheses, (), to self-reflection (Morrison 141). Parentheses represent that inward gaze into oneself, and a space that needs to be filled with self-reflection in order for one to heal and grow. Twyla and Roberta create new narratives of Maggie throughout the story in order to make themselves feel better about their troubled past. According to Benjamin, Maggie's "parenthetical body" is symbolically the interstitial space that "prompts self-reflection required to ignite healing" (Benjamin 102). Benjamin concludes that Morrison tries to get the readers to engage in America's past by eliminating and taking up the space between the racial binary that Maggie represents.

Not only do I agree with Benjamin's stance on "Recitatif", but I also disapprove of my own critical analysis of "Recitatif." I made the same mistakes that other scholars have made regarding Morrison's story; we focused on racial codes and the racial binary, while completely missing the interstitial space which Maggie represents. Although I did realize Maggie was of some importance, I was unsure why so I decided to not focus on Maggie at all. Therefore, I missed the most crucial message from "Recitatif" that Benjamin hones in on.

Maggie is brought up in every encounter between Twyla and Roberta, so of course it makes sense that Maggie is the focal point in "Recitatif". Twyla and Roberta project themselves onto Maggie, which is why the two women have a hard time figuring out "What the hell happened to Maggie" (Morrison 155). Maggie also has the effect of bringing the two women closer together, yet at times causing them to become more distant. For example, when Twyla and Roberta encounter one another at the grocery store, Twyla brings up the time Maggie fell and the "gar girls laughed at her", while Roberta reminds her that Maggie was in fact pushed down (Morrison 148). Twyla has created a new, "self-serving narrative[]" as to what happened to Maggie instead of accepting what has actually happened, which impedes Twyla's ability to self-reflect and heal (Benjamin 102). If the two women would have taken up the space between them to confront the truths of their past, Twyla and Roberta could have created a "cooperative narrative" in order to mend.

Maggie represents the interstitial space that lies between white and black Americans. I believe this is an ideal space where the two races can come together to discuss America's racialized past, learn from one another, and in turn, understand why America is divided as such.

If white and black America jumped into the space that Maggie defines, maybe we could move forward as a country and help one another succeed. When I say “succeed”, I am not referring to the “American dream” because that is a false dream created by white America. “Recitatif” is not merely what characteristics define which race, it is much more than. Plus, who cares about race! I want America to be able to benefit and give comfort to every citizen whatever their “race” may be. This is time where we need black and white America to come together and fight the greater evil, which is the corruption within America’s government.

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Synthesizing Sources

Synthesizing Your Research Findings

From [Ch. 18.2 Synthesis in *Composing Ourselves and Our World*](#): by Christine Photinos

Synthesis is something you already do in your everyday life. For example, if you are shopping for a new car, the research question you are trying to answer is, “Which car should I buy?” You

Teacher Takeaways

“This student’s summary of Benjamin’s article is engaging and incisive. Although the text being summarized seems very complex, the student clearly articulates the author’s primary claims, which are portrayed as an intervention in a conversation (i.e., a claim that challenges what people might think beforehand). The author is also honest about their reactions to the text, which I enjoy, but they seem to lose direction a bit toward the end of the paper. Also, given a chance to revise again, this student should adjust the balance of quotes and paraphrases/summaries: they use direct quotes effectively, but too frequently.”

– Professor Wilhjelms

explore available models, prices, options, and consumer reviews, and you make comparisons.

For example: Car X costs more than car Y but gets better mileage. Or: Reviewers A, B, and C all prefer Car X, but their praise is based primarily on design features that aren't important to you. It is this analysis *across* sources that moves you towards an answer to your question.

Early in an academic research project you are likely to find yourself making initial comparisons—for example, you may notice that Source A arrives at a conclusion very different from that of Source B—but the task of synthesis will become central to your work when you begin drafting your research paper or presentation. Remember, when you synthesize, you are not just compiling information. You are organizing that information around a specific argument or question, and this work—your own intellectual work—is central to research writing.

Below are some questions that highlight ways in which the act of synthesizing brings together ideas and generates new knowledge.

How do the sources speak to your specific argument or research question?

Your argument or research question is the main unifying element in your project. Keep this in the forefront of your mind when you write about your sources. Explain how, specifically, each source supports your central claim/s or suggests possible answers to your question. For example: Does the source provide essential background information or a definitional foundation for your argument or inquiry? Does it present numerical data that supports one of your points or helps you answer a question you have posed? Does it present a theory that might be applied to some aspect of your project? Does it present a recognized expert's insights on your topic?

How do the sources speak to each other?

Sometimes you will find explicit dialogue between sources (for example, Source A refutes Source B by name), and sometimes you will need to bring your sources into dialogue (for example, Source A does not mention Source B, but you observe that the two are advancing similar or dissimilar arguments). Attending to **interrelationships among sources** is at the heart of the task of synthesis.

Begin by asking: What are the points of agreement? Where are there disagreements? But be aware that you are unlikely to find your sources in pure positions of "for" vs. "against." You are more likely to find agreement in some areas and disagreement in other areas. You may also find agreement but for different reasons—such as different underlying values and priorities, or different methods of inquiry.

Where are there, or aren't there, information gaps?

Where is the available information unreliable (for example, it might be difficult to trace back to primary sources), or limited, (for example, based on just a few case studies, or on just one geographical area), or difficult for non-specialists to access (for example, written in specialist language, or tucked away in a physical archive)?

Does your inquiry contain sub-questions that may not at present be answerable, or that may not be answerable without additional primary research—for example, laboratory studies, direct observation, interviews with witnesses or participants, etc.?

Or, alternatively, is there a great deal of reliable, accessible information that addresses your question or speaks to your argument or inquiry? In considering these questions, you are engaged in synthesis: you are conducting an overview assessment of the field of available information and in this way generating composite knowledge.

Remember, synthesis is about pulling together information from a range of sources in order to answer a question or construct an argument. It is something you will be called upon to do in a wide variety of academic, professional, and personal contexts. Being able to dive into an ocean of information and surface with meaningful conclusions is an essential life skill.

Writing a Literature Review

From: [Literature Reviews](#), The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This will explain what literature reviews are and offer insights into the form and construction of literature reviews in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences.

Introduction

OK. You've got to write a literature review. You dust off a novel and a book of poetry, settle down in your chair, and get ready to issue a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" as you leaf through the pages. "Literature review" done. Right? Wrong! The "literature" of a literature review refers to any collection of materials on a topic, not necessarily the great literary texts of the world. "Literature" could be anything from a set of government pamphlets on British colonial methods in Africa to scholarly articles on the treatment of a torn ACL. And a review does not necessarily mean that your reader wants you to give your personal opinion on whether or not you liked these sources.

What is a literature review, then?

A literature review discusses published information in a particular subject area, and sometimes information in a particular subject area within a certain time period.

A literature review can be just a simple summary of the sources, but it usually has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis. A summary is a recap of the important information of the source, but a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information. It might give a new interpretation of old material or combine new with old interpretations. Or it might trace the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates. And depending on the situation, the literature review may evaluate the sources and advise the reader on the most pertinent or relevant.

But how is a literature review different from an academic research paper?

The main focus of an academic research paper is to develop a new argument, and a research paper is likely to contain a literature review as one of its parts. In a research paper, you use the literature as a foundation and as support for a new insight that you contribute. The focus of a literature review, however, is to summarize and synthesize the arguments and ideas of others without adding new contributions.

Why do we write literature reviews?

Literature reviews provide you with a handy guide to a particular topic. If you have limited time to conduct research, literature reviews can give you an overview or act as a stepping stone. For professionals, they are useful reports that keep them up to date with what is current in the field. For scholars, the depth and breadth of the literature review emphasizes the credibility of the writer in his or her field. Literature reviews also provide a solid background for a research paper's investigation. Comprehensive knowledge of the literature of the field is essential to most research papers.

Who writes these things, anyway?

Literature reviews are written occasionally in the humanities, but mostly in the sciences and social sciences; in experiment and lab reports, they constitute a section of the paper. Sometimes a literature review is written as a paper in itself.

Let's get to it!

What should I do before writing the literature review?

Clarify—if your assignment is not very specific, seek clarification from your instructor

- Roughly how many sources should you include?
- What types of sources (books, journal articles, websites)?
- Should you summarize, synthesize, or critique your sources by discussing a common theme or issue?
- Should you evaluate your sources?
- Should you provide subheadings and other background information, such as definitions and/or a history?

Find models

Look for other literature reviews in your area of interest or in the discipline and read them to get a sense of the types of themes you might want to look for in your own research or ways to organize your final review. You can simply put the word "review" in your search engine along

with your other topic terms to find articles of this type on the internet or in an electronic database. The bibliography or reference section of sources you've already read are also excellent entry points into your own research.

Narrow your topic

There are hundreds or even thousands of articles and books on most areas of study. The narrower your topic, the easier it will be to limit the number of sources you need to read in order to get a good survey of the material. Your instructor will probably not expect you to read everything that's out there on the topic, but you'll make your job easier if you first limit your scope.

And don't forget to tap into your professor's (or other professors') knowledge in the field. Ask your professor questions such as: "If you had to read only one book from the gos on topic X, what would it be?" Questions such as this help you to find and determine quickly the most seminal pieces in the field.

Consider whether your sources are current

Some disciplines require that you use information that is as current as possible. In the sciences, for instance, treatments for medical problems are constantly changing according to the latest studies. Information even two years old could be obsolete. However, if you are writing a review in the humanities, history, or social sciences, a survey of the history of the literature may be what is needed, because what is important is how perspectives have changed through the years or within a certain time period. Try sorting through some other current bibliographies or literature reviews in the field to get a sense of what your discipline expects. You can also use this method to consider what is currently of interest to scholars in this field and what is not.

Strategies for writing the literature review

Find a focus

A literature review, like a term paper, is usually organized around ideas, not the sources themselves as an annotated bibliography would be organized. This means that you will not just simply list your sources and go into detail about each one of them, one at a time. No. As you read widely but selectively in your topic area, consider instead what themes or issues connect your sources together. Do they present one or different solutions? Is there an aspect of the field that is missing? How well do they present the material and do they portray it according to an appropriate theory? Do they reveal a trend in the field? A raging debate? Pick one of these themes to focus the organization of your review.

Convey it to your reader

A literature review may not have a traditional thesis statement (one that makes an argument), but you do need to tell readers what to expect. Try writing a simple statement that lets the reader know what is your main organizing principle. Here are a couple of examples:

The current trend in treatment for congestive heart failure combines surgery and medicine.

More and more cultural studies scholars are accepting popular media as a subject worthy of academic consideration.

Consider organization

You've got a focus, and you've stated it clearly and directly. Now what is the most effective way of presenting the information? What are the most important topics, subtopics, etc., that your review needs to include? And in what order should you present them? Develop an organization for your review at both a global and local level.

First, cover the basic categories

Just like most academic papers, literature reviews also must contain at least three basic elements: an introduction or background information section; the body of the review containing the discussion of sources; and, finally, a conclusion and/or recommendations section to end the paper.

The following provides a brief description of the content of each:

Introduction: Gives a quick idea of the topic of the literature review, such as the central theme or organizational pattern.

Body: Contains your discussion of sources and is organized either chronologically, thematically, or methodologically (see below for more information on each).

Conclusions/Recommendations: Discuss what you have drawn from reviewing literature so far. Where might the discussion proceed?

Organizing the body

Once you have the basic categories in place, then you must consider how you will present the sources themselves within the body of your paper. Create an organizational method to focus this section even further.

To help you come up with an overall organizational framework for your review, consider the following scenario:

You've decided to focus your literature review on materials dealing with sperm whales. This is because you've just finished reading Moby Dick, and you wonder if that whale's portrayal is really real. You start with some articles about the physiology of sperm whales in biology journals written in the 1980s. But these articles refer to some British biological studies performed on whales in the early 18th century. So you check those out. Then you look up a book written in 1968 with information on how sperm whales have been portrayed in other forms of art, such as in Alaskan poetry, in French painting, or on whale bone, as the whale hunters in the late 19th century used to do. This makes you wonder about American whaling methods during the time portrayed in Moby Dick, so you find some academic articles published in the last five years on how accurately Herman Melville portrayed the whaling scene in his novel.

Now consider some typical ways of organizing the sources into a review:

Chronological: If your review follows the chronological method, you could write about the materials above according to when they were published. For instance, first you would talk about the British biological studies of the 18th century, then about *Moby Dick*, published in 1851, then the book on sperm whales in other art (1968), and finally the biology articles (1980s) and the recent articles on American whaling of the 19th century. But there is relatively no continuity among subjects here. And notice that even though the sources on sperm whales in other art and on American whaling are written recently, they are about other subjects/objects that were created much earlier. Thus, the review loses its chronological focus.

By publication: Order your sources by publication chronology, then, only if the order demonstrates a more important trend. For instance, you could order a review of literature on biological studies of sperm whales if the progression revealed a change in dissection practices of the researchers who wrote and/or conducted the studies.

By trend: A better way to organize the above sources chronologically is to examine the sources under another trend, such as the history of whaling. Then your review would have subsections according to eras within this period. For instance, the review might examine whaling from pre-1600-1699, 1700-1799, and 1800-1899. Under this method, you would combine the recent studies on American whaling in the 19th century with *Moby Dick* itself in the 1800-1899 category, even though the authors wrote a century apart.

Thematic: Thematic reviews of literature are organized around a topic or issue, rather than the progression of time. However, progression of time may still be an important factor in a thematic review. For instance, the sperm whale review could focus on the development of the harpoon for whale hunting. While the study focuses on one topic, harpoon technology, it will still be organized chronologically. The only difference here between a “chronological” and a “thematic” approach is what is emphasized the most: the development of the harpoon or the harpoon technology. But more authentic thematic reviews tend to break away from chronological order. For instance, a thematic review of material on sperm whales might examine how they are portrayed as “evil” in cultural documents. The subsections might include how they are personified, how their proportions are exaggerated, and their behaviors misunderstood. A review organized in this manner would shift between time periods within each section according to the point made.

Methodological: A methodological approach differs from the two above in that the focusing factor usually does not have to do with the content of the material. Instead, it focuses on the “methods” of the researcher or writer. For the sperm whale project, one methodological

approach would be to look at cultural differences between the portrayal of whales in American, British, and French art work. Or the review might focus on the economic impact of whaling on a community. A methodological scope will influence either the types of documents in the review or the way in which these documents are discussed.

Once you've decided on the organizational method for the body of the review, the sections you need to include in the paper should be easy to figure out. They should arise out of your organizational strategy. In other words, a chronological review would have subsections for each vital time period. A thematic review would have subtopics based upon factors that relate to the theme or issue.

Sometimes, though, you might need to add additional sections that are necessary for your study, but do not fit in the organizational strategy of the body. What other sections you include in the body is up to you. Put in only what is necessary.

Here are a few other sections you might want to consider:

- **Current Situation:** Information necessary to understand the topic or focus of the literature review.
- **History:** The chronological progression of the field, the literature, or an idea that is necessary to understand the literature review, if the body of the literature review is not already a chronology.
- **Methods and/or Standards:** The criteria you used to select the sources in your literature review or the way in which you present your information. For instance, you might explain that your review includes only peer-reviewed articles and journals.
- **Questions for Further Research:** What questions about the field has the review sparked? How will you further your research as a result of the review?

Begin composing

Once you've settled on a general pattern of organization, you're ready to write each section. There are a few guidelines you should follow during the writing stage as well. Here is a sample paragraph from a literature review about sexism and language to illuminate the following discussion:

However, other studies have shown that even gender-neutral antecedents are more likely to produce masculine images than feminine ones (Gastil, 1990). Hamilton (1988) asked students to complete sentences that required them to fill in pronouns that agreed with

gender-neutral antecedents such as “writer,” “pedestrian,” and “persons.” The students were asked to describe any image they had when writing the sentence. Hamilton found that people imagined 3.3 men to each woman in the masculine “generic” condition and 1.5 men per woman in the unbiased condition. Thus, while ambient sexism accounted for some of the masculine bias, sexist language amplified the effect. (Source: Erika Falk and Jordan Mills, “Why Sexist Language Affects Persuasion: The Role of Homophily, Intended Audience, and Offense,” *Women and Language* 19:2).

Use evidence

In the example above, the writers refer to several other sources when making their point. A literature review in this sense is just like any other academic research paper. Your interpretation of the available sources must be backed up with evidence to show that what you are saying is valid.

Be selective

Select only the most important points in each source to highlight in the review. The type of information you choose to mention should relate directly to the review’s focus, whether it is thematic, methodological, or chronological.

Use quotes sparingly

Falk and Mills do not use any direct quotes. That is because the survey nature of the literature review does not allow for in-depth discussion or detailed quotes from the text. Some short quotes here and there are okay, though, if you want to emphasize a point, or if what the author said just cannot be rewritten in your own words. Notice that Falk and Mills do quote certain terms that were coined by the author, not common knowledge, or taken directly from the study. But if you find yourself wanting to put in more quotes, check with your instructor.

Summarize and synthesize

Remember to summarize and synthesize your sources within each paragraph as well as throughout the review. The authors here recapitulate important features of Hamilton’s study, but then synthesize it by rephrasing the study’s significance and relating it to their own work.

Keep your own voice

While the literature review presents others’ ideas, your voice (the writer’s) should remain front and center. Notice that Falk and Mills weave references to other sources into their own text, but they still maintain their own voice by starting and ending the paragraph with their own ideas and their own words. The sources support what Falk and Mills are saying.

Use caution when paraphrasing

When paraphrasing a source that is not your own, be sure to represent the author's information or opinions accurately and in your own words. In the preceding example, Falk and Mills either directly refer in the text to the author of their source, such as Hamilton, or they provide ample notation in the text when the ideas they are mentioning are not their own, for example, Gastil's. For more information, please see the [handout on plagiarism](#) from The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Revise, revise, revise

Draft in hand? Now you're ready to revise. Spending a lot of time revising is a wise idea, because your main objective is to present the material, not the argument. So check over your review again to make sure it follows the assignment and/or your outline. Then, just as you would for most other academic forms of writing, rewrite or rework the language of your review so that you've presented your information in the most concise manner possible. Be sure to use terminology familiar to your audience; get rid of unnecessary jargon or slang. Finally, double check that you've documented your sources and formatted the review appropriately for your discipline. For tips on the revising and editing process, see the [handout on revising drafts](#) from The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Works consulted

We consulted the following works while writing this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the [UNC Libraries citation tutorial](#). We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

- Anson, Chris M. and Robert A. Schwegler. *The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers*. 6th edition. New York: Longman, 2010.
- Jones, Robert, Patrick Bizzaro, and Cynthia Selfe. *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997.
- Lamb, Sandra E. *How to Write It: A Complete Guide to Everything You'll Ever Write*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 1998.
- Rosen, Leonard J. and Laurence Behrens. *The Allyn and Bacon Handbook*. 4th edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.
- Troyka, Lynn Quitman. *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002.

→For more information on Literature Reviews, including a video, please check out:

<https://umb.libguides.com/litreview>

Chapter 4

Writing a Research Essay

Overview

You've thought critically, you've planned, you've located, and you've analyzed sources--so now what do you do with all of that information? The answer is easy; doing it is not. That's right--now it's time to write! Don't worry because you have probably already drafted portions of your research paper. Whether it be the proposal, summarizing and synthesizing sources, developing and revising your thesis statement, you've completed the foundational pieces--good job!

But now it's time to put it all together and support your claims with substantial and compelling evidence in pre-writing and then in full-fledged body paragraphs. In addition, you should not forget about implementing academic language and rhetorical strategies. Then you need to ensure that you have not plagiarized by using appropriate methods for quoting, paraphrasing, and citing. Next, opposing viewpoints must be accommodated. Finally, it's time to peer review, revise, and proofread.

Ready, set, let's write!

Chapter Contents

The Writing section includes readings and exercises on:

- Using Academic Language
- Rhetorical Moves
- Rhetorical Appeals & Logical Fallacies
- Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism
- Outlining and Drafting the Research Paper
- Considering Opposing Viewpoints
- Collaborative Writing/Projects
- Peer Review as Collaboration
- Strategies for Revision
- Order of Sections in a Research Paper
- The Abstract

- Reference page (APA) and Works Cited (MLA) page

Using Academic Language

From "[Using Academic Language](#)," *Writing Commons*, by Joe Moxley, 13 June 2019

In what ways have you fulfilled the assignment requirements as they relate to audience, appropriate persona/tone, and rhetorical stance? Why is this word choice/diction inappropriate (conversational) for your audience? What might be more appropriate?

For students and teachers alike, most writing occurs in non-academic settings—notes, e-mails, Facebook posts, blogs, shopping lists, etc. In these writing settings, it is perfectly fine to “write as you speak,” using a conversational tone and slang terms. However, when you enter the classroom (and the professional workspace), writing expectations change. These changes in expectation and acceptability occur because the topic or subject of academic writing is more complex than what we write about in our day-to-day writing settings—not because scholars and professionals say so or because they want to sound “snobby” or superior. Also, there is a shift in audience and level of audience interaction. Basically, college-level and professional writing require clarity both in grammar and word choice so that complex ideas can be easily understood by the reader.

Grammatical differences in writing and speaking

Using conversational language and an informal tone—or, “writing as we speak” —in academic writing can be problematic because it can lead to unclear communication between the writer and the reader. In conversations, we often speak in sentence fragments because we are reacting to the other person’s dialogue. For example, when someone asks “How was your day?” we might answer, “Good.” However, “good” is not a complete sentence, because it has neither a noun (subject) nor a verb. What we really mean to say is, “My day was good,” but because the question implies the subject (my day) and verb (was), our answer can still make sense without repeating these words back to the speaker. However, in writing, the reader cannot necessarily infer the missing subjects and verbs insinuated by the writer. In order for a writer’s ideas to be understood, he or she must include a subject and verb in each sentence and not assume that a reader will infer the correct meaning without these words.

We also tend to use run-ons frequently in our conversations, but they usually go unnoticed. For example, a friend was explaining to me a trip she took to Disney World in which she used several run-ons:

We took the kids to see "The Country Bear" show and on the "It's a Small World" ride, which Cole absolutely loved and couldn't stop singing the song the rest of the day, and then we took them on "The Haunted House" ride which was a huge mistake because Noah started screaming and yelling and Cole started crying while we were strapped in the moving seats so we couldn't get off and now the past few nights he's been having nightmares about the ghost who follows you home.

Run-ons are problematic because they create confusion. We can, to some degree, follow the story about my friend's trip to Disney World in this really long run-on sentence, but some of the details are muddled: Which song was Cole singing? Who is having nightmares—Noah or Cole? What is "the ghost who follows you home"?

When we have conversations, we don't notice run-ons, and if a detail isn't clearly communicated, the listener has the opportunity to ask for clarification. However, someone who is reading a text message cannot simply ask for clarification from the author. Many of us have visited Disney World, so we may be able to piece together what my friend meant, but it would be very difficult to understand a story about a foreign country we had never visited if it had been recounted in that way.

Communicating clearly using academic language and word choice

Clarity is especially important in academic and professional writing because in these settings we usually are asked to write about more complex subjects that may be unfamiliar to the reader. When my students adopt the method of “write as you speak,” their papers usually become confusing and their explanations are difficult to follow because of both grammatical errors and word choice. Correcting grammatical errors that occur in speech is a bit easier than identifying problematic language. The rules of grammar are much more concrete than rules about word choice, which are virtually non-existent. So, if there is no official guide to choosing acceptable words, how do we know when and what colloquial terms are unacceptable?

One way to decide what word to use is to think about words in terms of audience. The issue with colloquial diction is that it is not inclusive of all audiences. Certain terms and words are only familiar to specific generations or groups.

For example, my roommate used to play an online game *World of Warcraft*. One day we were playing tennis together, and after hitting the game-winning shot, she exclaimed, “I totally pwned you!” I later found out that *pwn* is a verb used by people in the gaming community that means “to dominate, conquer, or gain ownership of.” Because I had never played *World of Warcraft*, the meaning of my friend’s celebratory exclamation was lost to me. A barrier in communication also occurs between generations, especially now that technology has influenced us to use abbreviations and create terms such as *LOL* in order to save time. I can assure you that if my grandmother were to read some of my friends’ Facebook posts, she would think that they were speaking a foreign language. My grandmother, then, is not considered a member of the intended audience of my friends’ Facebook posts.

Obviously, we can eliminate web and text language from our academic writing. However, there are several other colloquial terms that are more well-known but are still questionable. So how do we know what terms are unacceptable and why? Keeping in mind that in academic writing we want to be as clear and direct as possible, we can decide against using several of these terms by analyzing if their meaning would be clearly understood by audiences of all groups and generations.

For example, several of my students used the phrase “name dropping” in their papers when analyzing one of President Obama’s speeches. While most people have heard the phrase or can infer its intended meaning, it is still rather ambiguous and problematic. When I hear the phrase “name dropping,” I don’t simply think of people mentioning authoritative figures; I think about people who like to talk about their relationships or interactions with famous or important individuals for no purpose other than to brag. President Obama, however, doesn’t

mention names simply to feel important. Instead, he establishes his credibility to his audience by referencing people who are knowledgeable about an issue. Students know why President Obama mentions certain people's names and professions, but their use of the term "name dropping" may confuse readers who have different associations with the word. In order to avoid these misconceptions, it is best to replace all colloquial terms—which are often ambiguous—with direct and clear language.

Colloquial diction as part of the writing process and final product

The assignments you complete in English composition courses will prompt you to carefully identify your chosen audience and write clearly with that particular audience in mind. The choices and changes you make in your writing indicate that you are becoming a more aware writer. This means that you understand who you are writing for, that you know what is appropriate for your audience, and that you have made a deliberate effort to adjust your writing accordingly. When evaluating your papers and projects, instructors read carefully, looking at your sentence structure, voice, tone, and word choice to determine whether or not you have been a rhetorically aware writer. Yet knowing how to make these rhetorical choices does not occur naturally for most of us. Instead, the writing process can help all writers continually think about their audience by providing them with opportunities to make changes during each stage of the drafting process. During phases of revision is also the best time to identify and replace colloquial diction in order to better clarify writing.

Academic writing often should appeal to a broad audience and always should be as clear and direct as possible. As discussed above, it is best to eliminate any and all uses of colloquial diction in order to achieve clarity in your writing. However, many of students find it difficult to write using academic language when they are simultaneously trying to organize their thoughts and to think critically about the assigned topic. Since we don't speak or even think in academic language, shifting from conversational language to more formal language can be extremely difficult. This task may seem less daunting if we approach it as a process of change, including several steps rather than a single giant leap. In the initial draft of a paper, using colloquial language is acceptable because it may be easier to understand and organize your thoughts. During successive drafts, you can then revise sentences in order to eliminate colloquialisms, thereby reaching a broader audience. Eventually, with practice, writing clearly and directly will come more naturally to you.

Rhetorical Moves

Helping Others Follow

From [*Choosing & Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research*](#) by Teaching & Learning, Ohio State University Libraries?

As you switch from component to component in your paper, you'll be making what are called rhetorical moves—taking subsequent steps to move your argument along and be persuasive. Your readers will probably know what you're doing because the components in everyday oral argument are the same as in written argument. But **why** you're switching between components of your argument, and with these particular sources, might be less clear.

Note:

The ideas and examples in this section are informed by all three editions of [*They Say/I Say*](#). The third edition of the text provides templates of actual language to be used in written arguments. This can be extremely helpful to beginning writers because it takes some of the mystery out of what to say and when to say it. You can find a copy of the book in the LCSC Writing Center.

You can help readers follow your argument by inserting phrases that signal why you're doing what you're doing. Here are some examples:

To state that what you're saying in your thesis (answer to your research question) is in opposition to what others have said:

"Many people have believed ..., but I have a different opinion."

To move from a reason to a summary of a research study that supports it (evidence). "Now let's take a look at the supporting research."

To introduce a summary of a resource you've just mentioned.

"The point they make is..."

If the objection is that you're not being realistic.

"But am I being realistic?"

To acknowledge an objection you believe a reader could have.

"At this point I should turn to an objection some are likely to be raising..."

To move from the body of an essay to the conclusion.

"So in conclusion..."

Phrases like these can grease the skids of your argument in your readers' minds, making it a lot easier for them to quickly get it instead of getting stuck on figuring out why you're bringing something up at a particular point. You will have pulled them into an argument conversation.

The blog that accompanies the book *They Say/I Say with Readings*, by Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst, contains short, elegantly constructed contemporary arguments from a variety of publications. Take a look at the [They Say/I Say blog](#) for a moment and read part of at least one of the readings to see how it can be helpful to you the next time you have to make a written argument.

Additional Resources

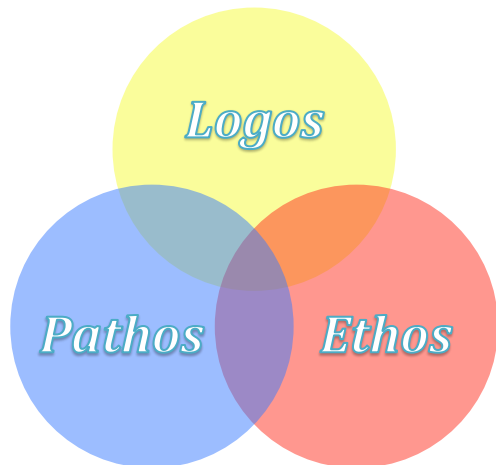
Take a look at these sites for paragraphing and argument essay advice for students:

- [Paragraphs](#)—Dartmouth Writing Center
- [On Paragraphs & Body Paragraphs](#) —The OWL at Purdue
- [Argument](#) – University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center

Rhetorical Appeals

from [EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers](#) by Shane Abrams, 2019

As we reviewed in Writing Project Three: Analysis, you will need to revisit rhetorical appeals for your argumentation essay.



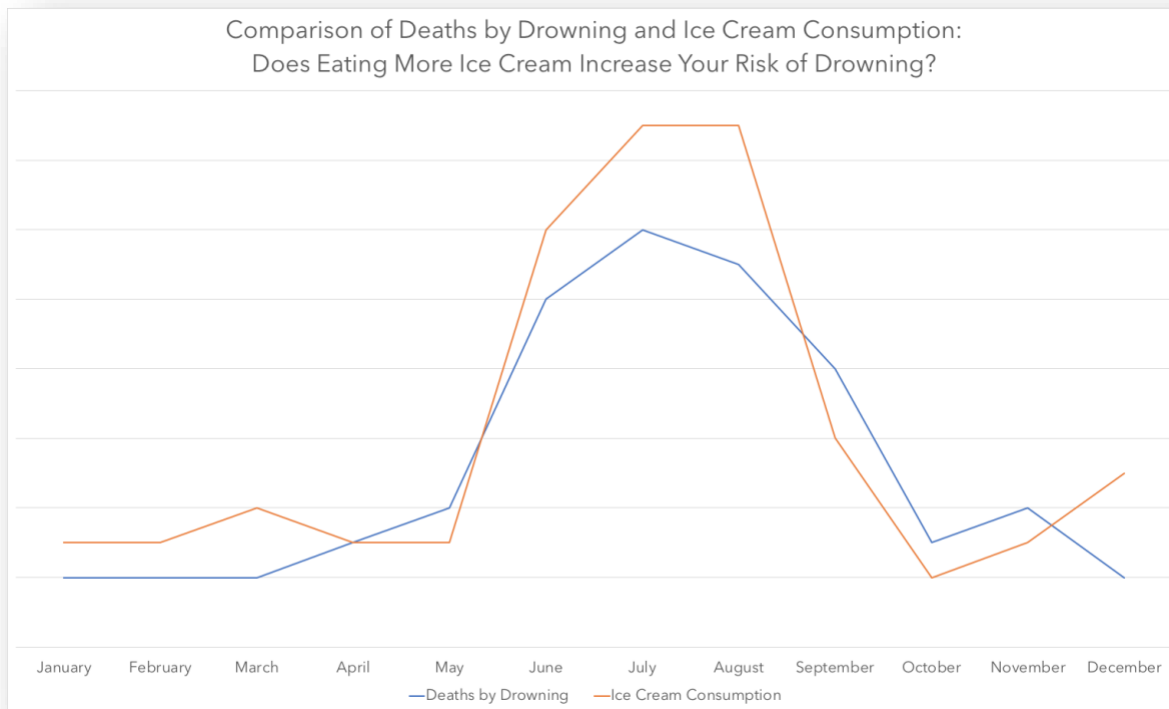
Regardless of the style of argument you use, you will need to consider the ways you engage your audience. Aristotle identified three kinds of **rhetorical appeals**: **logos**, **pathos**, and **ethos**. Some instructors refer to this trio as the “rhetorical triangle,” though I prefer to think of them as a three-part Venn diagram. I find this distinction especially valuable because there is some slippage in what instructors mean by “rhetorical triangle”—e.g., “logos, pathos, ethos” vs. “reader, writer, text.” The latter set of definitions, used to determine rhetorical situation, is superseded in this text by SOAP (subject, occasion,

audience, purpose). The best argumentation engages all three of these appeals, falling in the center where all three overlap. Unbalanced application of rhetorical appeals is likely to leave your audience suspicious, doubtful, or even bored.

Logos

You may have inferred already, but *logos* refers to an appeal to an audience’s logical reasoning. *Logos* will often employ statistics, data, or other quantitative facts to demonstrate the validity of an argument. For example, an argument about the wage gap might indicate that women, on average, earn only 80 percent of the salary that men in comparable positions earn; this would imply a logical conclusion that our economy favors men.

However, stating a fact or statistic does not alone constitute *logos*. For instance, when I show you this graph, I am not yet making a logical appeal.



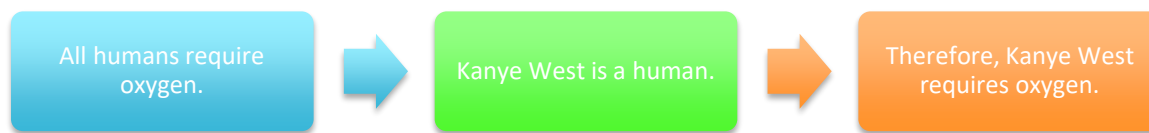
This correlation is an oft-cited example, but the graph is a fabrication to make a point, not actual data.

Yes, the graph is “fact-based,” drawing on data to illustrate a phenomenon. That characteristic alone, though, doesn’t make a logical appeal. For my appeal to be logical, I also need to *interpret* the graph:

As is illustrated here, there is a direct positive correlation between ice cream consumption and deaths by drowning: when people eat more ice cream, more people drown. Therefore, we need to be more careful about waiting 30 minutes after we eat ice cream.

Of course, this conclusion is inaccurate; it is a **logical fallacy** described in the table below called “post hoc, ergo propter hoc.” However, the example illustrates that your logic is only complete when you’ve drawn a logical conclusion from your facts, statistics, or other information.

There are many other ways we draw logical conclusions. There are entire branches of academia dedicated to understanding the many kinds of logical reasoning, but we might get a better idea by looking at a specific kind of logic. Let’s take for example the **logical syllogism**, which might look something like this:



Pretty straightforward, right? We can see how a general rule (major premise) is applied to a specific situation (minor premise) to develop a logical conclusion. I like to introduce this kind of logic because students sometimes jump straight from the major premise to the conclusion; if you skip the middle step, your logic will be less convincing.

It does get a little more complex. Consider this false syllogism: it follows the same structure (general rule + specific situation), but it reaches an unlikely conclusion.



This is called a logical fallacy. Logical fallacies are part of our daily lives. Stereotypes, generalizations, and misguided assumptions are fallacies you've likely encountered. You may have heard some terms about fallacies already: red herring, slippery slope, non sequitur. Fallacies follow patterns of reasoning that would otherwise be perfectly acceptable to us, but within their basic structure, they make a mistake. Aristotle identified that fallacies happen on the "material" level (the content is fallacious—something about the ideas or premises is flawed) and the "verbal" level (the writing or speech is fallacious—something about the delivery or medium is flawed).

It's important to be able to recognize these so that you can critically interrogate others' arguments and improve your own. Here are some of the most common logical fallacies:

Fallacy	Description	Example
<i>Post hoc, ergo propter hoc</i>	"After this, therefore because of this" – a confusion of cause-and-effect with coincidence, attributing a consequence to an unrelated event. This error assumes that correlation equals causation, which is sometimes not the case.	Statistics show that rates of ice cream consumption and deaths by drowning both increased in June. This must mean that ice cream causes drowning.

<i>Non sequitur</i>	"Does not follow" – a random digression that distracts from the train of logic (like a "red herring"), or draws an unrelated logical conclusion. John Oliver calls one manifestation of this fallacy "whataboutism," which he describes as a way to deflect attention from the subject at hand.	Sherlock is great at solving crimes; therefore, he'll also make a great father. Sherlock Holmes smokes a pipe, which is unhealthy. But what about Bill Clinton? He eats McDonald's every day, which is also unhealthy.
Straw Man	An oversimplification or cherry-picking of the opposition's argument to make them easier to attack.	People who oppose the destruction of Confederate monuments are all white supremacists.
<i>Ad hominem</i>	"To the person" – a personal attack on the arguer, rather than a critique of their ideas.	I don't trust Moriarty's opinion on urban planning because he wears bowties.
Slippery Slope	An unreasonable prediction that one event will lead to a related but unlikely series of events that follows.	If we let people of the same sex get married, then people will start marrying their dogs too!
False Dichotomy	A simplification of a complex issue into only two sides.	Given the choice between pizza and Chinese food for dinner, we simply <i>must</i> choose Chinese.

Learn about other logical fallacies in the Additional Recommended Resources appendix.

Pathos

The second rhetorical appeal we'll consider here is perhaps the most common: *pathos* refers to the process of engaging the reader's emotions. (You might recognize the Greek root *pathos* in "sympathy," "empathy," and "pathetic.") A writer can evoke a great variety of emotions to

support their argument, from fear, passion, and joy to pity, kinship, and rage. By playing on the audience’s feelings, writers can increase the impact of their arguments.

There are two especially effective techniques for cultivating *pathos* that I share with my students:

- Make the audience aware of the issue’s relevance to them specifically—“How would you feel if this happened to you? What are we to do about this issue?”
- Tell stories. A story about one person or one community can have a deeper impact than broad, impersonal data or abstract, hypothetical statements.

Consider the difference between

*About 1.5 million pets are euthanized each year
and*

*Scooter, an energetic and loving former service dog with curly brown hair like a Brillo pad,
was put down yesterday.*

Both are impactful, but the latter is more memorable and more specific.

Pathos is ubiquitous in our current journalistic practices because people are more likely to act (or, at least, consume media) when they feel emotionally moved. Consider, as an example, the outpouring of support for detained immigrants in June 2018, reacting to the Trump administration’s controversial family separation policy. As stories and images [like this one](#) surfaced, millions of dollars were raised in a matter of days on the premise of *pathos*, and resulted in the temporary suspension of that policy.

“[Facebook’s Walled Wonderland is Inherently Incompatible with News](#)” by Frederic Filloux (2016) is an example of this.

Ethos

Your argument wouldn’t be complete without an appeal to *ethos*. Cultivating *ethos* refers to the means by which you demonstrate your authority or expertise on a topic. You’ll have to show your audience that you’re trustworthy if they are going to buy your argument.

There are a handful of ways to demonstrate *ethos*:

- By personal experience: Although your lived experience might not set hard-and-fast rules about the world, it is worth noting that you may be an expert on certain facets of your life. For



instance, a student who has played rugby for fifteen years of their life is in many ways an authority on the sport.

- By education or other certifications: Professional achievements demonstrate *ethos* by revealing status in a certain field or discipline.
- By citing other experts: The common expression is “Stand on the shoulders of giants.” You can develop *ethos* by pointing to other people with authority and saying, “Look, this smart/experienced/qualified/important person agrees with me.”



Photo 1 Former President of South Africa Jacob Zuma delivering a speech.

A common misconception is that *ethos* corresponds with “ethics.” However, you can remember that *ethos* is about credibility because it shares a root with “authority.”

Sociohistorical Context of

Argumentation

This textbook has emphasized consideration of your rhetorical occasion, but it bears repeating here that “good” argumentation depends largely on your place in time, space, and culture. Different cultures throughout the world value the elements of argumentation differently, and argument has different purposes in different contexts. The content of your argument *and* your strategies for delivering it will change in every unique rhetorical situation.

Continuing from *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*, the notion of *kairos* speaks to this concern. To put it in plain language, *kairos* is the force that determines what will be the best argumentative approach in the moment in which you’re arguing; it is closely aligned with rhetorical occasion. According to rhetoricians, the characteristics of the *kairos* determine the balance and application of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*.

Moreover, your sociohistorical context will bear on what you can assume of your audience. What can you take for granted that your audience knows and believes? The “common sense” that your audience relies on is always changing: common sense in the U.S. in 1950 was much different from common sense in the U.S. in 1920 or common sense in the U.S. in 2018. You can make assumptions about your audience’s interests, values, and background knowledge, but only with careful consideration of the time and place in which you are arguing.

As an example, let's consider the principle of logical noncontradiction. Put simply, this means that for an argument to be valid, its logical premises must not contradict one another: if $A = B$, then $B = A$. If I said that a dog is a mammal and a mammal is an animal, but a dog is not an animal, I would be contradicting myself. Or, "No one drives on I-84; there's too much traffic." This statement contradicts itself, which makes it humorous to us.

However, this principle of non-contradiction is not universal. Our understanding of cause and effect and logical consistency is defined by the millennia of knowledge that has been produced before us, and some cultures value the contradiction rather than perceive it as invalid. This is not to say that either way of seeing the world is more or less accurate, but rather to emphasize that your methods of argumentation depend tremendously on sociohistorical context.

See "Power and Place Equal Personality" (Deloria) or "Jasmine-Not-Jasmine" (Han) for non-comprehensive but interesting examples. Deloria, Jr., Vine. "Power and Place Equal Personality." *Indian Education in America* by Deloria and Daniel Wildcat, Fulcrum, 2001, pp. 21-28.

Argumentation Activities

Op-Ed Rhetorical Analysis

One form of direct argumentation that is readily available is the opinion editorial, or op-ed. Most news sources, from local to international, include an opinion section. Sometimes, these pieces are written by members of the news staff; sometimes, they're by contributors or community members. Op-eds can be long (e.g., comprehensive journalistic articles, like Ta-Nehisi Coates' 2014 landmark "[The Case for Reparations](#)" or his (and others) testimony to the U.S. Congress on [C-SPAN](#) in 2019) or they could be brief (e.g., a brief statement of one's viewpoint, like in your local newspaper's Letter to the Editor section).

To get a better idea of how authors incorporate rhetorical appeals, complete the following rhetorical analysis exercise on an op-ed of your choosing.

1. Find an op-ed (opinion piece, editorial, or letter to the editor) from either a



local newspaper, a national news source, or an international news corporation. Choose something that interests you, since you'll have to read it a few times over.

2. Read the op-ed through once, annotating parts that are particularly convincing, points that seem unsubstantiated, or other eye-catching details.
3. Briefly (in one to two sentences) identify the rhetorical situation (SOAP) of the op-ed.
4. Write a citation for the op-ed in an appropriate format.
5. Analyze the application of rhetoric.
 - a. Summarize the issue at stake and the author's position.
 - b. Find a quote that represents an instance of *logos*.
 - c. Find a quote that represents an instance of *pathos*.
 - d. Find a quote that represents an instance of *ethos*.
 - e. Paraphrase the author's **call-to-action** (the action or actions the author wants the audience to take). A call-to-action will often be related to an author's rhetorical purpose.
6. In a one-paragraph response, consider: Is this rhetoric effective? Does it fulfill its purpose? Why or why not?

VICE News Rhetorical Appeal Analysis

[VICE News](#), an alternative investigatory news outlet, has recently gained acclaim for its inquiry-driven reporting on current issues and popular appeal, much of which is derived from effective application of rhetorical appeals.

You can complete the following activity using any of their texts, but I recommend "[State of Surveillance](#)" from June 8, 2016. Take notes while you watch and complete the organizer on the following pages after you finish.

What is the title and publication date of the text?

Briefly summarize the <u>subject</u> of this text.		
How would you describe the <u>purpose</u> of this text?		
<i>Pathos</i>	Provide at least 3 examples of <i>pathos</i> that you observed in the text	How would you describe the overall tone of the piece? What mood does it evoke for the viewer/reader?

<i>Logos</i>	Provide at least 3 examples of <i>logos</i> that you observed in the text:	In addition to presenting data and statistics, how does the text logically interpret evidence?
<i>Ethos</i>	Provide at least 3 examples of <i>ethos</i> that you observed in the text:	How might one person, idea, or source both enhance and detract from the cultivation of <i>ethos</i> ? (Consider Edward Snowden in "State of Surveillance," for instance.)

Audience Analysis: Tailoring Your Appeals

Now that you've observed the end result of rhetorical appeals, let's consider how you might tailor your own rhetorical appeals based on your audience.

First, come up with a claim that you might try to persuade an audience to believe. Then, consider how you might develop this claim based on the potential audiences listed in the organizer on the following pages. An example is provided after the empty organizer if you get stuck.

<u>Claim:</u>	
Audience #1: Business owners	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
<i>Logos</i>	
<i>Pathos</i>	
<i>Ethos</i>	

<p>Audience #2: Local political officials</p>	<p>What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?</p>
<p><i>Logos</i></p>	
<p><i>Pathos</i></p>	
<p><i>Ethos</i></p>	
<p>Audience #3: One of your family members</p>	<p>What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?</p>
<p><i>Logos</i></p>	
<p><i>Pathos</i></p>	
<p><i>Ethos</i></p>	

Audience #4: Invent your own	What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?
<i>Logos</i>	
<i>Pathos</i>	
<i>Ethos</i>	

Example

<p><u>Claim:</u> <i>Employers should offer employees discounted or free public transit passes.</i></p>	
<p>Audience #1: Business owners</p>	<p>What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?</p>
<p><i>Logos</i></p>	<p><i>They are concerned with profit margins – I need to show that this will benefit them financially: “If employees are able to access transportation more reliably, then they are more likely to arrive on time, which increases efficiency.”</i></p>
<p><i>Pathos</i></p>	<p><i>They are concerned with employee morale – I need to show that access will improve employee satisfaction: “Every employer wants their employees to feel welcome at the office. Does your work family dread the start of the day?”</i></p>
<p><i>Ethos</i></p>	<p><i>They are more likely to believe my claim if other business owners, the chamber of commerce, etc., back it up: “In 2010, Portland employer X started providing free bus passes, and their employee retention rate has increased 30%.”</i></p>
<p>Audience #2: Local political officials</p>	<p>What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?</p>
<p><i>Logos</i></p>	<p><i>They are held up by political bureaucracy – I need to show a clear, direct path to executing my claim: “The implementation of such a program could be modeled after an existing system, like EBT cards.”</i></p>

<p><i>Pathos</i></p>	<p><i>They are concerned with reelection – I need to show that this will build an enthusiastic voter base: “When politicians show concern for workers, their approval rates increase. If the voters are happy, you’ll be happy!”</i></p>
<p><i>Ethos</i></p>	<p><i>They are more likely to believe my claim if I show other cities and their political officials executing a similar plan – I could also draw on my own experiences because I am a member of the community they represent: “As an employee who uses public transit (and an enthusiastic voter), I can say that I would make good use of this benefit.”</i></p>
<p>Audience #3: One of your family members</p>	<p>What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?</p>
<p><i>Logos</i></p>	<p><i>My mom has to drive all over the state for her job – I could explain how this will benefit her: “If you had a free or discounted pass, you could drive less. Less time behind the wheel means a reduction of risk!”</i></p>
<p><i>Pathos</i></p>	<p><i>My mom has to drive all over the state for her job – I could tap into her frustration: “Aren’t you sick of a long commute bookending each day of work? The burning red glow of brakelights and the screech of tires—it doesn’t have to be this way.”</i></p>
<p><i>Ethos</i></p>	<p><i>My mom might take my word for it since she trusts me already: “Would I mislead you? I hate to say I told you so, but I was totally right about the wool sweater thing.”</i></p>

<p>Audience #4: Invent your own <i>Car drivers</i></p>	<p>What assumptions might you make about this audience? What do you think they currently know and believe?</p>
<p><i>Logos</i></p>	<p><i>They are concerned with car-related expenses – I need to lay out evidence of savings from public transit: “Have you realized that taking the bus two days a week could save you \$120 in gas per month?”</i></p>
<p><i>Pathos</i></p>	<p><i>They are frustrated by traffic, parking, etc. – I could play to that emotion: “Is that a spot? No. Is that a spot? No. Oh, but—No”. Sound familiar? You wouldn’t have to hear this if there were an alternative.</i></p>
<p><i>Ethos</i></p>	<p><i>Maybe testimonies from former drivers who use public transit more often would be convincing: “In a survey of PSU students who switched from driving to public transit, 65% said they were not only confident in their choice, but that they were much happier as a result!”</i></p>

Sample Texts by Student Authors

Effective Therapy Through Dance and Movement

Two chairs, angled slightly away from one another, a small coffee table positioned between them, and an ominous bookshelf behind them, stocked with thick textbooks about psychodynamic theory, Sigmund Freud, and of course, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist's typical clinical set-up. Walking into the room, your entire body feels tense—rigid with stress as you enter the therapist's office only to find the aforementioned sight. Your heartbeat reverberates throughout your body, your throat tightens ever-so-slightly, and your mouth goes dry as an overwhelming sense of nervousness sets in.

Now, imagine instead walking into a beautiful studio, wearing your most comfortable clothing. You take off your shoes, and put your hands in the pockets of your sweatpants as you begin to slip and slide around the sprung hardwood floor whilst a childish smile creeps across your face. Your therapist is not there necessarily to dissect your personality or interpret your behavior, but instead to encourage your mental and physical exploration, leading you on a journey of self-discovery. This is the warm and encouraging environment that dance/movement therapy (DMT) may take place in.

In its essence, DMT is the therapeutic use of physical movement—specifically dance in this context—to encourage and support emotional, intellectual, and motor functions of the mind and body. The focus of the therapy lies within the connection and correlation between movement and emotion (“About”). Unlike so-called “normal” therapies, which are set in a clinical environment, and are conducted by somebody with an extensive background in psychology, DMT is generally practiced by individuals whose background is primarily in dance and the performing arts, with psychology or psychotherapy education falling second. Although some may argue otherwise, I believe that DMT is a viable form of therapy, and that dance and movement can act as the catalyst for profound mental transformation; therefore, when dance and therapy are combined, they create a powerful platform for introspection along with interpersonal discovery, and mental/behavioral change.

Life begins with movement and breathing; they precede all thought and language. Following movement and breath, gesture falls next in the development of personal

communication and understanding (Chaiklin 3). Infants and toddlers learn to convey their wants and needs via pointing, yelling, crying, clapping. As adults, we don't always understand what it is they're trying to tell us; however, we know that their body language is intended to communicate something important. As a child grows older, a greater emphasis is placed on verbally communicating their wants and needs, and letting go of the physical expression. Furthermore, the childish means of demonstrating wants and needs become socially inappropriate as one matures. Perhaps we should not ignore the impulses to cry, to yell, or to throw a tantrum on the floor, but instead encourage a channeled physical release of pent-up energy.

I personally, would encourage what some would consider as emotional breakdowns within a therapeutic setting. For example, screaming, sobbing, pounding one's fists against the floor, or kicking a wall all seem taboo in our society, especially when somebody is above the age of three. There is potential for said expressions to become violent and do more harm than good for a client. Therefore, I propose using dance and movement as a method of expressing the same intense emotions.

As a dancer myself, I can personally attest to the benefits of emotional release through movement. I am able to do my best thinking when I am dancing, and immediately after I stop. When dancing, whether it is improvised movement or learned choreography, the body is in both physical and mental motion, as many parts of the brain are activated. The cerebrum is working in overdrive to allow the body to perform certain actions, while other areas of the brain like the cerebellum are trying to match your breathing and oxygen intake to your level of physical exertion. In addition, all parts of the limbic system are triggered. The limbic system is comprised of multiple parts of the brain including the amygdala, hippocampus, thalamus, and hypothalamus. These different areas of the brain are responsible for emotional arousal, certain aspects of memory, and the willingness to be affected by external stimuli. So, when they are activated with movement, they encourage the endocrine system—specifically the pituitary gland—to release hormones that make you feel good about yourself, how you are moving, and allow you to understand what emotions you're feeling and experiencing (Kinser).

As a form of exercise as well, dancing releases endorphins—proteins that are synthesized by the pituitary gland in response to physiologic stressors. This feeling is so desirable that opioid medications were created with the intent of mimicking the sensation that accompanies an

endorphin rush (Sprouse-Blum 70). Along with the beta-proteins comes a level of mental clarity, and a sense of calm. Dance movement therapists should utilize this feeling within therapy, allowing participants to make sense of crises in their life as they exist in this heightened state.

Similar to the potential energy that is explored in physics, when set to music, physical movement manifests a mental state that allows for extensive exploration and introspective discovery. DMT is effective as a therapy in that it allows clients to manifest and confront deep psychological issues while existing in a state of nirvana—the result of dance. Essentially, DMT allows the participant to feel good about him or herself during the sessions, and be open and receptive to learning about their patterns of thought, and any maladaptive behavior (“About”).

Playing specifically to this idea of finding comfort through one’s own body, a case study was done involving an adolescent girl (referred to as “Alex”) who struggled with acute body dysmorphic disorder—a mental illness whose victims are subject to obsession with perceived flaws in their appearance. The aim of the study was to examine “the relationship between an adolescent female’s overall wellness, defined by quality of life, and her participation in a dance/movement therapy [DMT]-based holistic wellness curriculum” (Hagensen 150). During the six-week-long data-collection and observation period, Alex’s sessions took place in a private psychotherapy office and included normal dance and movement based therapy, along with a learning curriculum that focused on mindfulness, body image, movement, friendships, and nutrition. Her therapist wanted not only to ensure that Alex receive the necessary DMT to overcome her body dysmorphic disorder, but also to equip her with the tools to better combat it in the future, should it resurface.

In total, the case study lasted four months, and included nine individual therapy sessions, and a handful of parental check-in meetings (to get their input on her progress). Using the Youth Quality of Life-Research Version (YQOL-R) and parent surveys, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected that revealed that Alex did indeed learn more about herself, and how her body and mind function together. The psychologists involved concluded that the use of DMT was appropriate for Alex’s case, and it proved to be effective in transforming her distorted image of herself (Hagensen 168).

Some may dispute this evidence by saying that the case of a single adolescent girl is not sufficient to deem DMT effective; however, it is extremely difficult to limit confounding variables in large-scale therapeutic experiments. In the realm of psychology, individual studies

provide data that is just as important as that of bigger experiments. To further demonstrate DMT's effectiveness on a larger scale though, I turn to a study that was conducted in Germany in 2012 for evidence.

After recruiting 17 dance therapists and randomly selecting 162 participants, a study was conducted to test the efficacy of a 10-week long DMT group and whether or not the quality of life (QOL) of the participants improved. Ninety-seven of the participants were randomly assigned to the therapy group (the experimental group), whilst the remaining 65 were placed on a waitlist, meaning that they did not receive any treatment (the control group) (Bräuninger 296). All of the participants suffered from stress, and felt that they needed professional help dealing with it. The study utilized a subject-design, and included a pre-test, post-test, and six-month follow-up test. As hypothesized, the results demonstrated that participants in the experimental DMT group significantly improved the QOL, both in the short term (right after the sessions terminated) and in the long term (at the six-month follow-up). The greatest QOL improvements were in the areas of psychological well-being and general life in both the short- and long-term. At the end of the study, it was concluded that, "Dance movement therapy significantly improves QOL in the short and long term" (Bräuninger 301).

DMT does prove to be an effective means of therapy in the cases of body dysmorphic disorder and stress; however, when it comes to using DMT in the treatment of schizophrenia, it seems to fall short. In an attempt to speak to the effectiveness of dance therapy in the context of severe mental illnesses and disorders, a group of psychologists conducted a study to "evaluate the effects of dance therapy for people with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses compared with standard care and other interventions" (Xia 675). Although DMT did not do any harm, there was no identifiable reduction in the participant's symptoms, nor was there an overall improvement in mental cognition. It was concluded that the results of the study did not affirm nor deny the use of dance/movement therapy amongst the group of schizophrenic participants (Xia 676).

I believe that the aforementioned case study brings to light something key about DMT: the kinds of people and mental illnesses that it can be successful for. As demonstrated by the study conducted on schizophrenic patients, DMT isn't necessarily effective for the entire spectrum of mental illness. DMT has been shown to be more effective for those dealing with less serious mental illnesses, or are simply struggling to cope with passing crises in their life. For

example, problems with stress, self-image, family, time management, and relationships are ideal issues to deal with in a DMT setting (Payne 14). Studies have shown that these are the most successfully resolved personal conflicts in this therapy.

Although DMT may not be an effective treatment for certain people or problems, it is unlikely that it will cause detriment to patients, unlike other therapies. For example, it is very common for patients in traditional verbal therapy to feel intense and strong emotions that they were not prepared to encounter, and therefore, not equipped to handle. They can have an increased anxiety and anxiousness as a result of verbal therapy, and even potentially manifest and endure false memories (Linden 308). When a client is difficult to get talking, therapists will inquire for information and ask thought-provoking questions to initiate conversation or better develop their understanding of a patient's situation. In some cases, this has been shown to encourage the development of false memories because the therapist is overbearing and trying too hard to evoke reactions from their reluctant clients. These negative side effects of therapy may also manifest themselves in DMT; however, this is very unlikely given the holistic nature of the therapy, and the compassionate role of the therapist.

Along with its positive effects on participants, another attribute to the utilization of DMT is that a holistic curriculum may be easily interwoven and incorporated alongside the standard therapy. Instead of participation only in standard therapy sessions, a therapist can also act as a teacher. By helping participants learn about mindfulness and introspection techniques, along with equipping them with coping skills, the therapist/teacher is able to help their clients learn how to combat problems they may face in the future, after therapy has ended. Like in the case of Alex, it is helpful to learn not just about thinking and behavioral patterns, but what they mean, and techniques to keep them in check.

A holistic curriculum is based on "the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace" (Miller). In other words, when instilled in the context of DMT, participants learn not only about themselves, but also about their interactions with others and the natural world. Although some find such a premise to be too free-spirited for them, the previously mentioned connections are arguably some of the most important one's in an individual's life. Many people place too great of an emphasis on being happy, and finding happiness, but choose to ignore the introspective process of examining their relationships. By

combining DMT and a holistic curriculum, one can truly begin to understand how they function cognitively, what effect that has on their personal relationships, and what their personal role is in a society and in the world.

Finally, DMT is simply more practical and fun than other, more conventional forms of therapy. It is in essence the vitamin C you would take to not just help you get over a cold, but that you would take to help prevent a cold. In contrast, other therapy styles act as the antibiotics you would take once an infection has set in—there are no preventative measures. When most people make the decision to attend therapy, it is because all else has failed and speaking with a therapist is their last resort. Since DMT is a much more relaxed and natural style of therapy, learned exercise and techniques can easily be incorporated into daily life. While most people won't keep a journal of their dreams, or record every instance in the day they've felt anxious (as many clinical therapists would advise), it would be practical to attend a dance class once a week or so. Just by being in class, learning choreography and allowing the body to move, one *can* lose and discover themselves all at the same time. DMT can be as simple as just improvising movement to a song and allowing the mind to be free for a fleeting moment (Eddy 6). And although short, it can still provide enough time to calm the psyche and encourage distinct moments of introspection.

DMT is an extremely underrated area of psychology. With that being said, I also believe it can be a powerful form of therapy and it has been shown to greatly improve participants' quality of life and their outlook on it. As demonstrated by the previous case studies and experiments, DMT allows clients to think critically about their own issues and maladaptive behaviors, and become capable of introspection. Although DMT may not be effective for all mental illnesses, it is still nonetheless a powerful tool for significant psychological change, and should be used far more often as a form of treatment. Instead of instantly jumping to the conclusion that traditional psychotherapy is the best option for all clients, patients and therapists alike should perhaps recognize that the most natural thing to our body—movement—could act as the basis for interpersonal discovery and provide impressive levels of mental clarity.

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Essay by Samantha Lewis, Portland State University, 2015. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

Teacher Takeaways

"This is a good example of Rogerian argument. Rather than taking a confrontational position that might alienate those who disagree, the author acknowledges the grounds for disagreement while explaining why opponents' concerns may be misplaced. Logos and ethos are both successfully employed in that process. However, the use of pathos is largely limited to the first two paragraphs, where the reader is invited to imagine two radically different therapy scenarios. That works well, but using pathos more broadly might vary the tone of the essay and engage the reader more directly in the argument."

– Professor Dunham

We Don't Care About Child Slaves

When you walk into the mall or any department store, your main goal is to snatch a deal, right? You scout for the prettiest dress with the lowest price or the best fitting jeans with the biggest discount. And once you find it, you go to the checkout and purchase it right away. Congratulations—now it's all yours! But here's the thing: the item that you just purchased could have possibly been made from the sweat, blood, and tears of a six-year-old child in Vietnam. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), one in ten Vietnamese children aged 5 to 17 are slave workers, and Vietnam is the second biggest source of imported goods to the US. This means that a lot of the things we get from Target, Walmart, and countless other stores are made by child slaves. The problem is that the bargain on that cute shirt we just got was too good for us to think twice—about where it came from, how it was made. As a society, we need to take action against child labor by being conscious of where we buy our goods so we don't feed the system that exploits children.

When we think of child slavery, we are horrified by it. How can someone treat children in such a way? It's horrific, it's terrible, and it's a serious crime! But then again, those shoes you saw in the store are so cute and are at such a cheap price, you must buy them! Even if they were made by child slaves, you can't do anything about that situation and purchasing them won't do

any harm at all, right? The unfortunate reality is that we are all hypocritical when it comes to this issue. I'm pretty sure that all of us have some sort of knowledge of child slave workers in third-world countries, but how come we never take it into consideration when we buy stuff? Maybe it's because you believe your actions as one person are too little to affect anything, or you just can't pass up that deal. Either way, we need to all start doing research about where we are sending our money.

As of 2014, 1.75 million Vietnamese children are working in conditions that are classified as child labor according to the ILO (Rau). Most of these children work in crowded factories and work more than 42 hours a week. These children are the ones who make your clothes, toys, and other knick-knacks that you get from Target, Walmart, etc. If not that, they're the ones who make the zippers on your coats and buttons on your sweater in a horrifying, physically unstable work environment.

How exactly do these children end up in this situation? According to a BBC report, labor traffickers specifically target children in remote and poor villages, offering to take them to the city to teach them vocational training or technical skills. Their parents usually agree because they are not aware of the concept of human trafficking since they live in an isolated area. Also, it gives the family an extra source of income. The children are then sent to other places and are forced to work in mostly farms or factories. These children receive little to no pay and most of the time get beaten if they made a mistake while working. They are also subject to mental abuse and at the worst, physically tortured by their boss. Another reason why children end up in the labor force is because they must provide for their family; their parents are unable to do so for whatever reason (Brown).

In 2013, BBC uncovered the story of a Vietnamese child labor victim identified as "Hieu." Hieu was a slave worker in Ho Chi Minh city who jumped out of the third floor window of a factory with two other boys to escape his "workplace." Aged 16 at the time, Hieu explained that a woman approached him in his rural village in Dien Bien, the country's poorest province, and offered him vocational training in the city. He and 11 other children were then sent to the city and forced to make clothes for a garment factory in a cramped room for the next two years. "We started at 6AM and finished work at midnight," he said. "If we made a mistake making the clothes they would beat us with a stick." Fortunately for Hieu, he managed to escape and is one

of the 230 children saved by The Blue Dragon Foundation, a charity that helps fight against child labor (Brown).

For the rest of the victims, however, hope is yet to be found. According to the US Department of Commerce, most of the apparel that is sold in the US is made overseas, and Vietnam is the second biggest source for imported goods right behind China. Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka are also on the list of the top sources of US apparel imports. This means that the demand for goods from these countries is high; therefore, the need for child slave workers is increasing.

One of the biggest corporations in the world that has an ongoing history of the use of child slaves is Nike. According to IHSCS News, workers at Vietnam shoe manufacturing plants make 20 cents an hour, are beaten by supervisors, and are not allowed to leave their work posts. Vietnam isn't the only place that has factories with dangerous working conditions owned by the athletic-wear giant (Wilsey). Nike also has sweatshops in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, and China, just to name a few, that have all been investigated by officials due to inhumane working conditions. Everything from clothing and shoes, to soccer balls are potentially made by child slaves in these countries (Greenhouse). Please keep this in mind the next time you visit your local Nike store.

Vietnam has actually been praised for its efforts in combating child slave issues. According to The Borgen Project, Vietnam has increased the number of prosecutions it holds to help end overseas gang activity (Rau). However, the country lacks internal control in child trafficking, and traffickers who are caught receive light punishments. The person who trafficked Hieu and the 11 other children only faced a fine of \$500 and his factory was closed down, but he did not go to court (Brown).

Let's be real: doing our part to fight against child labor as members of a capitalistic society is not the easiest thing to do. We are all humans who have needs and our constant demand to buy is hard to resist, especially when our society is fueled by consumerism. However, big changes takes little steps. We can start to combat this issue by doing research on where we spend our money and try to not support corporations and companies that will enable the child labor system. We can also donate to charities, such as The Blue Dragon Foundation, to further help the cause. Yes, it is hard to not shop at your favorite stores and I can't stop you from doing so. But all I ask is that you educate yourself on where you are spending your money, and

hopefully your moral compass will guide you onto the right path. If you are horrified by the thought of a 5-year-old child being beaten and working 24 hours a day, do not be a part of the problem. Keep Hieu—and the other 1.75 million children who are currently suffering in Vietnam—in mind the next time you buy something.

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Essay by Jennifer Vo-Nguyen, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

Teacher Takeaways

"This essay provides compelling information from credible sources and offers a mix of strategies, including anecdotal examples and more objective statistical information. These approaches complement each other by putting a human face to the problem while also demonstrating its extent and severity. I'd like to see better engagement with the opposing positions, though. It seems likely that many people are not aware of this issue, or are not aware of resources that would help them become more ethical consumers. By failing to anticipate the needs of the audience, the author risks frustrating or alienating readers rather than persuading them."

– Professor Dunham

Carnivore Consumption Killing Climate

The year of 1955 was the year of many revolutionary names: you might remember the rise of Elvis or the valor of Rosa Parks that year. Some might recognize it as the birth year of two of the 20th centuries best and brightest: Mr. Jobs, and Mr. Gates. However, I recognize it as the birth year of a pair even brighter than that of Steve and Bill. A pair of golden arches that is: McDonald's was founded April 15, 1955, and ever since then, the market for fast, greasy, and cheap food has been a staple in many countries around the world. Which has led to a steady rise in the consumption of meat and other animal products. This spells out disaster for not only personal health but the health of the environment. The direct link between the consumption of animal products and global warming is negatively effecting the health of this generation. If action isn't taken by each of us, global warming will be hazardous for future generations who will be left with the burden of reversing the wastefulness of their greedy ancestors.

While there are many industries that contribute to global warming, the food and farming industry has one of the largest impacts on the environment. For starters, every step of the process, from the birth of the calf to the burger patty sizzling on the grill, produces near irreversible damage to the environment. All livestock, not only cows, passively contribute to global warming. "Livestock, especially cattle, produce methane (CH₄) as part of their digestion. This process is called enteric fermentation, and it represents almost one third of the emissions from the Agriculture sector" ("Greenhouse"). While this may seem insignificant to nice small farms with only a few cows, large corporations own thousands of cattle, all of which add up to significant amount of enteric fermentation. Not to mention, the thousands of gallons of gas that

goes into transporting the cows and there are tons of coal or fossil fuels being burned to power big warehouses where cows and other various meat-producing animals are crammed into undersized cages, where they are modified and bred for slaughter.

Moreover, the driving of semis release carbon dioxide into the air. These trucks are used to haul the animals, their feed, and the final product, your food. The final number of trips, when all said and done, adds up to an enormous amount of gas being burned. “When we burn fossil fuels, such as coal and gas, we release carbon dioxide (CO₂). CO₂ builds up in the atmosphere and causes Earth’s temperature to rise” (“Climate”). In summary, the burning of gas and other fossil fuels in one major way the meat, and the entire food industry contributes to global warming. The rising of the earth’s temperature is like the flick of the first domino in the line. Heating of the Earth being the first domino leading to melting the ice caps and so on. Everyone has heard the spiel of melting ice caps and “saving the polar bears!”; however, there are many serious and harmful effects of such CO₂ emissions. Some may rebuttal that “global warming doesn’t have any effect on me”, but there is a list of health problems caused by global warming that do negatively impact humans.

Unless people can come together and reduce, not just their CO₂ footprint, but all greenhouse gas emissions there will continue to be an increase medical problems globally. The rising temperatures is causing longer allergy seasons and an increase in allergens or dust, pollen and other particles in the air. “Research studies associate fine particles [allergens] with negative cardiovascular outcomes such as heart attacks, formation of deep vein blood clots, and increased mortality from several other causes. These adverse health impacts intensify as temperatures rise” (Portier 14). For further explanation, polluting the atmosphere by burning gas and raising mass numbers of livestock is causing the global temperature to rise. These negative health issues are only the outcome of global warming. I have purposely omitted the health problems, though many, of eating red meat. Cutting meat out of your diet will improve your individual health, but more importantly, it will improve the health of the earth. Some critics might argue that eating just one burger can’t raise the entire Earth’s temperature. The simple answer is, it doesn’t. However, making the conscious decision to eat meat on a day to day basis adds up to a slew of health problems accompanied by a large personal carbon footprint.

Acidification of the oceans is one of the harmful effects on the environment caused by an inflated carbon footprint. This happens when the CO₂ that is released into the atmosphere,

absorbs into the ocean, thus leading to a change in the pH level of the ocean. “High concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere increase the amount that is dissolved into the ocean, leading to acidification... many [people on coastal regions] depend on marine protein for daily subsistence, the consequences of perturbing delicate ocean and coastal systems will be far-reaching” (Portier 6). This is problematic for any who live on coastal regions and may rely heavily on seafood in their diet but is also a problem for the fish as well. Disrupting an entire food chain could have many unforeseen consequences.

Meat lovers will interject: “well food other than meat is produced in factories, don’t those contribute to global warming too?” These arguments are not invalid; while the meat industry may cause much of the food and agriculture’s emissions, other methods of food production are outdated and harmful as well. The problem of global warming, is not solely the fault of the meat industry, the blame should be put onto anyone who produces more than their fair share of greenhouse gases. For example, the way rice is cultivated could very well be a place CO₂ emissions could be cut. “A change in rice processing and consumption patterns could reduce CO₂ emission by 2-16%” (Norton 42). The implementation made to reduce the footprint of rice cultivation, could then be remodeled to be effectively used to reduce the pollution of the food and agriculture sector as a whole.

However, more simple things than changing the way food is produced can help save the environment. It can be as simple as picking up a piece of litter off the ground to deciding to recycle all your bottles and cans. But for those looking to make a greater contribution to saving the world, stop eating meat. Or, if that is too difficult, reduce the amount of meat you eat. A paper published by the World Resources Institute “showed that reducing heavy red meat consumption, would lead to a per capita food and land use-related greenhouse gas emissions reduction of between 15 and 35 percent by 2050. Going vegetarian could reduce those per capita emissions by half” (Magill). As a vegetarian I gave up eating meat mainly for this reason. But not only can you save the environment by giving up meat, by doing so you can save more than just your life, but millions of lives; “switching to vegetarianism could help prevent nearly 7m premature deaths and help reduce health care costs by \$1b” (Harvey). As mentioned, there are multiple positive impacts of eliminating meat from your diet, and it is the best way to reduce your carbon footprint. In tandem, being aware of your carbon footprint is very important, because not monitoring individual emissions is causing greenhouse gases to reach dangerous

levels. Which is beginning to cause a variety of health problems for many people which will only intensify if nothing is done on a personal and global level.

Not only do we have to worry about the changes to ocean and coastal life, but life everywhere will get far worse if nothing is done to stop the warming of our planet. A world dominated by scientifically advanced greedy carnivores is not a world worth saving. The earth is on a slippery slope that is leading to extinction. The way we consume animal products is irresponsible because it poses a major threat to the environment and endangers humans. To respond to this, we need to develop new ways to combat ecological problems and change wasteful consumption habits. If we cannot stop our polluting and wasteful ways, we are destined to lose the planet that harbors everything we know.

To change the eating habits of an entire nation might be a feat all its own; changing the eating habits of an entire world seems impossible. I am confident that it all starts with one person making the right choice. I urge you to follow not only in my footsteps, but join the millions of others who are putting down their steak knives to fight climate change. I find it horrifying that some people would rather destroy their own race than change what goes on their plate. There is overwhelming evidence that illuminates the fiery connection between global warming and serious health problems. Now this generation and future generations will need to create regulations and invent new solutions to enjoy the same planet we have all called home.

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Essay by Tim Curtiss, Portland Community College, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

Teacher Takeaways

“This essay is a good example of an Aristotelian argument; the author clearly presents their stance and their desired purpose, supporting both with a blend of logos, pathos, and ethos. It’s clear that the author is passionate and knowledgeable. I would say as a meat-eater, though, that many readers would feel attacked by some of the rhetorical figures included here: no one wants to be part of the group of ‘scientifically advanced greedy carnivores’ that will make our world uninhabitable, regardless of the truth of that statement. Additionally, the author seems to lose track of their thesis throughout paragraphs four and five. I would encourage them to make sure every paragraph begins and ends with a connection to the thesis statement.”

– Professor Dawson

Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism

From [Chapter 3 of The Process of Research Writing](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- How to Summarize: An Overview

- How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview
- When to Quote, When to Paraphrase
- Four Examples of Quotes and Paraphrases
- How to Avoid Plagiarism in the Research Process
- Plagiarism and the Internet

Learning how to effectively quote and paraphrase research can be difficult, and it certainly takes practice. Hopefully, your abilities to make good use of your research will improve as you work through the exercises in this book, not to mention as you take on other research writing experiences beyond this class. The goal of this section is to introduce some basic strategies for summarizing, quoting and paraphrasing research in your writing and to explain how to avoid plagiarizing your research.

How to Summarize: An Overview

As we noted on pages 202-205, a summary is a brief explanation of a longer text. Some summaries, such as the ones that accompany annotated bibliographies, are very short, just a sentence or two. Others are much longer, though summaries are always much shorter than the text being summarized in the first place.

“The Annotated Bibliography Exercise,” also offers advice on writing effective summaries. See pages 159 – 167.

Summaries of different lengths are useful in research writing because you often need to provide your readers with an explanation of the text you are discussing. This is especially true when you are going to quote or paraphrase from a source.

Of course, the first step in writing a good summary is to do a thorough reading of the text you are going to summarize in the first place. Beyond that important start, there are a few basic guidelines you should follow when you write summary material:

- **Stay “neutral” in your summarizing.** Summaries provide “just the facts” and are not the place where you offer your opinions about the text you are summarizing. Save your opinions and evaluation of the evidence you are summarizing for other parts of your writing.
- **Don’t quote from what you are summarizing.** Summaries will be more useful to you and your colleagues if you write them in your own words.
- **Don’t “cut and paste” from database abstracts.** Many of the periodical indexes that are available as part of your library’s computer system include abstracts of articles. Do

not “cut” this abstract material and then “paste” it into your own annotated bibliography. For one thing, this is plagiarism. Second, “cutting and pasting” from the abstract defeats one of the purposes of writing summaries and creating an annotated bibliography in the first place, which is to help you understand and explain your research.

How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview

Writers quote and paraphrase from research in order to support their points and to persuade their readers. A quote or a paraphrase from a piece of evidence in support of a point answers the reader’s question, “says who?”

This is especially true in academic writing since scholarly readers are most persuaded by effective research and evidence. For example, readers of an article about a new cancer medication published in a medical journal will be most interested in the scholar’s research and statistics that demonstrate the effectiveness of the treatment. Conversely, they will not be as persuaded by emotional stories from individual patients about how a new cancer medication improved the quality of their lives. While this appeal to emotion can be effective and is common in popular sources, these individual anecdotes do not carry the same sort of “scholarly” or scientific value as well-reasoned research and evidence.

Of course, your instructor is not expecting you to be an expert on the topic of your research paper. While you might conduct some primary research, it’s a good bet that you’ll be relying on secondary sources such as books, articles, and websites to inform and persuade your readers. You’ll present this research to your readers in the form of quotes and paraphrases.

A “quote” is a direct restatement of the exact words from the original source. The general rule of thumb is any time you use three or more words as they appeared in the original source, you should treat it as a quote. A “paraphrase” is a restatement of the information or point of the original source in your own words.

While quotes and paraphrases are different and should be used in different ways in your research writing (as the examples in this section suggest), they do have a number of things in common. Both quotes and paraphrases should:

- be “introduced” to the reader, particularly the first time you mention a source;

- include an explanation of the evidence which explains to the reader why you think the evidence is important, especially if it is not apparent from the context of the quote or paraphrase; and
- include a proper citation of the source.

The method you should follow to properly quote or paraphrase depends on the style guide you are following in your academic writing. The two most common style guides used in academic writing are the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the American Psychological Association (APA). Your instructor will probably assign one of these styles before you begin working on your project, however, if he/she doesn't mention this, be sure to ask.

When to Quote, When to Paraphrase

The real "art" to research writing is using quotes and paraphrases from evidence effectively in order to support your point. There are certain "rules," dictated by the rules of style you are following, such as the ones presented by the MLA or the ones presented by the APA. There are certain "guidelines" and suggestions, like the ones I offer in the previous section and the ones you will learn from your teacher and colleagues.

But when all is said and done, the question of when to quote and when to paraphrase depends a great deal on the specific context of the writing and the effect you are trying to achieve. Learning the best times to quote and paraphrase takes practice and experience.

In general, it is best to use a quote when:

- The exact words of your source are important for the point you are trying to make. This is especially true if you are quoting technical language, terms, or very specific word choices.
- You want to highlight your *agreement* with the author's words. If you agree with the point the author of the evidence makes and you like their exact words, use them as a quote.
- You want to highlight your *disagreement* with the author's words. In other words, you may sometimes want to use a direct quote to indicate exactly what it is you disagree about. This might be particularly true when you are considering the antithetical positions in your research writing projects.

In general, it is best to paraphrase when:

- There is no good reason to use a quote to refer to your evidence. If the author's exact words are not especially important to the point you are trying to make, you are usually better off paraphrasing the evidence.

- You are trying to explain a particular a piece of evidence in order to explain or interpret it in more detail. This might be particularly true in writing projects like critiques.
- You need to balance a direct quote in your writing. You need to be careful about directly quoting your research *too* much because it can sometimes make for awkward and difficult to read prose. So, one of the reasons to use a paraphrase instead of a quote is to create balance within your writing.

Tips for Quoting and Paraphrasing

- Introduce your quotes and paraphrases to your reader, especially on first reference.
- Explain the significance of the quote or paraphrase to your reader.
- Cite your quote or paraphrase properly according to the rules of style you are following in your essay.
- Quote when the exact words are important, when you want to highlight your agreement or your disagreement.
- Paraphrase when the exact words aren't important, when you want to explain the point of your evidence, or when you need to balance the direct quotes in your writing.

Four Examples of Quotes and Paraphrases

Here are four examples of what I mean about properly quoting and paraphrasing evidence in your research essays. In each case, I begin with a **bad** example, or the way **not** to quote or paraphrase.

Quoting in MLA Style

Here's the first **bad** example, where the writer is trying to follow the rules of MLA style:

There are many positive effects for advertising prescription drugs on television. "African-American physicians regard direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines as one way to educate minority patients about needed treatment and healthcare options" (Wechsler, Internet).

This is a potentially good piece of information to support a research writer's claim, but the researcher hasn't done any of the necessary work to explain where this quote comes from or to explain why it is important for supporting her point. Rather, she has simply "dropped in" the quote, leaving the interpretation of its significance up to the reader.

Now consider this revised **good** (or at least **better**) example of how this quote might be better introduced into the essay:

In her *Pharmaceutical Executive* article available through the Wilson Select Internet database, Jill Wechsler writes about one of the positive effects of advertising prescription drugs on television: “African-American physicians regard direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines as one way to educate minority patients about needed treatment and healthcare options.”

Note:

When quoting a complete sentence, use a colon as shown above. If you are using an incomplete sentence, use a comma, as shown below.

In her *Pharmaceutical Executive* article available through the Wilson Select Internet database, Jill Wechsler writes about one of the positive effects of advertising prescription drugs on television. She states, “African-American physicians regard direct-to-consumer advertising” as a as a way to inform the patients on options.

In this revision, it’s much more clear what point the writer is trying to make with this evidence and where this evidence comes from.

In this particular example, the passage is from a traditional print journal called *Pharmaceutical Executive*. However, the writer needs to indicate that she actually found and read this article through Wilson Select, an internet database which reproduces the “full text” of articles from periodicals without any graphics, charts, or page numbers.

When you use a direct quote in your research, you need to the indicate page number of that direct quote or you need to indicate that the evidence has no specific page numbers. While it can be a bit awkward to indicate within the text how the writer found this information if it’s from the internet, it’s important to do so on the first reference of a piece of evidence in your writing. On references to this piece of evidence after the first reference, you can use just the last name of the writer.

For example:

Wechsler also reports on the positive effects of advertising prescription drugs on television. She writes...

Paraphrasing in MLA Style

In this example, the writer is using MLA style to write a research essay for a literature class. Here is a **bad** example of a paraphrase:

While Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (Callahan).

There are two problems with this paraphrase. First, if this is the first or only reference to this particular piece of evidence in the research essay, the writer should include more information about the source of this paraphrase in order to properly introduce it. Second, this paraphrase is actually not of the *entire* article but rather of a specific passage. The writer has neglected to note the page number within the parenthetical citation.

A **better** revision of this paraphrase might look like this:

John F. Callahan suggests in his article “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” that while Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (381).

By incorporating the name of the author of the evidence the research writer is referring to here, the source of this paraphrase is now clear to the reader. Furthermore, because there is a page number at the end of this sentence, the reader understands that this passage is a paraphrase of a particular part of Callahan’s essay and *not* a summary of the entire essay. Again, if the research writer had introduced this source to his readers earlier, he could have started with a phrase like “Callahan suggests...” and then continued on with his paraphrase.

If the research writer were offering a brief summary of the entire essay following MLA style, he wouldn’t include a page number in parentheses. For example:

John F. Callahan’s article “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” examines Fitzgerald’s fascination with the elusiveness of the American Dream in the novels *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night*, and *The Last Tycoon*.

Quoting in APA Style

Consider this **bad** example in APA style, of what **not** to do when quoting evidence:

“If the U.S. scallop fishery were a business, its management would surely be fired, because its revenues could readily be increased by at least 50 percent while its costs were being reduced by an equal percentage.” (Repetto, 2001, p. 84).

Again, this is a potentially valuable piece of evidence, but it simply isn’t clear what point the research writer is trying to make with it. Further, it doesn’t follow the preferred method of citation with APA style.

Here is a revision that is a **better** example:

Repetto (2001) concludes that in the case of the scallop industry, those running the industry should be held responsible for not considering methods that would curtail the problems of over-fishing: “If the U.S. scallop fishery were a business, its management would surely be fired, because its revenues could readily be increased by at least 50 percent while its costs were being reduced by an equal percentage” (p. 84).

This revision is improved because the research writer has introduced and explained the point of the evidence with the addition of a clarifying sentence. It also follows the rules of APA style. Generally, APA style prefers that the research writer refer to the author only by last name followed immediately by the year of publication. Whenever possible, you should begin your citation with the author’s last name and the year of publication, and, in the case of a direct quote like this passage, the page number (including the “p.”) in parentheses at the end.

Paraphrasing in MLA Style

Paraphrasing in APA style is slightly different from MLA style as well. Consider first this **bad** example of what **not** to do in paraphrasing from a source in APA style:

Computer criminals have lots of ways to get away with credit card fraud (Cameron, 2002).

The main problem with this paraphrase is there isn’t enough here to adequately explain to the reader what the point of the evidence really is. Remember: your readers have no way of automatically knowing why you as a research writer think that a particular piece of evidence is useful in supporting your point. This is why it is key that you introduce and explain your evidence.

Here is a revision that is **good** or at least **better**:

Cameron (2002) points out that computer criminals intent on committing credit card fraud are able to take advantage of the fact that there aren’t enough officials working to enforce computer crimes. Criminals are also able to use the technology to their advantage by communicating via email and chat rooms with other criminals.

Again, this revision is better because the additional information introduces and explains the point of the evidence. In this particular example, the author’s name is also incorporated into the explanation of the evidence as well. In APA, it is preferable to weave in the author’s name into your essay, usually at the beginning of a sentence, also known as an attributive tag or

signal phrase. However, it would also have been acceptable to end an improved paraphrase with just the author's last name and the date of publication in parentheses.

How to Avoid Plagiarism in the Research Process

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or uncredited use of the writings or ideas of another in your writing. While it might not be as tangible as auto theft or burglary, plagiarism is still a form of theft.

In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious matter because ideas in the forms of research, creative work, and original thought are highly valued. Chances are, your school has strict rules about what happens when someone is caught plagiarizing. The penalty for plagiarism is severe, everything from a failing grade for the plagiarized work, a failing grade for the class, or expulsion from the institution.

You might not be aware that plagiarism can take several different forms. The most well-known, **purposeful plagiarism**, is handing in an essay written by someone else and representing it as your own, copying your essay word for word from a magazine or journal, or downloading an essay from the internet.

A much more common and less understood phenomenon is what I call **accidental plagiarism**. Accidental plagiarism is the result of improperly paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, or citing your evidence in your academic writing. Generally, writers accidentally plagiarize because they simply don't know or they fail to follow the rules for giving credit to the ideas of others in their writing.

Both purposeful and accidental plagiarism are wrong, against the rules, and can result in harsh punishments. Ignoring or not knowing the rules of how to not plagiarize and properly cite evidence might be an *explanation*, but it is not an *excuse*.

To exemplify what I'm getting at, consider the examples below that use quotations and paraphrases from this brief passage:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties. Rock started out as an Anglo-American phenomenon and has become an industry. Nonetheless, it was able to capture the hopes of young people around the world and provided enjoyment to those of us who listened to or played rock. Sixties pop was the conscience of one or two generations that helped bring the war in Vietnam to a close. Obviously, neither rock nor pop has solved global poverty or hunger. But is this a reason to be "against" them? (ix).

And just to make it clear that *I'm* not plagiarizing this passage, here is the citation in MLA style: Lévy, Pierre. *Cyberculture*. Trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001.

Here's an obvious example of plagiarism:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties.

In this case, the writer has literally taken one of Lévy's sentences and represented it as her own. That's clearly against the rules.

Here's another example of plagiarism, perhaps less obvious:

The same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people.

While these aren't Lévy's exact words, they are certainly close enough to constitute a form of plagiarism. And again, even though you might think that this is a "lesser" form of plagiarism, it's still plagiarism.

Both of these passages can easily be corrected to make them acceptable quotations or paraphrases.

In the introduction of his book *Cyberculture*, Pierre Lévy observes that "Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties" (ix).

Pierre Lévy suggests that the same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people (ix).

Note that changing these passages from examples of plagiarism to acceptable examples of a quotation and a paraphrase is extremely easy: properly cite your sources.

This leads to the "golden rule" of avoiding plagiarism:

Always cite your sources. If you are unsure as to whether you should or should not cite a particular claim or reference, you should probably cite your source.

Often, students are unclear as to whether or not they need to cite a piece of evidence because they believe it to be “common knowledge” or because they are not sure about the source of information. When in doubt about whether or not to cite evidence in order to give credit to a source (“common knowledge” or not), you should cite the evidence.

Plagiarism and the Internet

Sometimes, I think the ease of finding and retrieving information on the World Wide Web makes readers think that this information does not need to be cited. After all, it isn't a traditional source like a book or a journal; it is available for "free." All a research writer needs to do with a web site is "cut and paste" whatever he needs into his essay, right? Wrong!

You need to cite the evidence you find from the internet or the World Wide Web the same way you cite evidence from other sources. To not do this is plagiarism, or, more bluntly, cheating. Just because the information is "freely" available on the internet does not mean you can use this information in your academic writing without properly citing it, much in the same way that the information from library journals and books "freely" available to you needs to be cited in order to give credit where credit is due.

It is also not acceptable to simply download graphics from the World Wide Web. Images found on the internet are protected by copyright laws. Quite literally, taking images from the web (particularly from commercial sources) is an offense that could lead to legal action. There are places where you can find graphics and clip art that web publishers have made publicly available for anyone to use, but be sure that the website where you find the graphics makes this explicit before you take graphics as your own.

In short, you can use evidence from the web as long as you don't plagiarize and as long as you properly cite it; don't take graphics from the Web unless you know the images are in the public domain.

The Research Essay

From [Chapter 10 of The Process of Research Writing](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- A “Research Essay” Instead of A “Research Paper”
- Getting Ready: Questions to Ask Yourself About Your Research Essay
- Creating and Revising a Formal Outline
- The Introduction
- Giving Your Readers Background Information
- Weaving in Evidence to Support Your Points
- Accounting for the Opposition: Antithetical Arguments
- Conclusions
- Works Cited/Bibliography

A “Research Essay” or a “Research Project” instead of a “Research Paper”

Throughout this book, I’ve purposefully avoided the term “research paper” for three reasons. First, while teachers assign and students write essays in college classes that are commonly called “research papers,” there is no clear consensus on the definition of a research paper. This is because the definition of “research” differs from field to field, and even between instructors within the same discipline teaching the same course.

Second, while the papers we tend to call “research papers” do indeed include research, most other kinds of college writing require at least some research as well. All of the exercises outlined in “Exercises in the Process of Research” are examples of this: while none of these assignments are “research papers,” all of them involve research in order to make a point.

A third reason has to do with the connotations of the word “paper” versus the word “essay.” For me, “paper” suggests something static, concrete, routine, and uninteresting—think of the negative connotations of the term bureaucratic “paperwork,” or the policing mechanism of “showing your papers” to the authorities. On the other hand, the word “essay” has more positive connotations: dynamic, flexible, unique, and creative. The definitions of essay in dictionaries I have examined include terms like “attempt,” “endeavor,” and “a try.” As a writer, I would much rather work on something that was a dynamic and creative endeavor rather than a static and routine document. My hope is that you, as a student and a writer, feel the same way.

This chapter is about writing a research essay. While I cannot offer you *exact* guidelines of how to do this for each and every situation where you will be asked to write such a paper or essay, I

can provide you with the general guidelines and advice you'll need to successfully complete these sorts of writing assignments. In the next chapter, I'll describe a few alternatives to presenting your research in a conventional essay.

Getting Ready: Questions to Ask Yourself About Your Research Essay

If you are coming to this section after working through some of the writing exercises introduced earlier, then you are ready to dive into your research essay. By this point, you probably have done some combination of the following things:

- Thought about different kinds of evidence to support your research;
 - Been to the library and the internet to gather evidence;
 - Developed an annotated bibliography for your evidence;
 - Written and revised a working thesis for your research;
 - Critically analyzed and written about key pieces of your evidence;
 - Considered the reasons for disagreeing and questioning the premise of your working thesis;
- and
- Categorized and evaluated your evidence.

In other words, you already have been working on your research essay through the process of research writing.

But before diving into writing a research essay, you need to take a moment to ask yourself, your colleagues, and your teacher some important questions about the nature of your project.

What is the specific assignment?

It is crucial to consider the teacher's directions and assignment for your research essay. The teacher's specific directions will in large part determine what you are required to do to successfully complete your essay, just as they did with the exercises you completed in part two of this book.

If you have been given the option to choose your own research topic, the assignment for the research essay itself might be open-ended. For example:

Write a research essay about the working thesis that you have been working on with the previous writing assignments. Your essay should be about ten pages long, it should include ample evidence to support your point, and it should follow MLA style.

Some research writing assignments are more specific than this, of course. For example, here is a research writing assignment for a poetry class:

Write a seven to ten page research essay about one of the poets discussed in the last five chapters of our textbook and his or her poems. Besides your analysis and interpretation of the poems, be sure to cite scholarly research that supports your points. You should also include research on the cultural and historic contexts the poet was working within. Be sure to use MLA documentation style throughout your essay.

Obviously, you probably wouldn't be able to write a research project about the problems of advertising prescription drugs on television in a history class that focused on the American Revolution.

What is the main purpose of your research essay?

Has the goal of your essay been to answer specific questions based on assigned reading material and your research? Or has the purpose of your research been more open-ended and abstract, perhaps to learn more about issues and topics to share with a wider audience? In other words, is your research essay supposed to answer questions that indicate that you have learned about a set and defined subject matter (usually a subject matter which your teacher already more or less understands), or is your essay supposed to discover and discuss an issue that is potentially unknown to your audience, including your teacher.

The "demonstrating knowledge about a defined subject matter" purpose for research is quite common in academic writing. For example, a political science professor might ask students to write a research project about the Bill of Rights in order to help her students learn about the Bill of Rights and to demonstrate an understanding of these important amendments to the U.S. Constitution. But presumably, the professor already knows a fair amount the Bill of Rights, which means she is probably more concerned with finding out if you can demonstrate that you have learned and have formed an opinion about the Bill of Rights based on your research and study.

"Discovering and discussing an issue that is potentially unknown to your audience" is also a very common assignment, particularly in composition courses. As the examples included throughout *Say it Well* suggest, the subject matter for research essays that are designed to inform your audience about something new is almost unlimited.

Even if all of your classmates have been researching a similar research idea, chances are your particular take on that idea has gone in a different direction. For example, you and some of your classmates might have begun your research by studying the effect on children of violence on television, either because that was a topic assigned by the teacher or because you simply shared an interest in the general topic. But as you have focused and refined this initially broad topic, you and your classmates will inevitably go into different directions, perhaps focusing on different genres (violence in cartoons versus live-action shows), on different age groups (the effect of violent television on preschoolers versus the effect on teen-agers), or on different conclusions about the effect of television violence in the first place (it is harmful versus there is no real effect).

Who is the main audience for your research writing project?

Besides your teacher and your classmates, who are you trying to reach with your research? Who are you trying to convince as a result of the research you have done? What do you think is fair to assume that this audience knows or doesn't know about the topic of your research project? Purpose and audience are obviously closely related because the reason for writing something has a lot to do with who you are writing it for, and who you are writing something for certainly has a lot to do with your purposes in writing in the first place.

In composition classes, it is usually presumed that your audience includes your teacher and your classmates. After all, one of the most important reasons you are working on this research project in the first place is to meet the requirements of this class, and your teacher and your classmates have been with you as an audience every step of the way.

Contemplating an audience beyond your peers and teachers can sometimes be difficult, but if you have worked through the exercises, you probably have at least some sense of an audience beyond the confines of your class. For example, one of the purposes "Critique Exercise" in is to explain to your readers why they might be interested in reading the text that you are critiquing. The goal of the "Antithesis Exercise" (in a later section) is to consider the position of those who would disagree with the position you are taking. So directly and indirectly, you've probably been thinking about your readers for a while now.

Still, it might be useful for you to try to be even more specific about your audience as you begin your research essay. Do you know any "real people" (friends, neighbors, relatives, etc.) who might be an ideal reader for your research essay? Can you at least imagine what an ideal reader might want to get out of reading your research essay?

I'm not trying to suggest that you ought to ignore your teacher and your classmates as your primary audience. But research essays, like most forms of writing, are strongest when they are intended for a more specific audience, either someone the writer knows or someone the writer can imagine. Teachers and classmates are certainly part of this audience, but trying to reach an audience of potential readers beyond the classroom and the assignment will make for a stronger essay.

What sort of “voice” or “authority” do you think is appropriate for your research project?

Do you want to take on a personal and more casual tone in your writing, or do you want to present a less personal and less casual tone? Do you want to use first person, the “I” pronoun, or do you want to avoid it?

My students are often surprised to learn that it is perfectly acceptable in many types of research and academic writing for writers to use the first person pronoun, “I.” It is the tone I’ve taken with this textbook, and it is an approach that is very common in many fields, particularly those that tend to be grouped under the term “the humanities.”

For example, consider this paragraph from Kelly Ritter’s essay “The Economics of Authorship: Online Paper Mills, Student Writers, and First-Year Composition,” which appeared in June 2005 issue of one of the leading journals in the field of composition and rhetoric, *College Composition and Communication*:

When considering whether, when, and how often to purchase an academic paper from an online paper-mill site, first-year composition students therefore work with two factors that **I** wish to investigate here in pursuit of answering the questions posed above: the negligible desire to do one’s own writing, or to be an author, with all that entails in this era of faceless authorship vis-à-vis the internet; and the ever-shifting concept of “integrity,” or responsibility when purchasing work, particularly in the anonymous arena of online consumerism. (603, emphasis added)

Throughout her thoughtful and well-researched essay, Ritter uses first person pronouns (“I” and “my,” for example) when it is appropriate: “I think,” “I believe,” “my experiences,” etc.

This sort of use of the personal pronoun is not limited to publications in English studies. This example comes from the journal *Law and Society Review* (Volume 39, Issue 2, 2005), which is an interdisciplinary journal concerned with the connections between society and the law. The article is titled “Preparing to Be Colonized: Land Tenure and Legal Strategy in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii” and it was written by law professor Stuart Banner:

The story of Hawaii complicates the conventional account of colonial land tenure reform. Why did the land tenure reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries receive its earliest implementation in, of all places, Hawaii? Why did the Hawaiians do this to themselves? What did they hope to gain from it? This article attempts to answer these questions. At the end, **I** briefly suggest why the answers may shed some light on the process of colonization in other times and places, and thus why

the answers may be of interest to people who are not historians of Hawaii. (275, emphasis added)

Banner uses both “I” and “my” throughout the article, again when it’s appropriate.

Even this cursory examination of the sort of writing academic writers publish in scholarly journals will demonstrate my point: academic journals *routinely* publish articles that make use of the first person pronoun. Writers in academic fields that tend to be called “the sciences” (chemistry, biology, physics, and so forth, but also more “soft” sciences like sociology or psychology) are more likely to avoid the personal pronoun or to refer to themselves as “the researcher,” “the author,” or something similar. But even in these fields, “I” does frequently appear.

The point is this: using “I” is not inherently *wrong* for your research essay or for any other type of academic essay. However, you need to be aware of your choice of first person versus third person and your role as a writer in your research project.

Generally speaking, the use of the first person “I” pronoun creates a greater closeness and informality in your text, which can create a greater sense of intimacy between the writer and the reader. This is the main reason I’ve used “I” throughout this text: using the first person pronoun in a textbook like this lessens the distance between us (you as student/reader and me as writer), and I think it makes for easier reading of this material.

If you do decide to use a first person voice in your essay, make sure that the focus stays on your research and does not shift to you the writer. When teachers say “don’t use I,” what they are really cautioning against is the *overuse* of the word “I” such that the focus of the essay shifts from the research to “you” the writer. While mixing autobiography and research writing can be interesting (as I will touch on in the next chapter on alternatives to the research essay), it is not the approach you want to take in a traditional academic research essay.

The third person pronoun (and avoidance of the use of “I”) tends to have the opposite effect of the first person pronoun: it creates a sense of distance between writer and reader, and it lends a greater formality to the text. This can be useful in research writing because it tends to emphasize research and evidence in order to persuade an audience.

(I should note that much of this textbook is presented in what is called second person voice, using the “you” pronoun. Second person is very effective for writing instructions, but generally speaking, I would discourage you from taking this approach in your research project.)

In other words, “first person” and “third person” are both potentially acceptable choices, depending on the assignment, the main purpose of your assignment, and the audience you are trying to reach. Just be sure to consistent—don’t switch between third person and first person in the same essay.

What is your working thesis and how has it changed and evolved up to this point?

You already know how important it is to have an evolving working thesis. If you haven’t read that part of the textbook, you might want to do so before getting too far along with your research project.

Remember: a **working** thesis is one that changes and evolves as you write and research. It is perfectly acceptable to change your thesis in the writing process based on your research.

Activity: Discussing the Research Writing Assignment

Working alone or in small groups, answer these questions about your research essay before you begin writing it:

- What is the specific research writing assignment? Do you have written instructions from the teacher for this assignment? Are there any details regarding page length, arrangement, or the amount of support evidence that you need to address? In your own words, restate the assignment for the research essay.
- What is the purpose of the research writing assignment? Is the main purpose of your research essay to address specific questions, to provide new information to your audience, or some combination of the two?
- Who is the audience for your research writing assignment? Besides your teacher and classmates, who else might be interested in reading your research essay?
- What sort of voice are you going to use in your research essay? What do you think would be more appropriate for your project, first person or third person?
- What is your working thesis? Think back to the ways you began developing your working thesis in the exercises in previous sections of this text. In what ways has your working thesis changed?

If you are working with a small group of classmates, do each of you agree with the basic answers to these questions? Do the answers to these questions spark other questions that you have and need to have answered by your classmates and your teacher before you begin your research writing project?

Once you have some working answers to these basic questions, it's time to start thinking about actually writing the research essay itself. For most research essay projects, you will have to consider at least most of these components in the process:

- The Formal Outline
- The Introduction
- Background Information
- Evidence to Support Your Points
- Antithetical Arguments and Answers
- The Conclusion
- Works Cited or Reference Information

The rest of this chapter explains these parts of the research essay and it concludes with an example that brings these elements together.

Creating and Revising a Formal Outline

Frequently, research essay assignments will also require you to include a formal outline, usually before the essay begins following the cover page. Formal outlines are sort of table of contents for your essay: they give the reader a summary of the main points and sub-points of what they are about to read.

The standard format for an outline looks something like this:

- I. First Major Point
 - A. First sub-point of the first major point
 - 1. First sub-point of the first sub-point
 - 2. Second sub-point of the first sub-point
 - B. Second sub-point of the first major point
- II. Second Major point

And so on. Alternatively, you may also be able to use a decimal outline to note the different points. For example:

- 1. First Major point
 - 1.1. First sub-point of the first major point
 - 1.1.1 First sub-point of the first sub-point
 - 1.1.2 Second sub-point of the first sub-point
 - 1.2. Second sub-point of the first major point
- 2. Second Major point

Sometimes, teachers ask student writers to include a “thesis statement” for their essay at the beginning of the outline.

Generally speaking, if you have one “point,” be it a major point or a sub-point, or sub-point of a sub-point (perhaps a sub-sub-point!), you need to have at least a second similar point. In other words, if you have a sub-point you are labeling “A.,” you should have one labeled “B.” The best rule of thumb I can offer in terms of the grammar and syntax of your various points is to keep them short and consistent.

Now, while the formal outline is generally the first thing in your research essay after the title page, writing one is usually the **last** step in the writing process. Don't start writing your research essay by writing a formal outline first because it might limit the changes you can make to your essay during the writing process.

Of course, a **formal** outline is quite different from a **working** outline, one where you are more informally writing down ideas and "sketching" out plans for your research essay before or as you write. There are no specific rules or methods for making a working outline—it could be a simple list of points, it could include details and reminders for the writer, or anything in-between.

Making a working outline is a good idea, particularly if your research essay will be a relatively long and complex one. Just be sure to not confuse these two very different outlining tools.

Activity 10.2

Working alone or in small groups, make a formal outline of an already completed essay. You can work with any of the sample essays in this text or any other brief sample. Don't work with the sample research essay at the end of this chapter, though—there is a sample formal outline included with it.

If you and your classmates made a formal outline of the same essay, compare your outlines. Were there any significant differences in your approaches to making an outline? What were they?

The Introduction

Research essays have to begin somewhere, and this somewhere is called the "introduction." By "beginning," I don't necessarily mean *only* the first paragraph—introductions in traditional research essays are frequently several paragraphs long. Generally speaking though, the introduction is about 25 percent or less of the total essay; in other words, in a ten-page, traditional research essay, the introduction would rarely be longer than two and a half pages.

Introductions have two basic jobs to perform:

- To get the reader's attention; and
- To briefly explain what the rest of the essay will be about.

What is appropriate or what works to get the reader's attention depends on the audience you have in mind for your research essay and the sort of voice or authority you want to have with your essay. Frequently, it is a good idea to include some background material on the issue being discussed or a brief summary of the different sides of an argument. If you have an anecdote from either your own experience or your research that you think is relevant to the rest of your project or will be interesting to your readers, you might want to consider beginning with that story. Generally speaking, you should avoid mundane or clichéd beginnings like "This research essay is about..." or "In society today..."

The second job of an introduction in a traditional research essay is to explain to the reader what the rest of the essay is going to be about. This is frequently done by stating your "thesis statement," which is more or less where your working thesis has ended up after its inevitable changes and revisions.

A thesis statement can work in a lot of different places in the introduction, not only as the last sentence at the end of the first paragraph. It is also possible to let your readers know what your thesis is without ever directly stating it in a single sentence. This approach is common in a variety of different types of writing that use research, though traditionally, most academic research essays have a specific and identifiable thesis statement.

Let's take a look at this example of a **weak** introductory paragraph:

In our world today, there are many health problems, such as heart disease and cancer. Another serious problem that affects many people in this country is diabetes, particularly Type II diabetes. Diabetes is a disease where the body does not produce enough insulin, and the body needs insulin to process sugars and starches. It is a serious disease that effects millions of people, many of whom don't even know they have the disease. In this essay, I will discuss how eating sensibly and getting plenty of exercise are the most important factors in preventing Type 2 Diabetes.

The first two sentences of this introduction don't have much to do with the topic of diabetes, and the following sentences are rather vague. Also, this introduction doesn't offer much information about what the rest of the essay will be about, and it certainly doesn't capture the reader's attention.

Now, consider this revised and **better** introductory paragraph:

Diabetes is a disease where the body does not produce enough of insulin to process starches and sugars effectively. According to the American Diabetes Association web site, over 18 million Americans have diabetes, and as many as 5.2 million of these people

are unaware that they have it. Perhaps even more striking is that the most common form of diabetes, Type 2 Diabetes, is largely preventable with a sensible diet and exercise.

This introduction is much more specific and to the point, and because of that, it does a better job of getting the reader's attention. Also, because it is very specific, this introduction gives a better sense to the reader where the rest of the essay will be leading.

While the introduction is of course the first thing your readers will see, **make sure it is one of the last things you decide to revise in the process of writing your research essay.** You will probably start writing your essay by writing an introduction—after all, you've got to start somewhere. But it is nearly impossible to write a very effective introduction if the rest of the essay hasn't been written yet, which is why you will certainly want to return to the introduction to do some revision work after you've written your essay.

Activity: Revising “Bad” Introductions

Working alone or in small groups, revise one of the following “bad” introductions, being sure to get the reader's attention, to make clear what the essay being introduced would be about, and to eliminate unneeded words and clichés. Of course, since you don't have the entire essay, so you may have to take certain liberties with these passages. But the goal is to improve these “bad beginnings” without changing their meaning.

Example #1:

In society today, there are many problems with television shows. A lot of them are not very entertaining at all. Others are completely inappropriate for children. It's hard to believe that these things are on TV at all. In fact, because of a lot of the bad things that have been on television in recent years, broadcasters have had to censor more and more shows. They have done some of this voluntarily, but they have also been required to do this by irate advertisers and viewers as well. For example, consider Janet Jackson's famous “wardrobe malfunction” at the 2004 Super Bowl. I contend that Jackson's performance in the 2004 Super Bowl, accident or not, has led to more censorship on television.

Example #2:

There are a lot of challenges to being a college student. We all know that studying and working hard will pay off in the end. A lot of college students also enjoy to cheer for their college teams. A lot of colleges and universities will do whatever it takes to have winning teams. In fact, some colleges and universities are even willing to allow in students with bad test scores and very low high school grades as long as they are great athletes and can make the team better. All of this leads to a difficult to deny observation: college sports, especially

Division I football, is full of corruption and it is damaging the academic integrity of some of our best universities.

Background Information (or Helping Your Reader Find a Context)

It is always important to explain, contextualize, and orientate your readers within any piece of writing. Your research essay is no different in that you need to include background information on your topic in order to create the right context for the project.

In one sense, you're giving your reader important background information every time you fully introduce and explain a piece of evidence or an argument you are making. But often times, research essays include some background information about the overall topic near the beginning of the essay. Sometimes, this is done briefly as part of the introduction section of the essay; at other times, this is best accomplished with a more detailed section after the introduction and near the beginning of the essay.

How much background information you need to provide and how much context you need to establish depends a great deal on how you answer the "Getting Ready" questions at the beginning of this chapter, particularly the questions in which you are asked to consider your *purpose* and your *audience*. If one of the purposes of your essay is to convince a primary audience of readers who know little about your topic or your argument, you will have to provide more background information than you would if the main purpose of your essay was to convince a primary audience that knows a lot about your topic. **But even if you can assume your audience is as familiar with the topic of your essay as you, it's still important to provide at least some background on your specific approach to the issue in your essay.**

It's almost always better to give your readers "too much" background information than "too little." In my experience, students too often assume too much about what their readers (the teacher included!) knows about their research essay. There are several reasons why this is the case; perhaps it is because students so involved in their research forget that their readers haven't been doing the same kind of research. The result is that sometimes students "cut corners" in terms of helping their audience through their essay. I think that the best way to avoid these kinds of misunderstandings is for you to always remember that your readers don't know as much about your specific essay as you do, and part of your job as a writer is to guide your reader through the text.

In Casey Copeman's research essay at the end of this chapter, the context and background information for the subject matter after the introduction; for example:

The problems surrounding corruption in university athletics have been around ever since sports have been considered important in American culture. People have emphasized the

importance of sports and the significance of winning for a long time. According to Jerome Cramer in a special report published in Phi Delta Kappan, "Sports are a powerful experience, and America somehow took this belief of the ennobling nature of sports and transformed it into a quasi-religion" (Cramer K1).

Casey's subject matter, college athletics, was one that she assumed most of her primary audience of fellow college students and classmates were familiar with. Nonetheless, she does provide some basic information about the importance of sports team in society and in universities in particular.

Weaving in Evidence to Support Your Point

Throughout your research essay, you need to include evidence that supports your points. There is no firm rule as to "how much" research you will want or need to include in your research essay. Like so many other things with research writing, it depends on your purpose, the audience, the assignment, and so forth. **But generally speaking, you need to have a piece of evidence in the form of a direct quote or paraphrase every time you make a claim that you cannot assume your audience "just knows."**

Stringing together a series of quotes and paraphrases from different sources might show that you have done a lot of research on a particular topic, but your audience wants to know your *interpretation* of these quotes and paraphrases, and your reader wants and needs to be guided through your research. To do this, you need to work at explaining the significance of your evidence throughout your essay.

For example, this passage does a **bad** job of introducing and weaving in evidence to support a point.

In America today, the desire to have a winning team drives universities to admit academically unqualified students. "At many universities, the tradition of athletic success requires coaches to produce not only competitive by championship-winning teams" (Duderstadt 191).

The connection between the sentence and the evidence is not as clear as it could be. Further, the quotation is simply "dropped in" with no explanation. Now, compare it with this revised and **better** example:

The desire to always have a winning team has driven many universities to admit academically unqualified student athletes to their school just to improve their sports teams. According to James Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan,

the corruption of university athletics usually begins with the process of recruiting and admitting student athletes. He states that, "At many universities, the tradition of athletic success requires coaches to produce not only competitive but championship-winning teams" (Duderstadt 191).

Remember: the point of using research in writing (be it a traditional research essay or any other form of research writing) is not merely to offer your audience a bunch of evidence on a topic. Rather, the point of research writing is to interpret your research in order to persuade an audience.

Antithetical Arguments and Answers

Most research essays anticipate and answer antithetical arguments, the ways in which a reader might disagree with your point. Besides demonstrating your knowledge of the different sides of the issue, acknowledging and answering the antithetical arguments in your research essay will go a long way toward convincing some of your readers that the point you are making is correct.

Antithetical arguments can be placed almost anywhere within a research essay, including the introduction or the conclusion. However, you want to be sure that the antithetical arguments are accompanied by "answering" evidence and arguments. After all, the point of presenting antithetical arguments is to explain why the point you are supporting with research is the correct one.

In the essay at the end of this chapter, Casey brings up antithetical points at several points in her essay. For example:

To be fair, being a student-athlete isn't easy. They are faced with difficult situations when having to juggle their athletic life and their academic life at school. As Duderstadt said, "Excelling in academics is challenging enough without the additional pressures of participating in highly competitive athletic programs" (Duderstadt 190). So I can see why some athletes might experience trouble fitting all of the studying and coursework into their busy schedules.

The Conclusion

As research essays have a beginning, so do they have an ending, generally called a conclusion. While the main purpose of an introduction is to get the reader's attention and to explain what

the essay will be about, the goal of a conclusion is to bring the reader to a satisfying point of closure. In other words, a good conclusion does not merely “end” an essay; it wraps things up.

It is usually a good idea to make a connection in the conclusion of your essay with the introduction, particularly if you began your essay with something like a relevant anecdote or a rhetorical question. You may want to restate your thesis, though you don’t necessarily have to restate your thesis in exactly the same words you used in your introduction. It is also usually not a good idea to end your essay with obvious concluding cues or clichéd phrases like “in conclusion.”

Conclusions are similar to introductions on a number of different levels. First, like introductions, they are important since they leave definite “impressions” on the reader—in this case, the important “last” impression. Second, conclusions are almost as difficult to write and revise as introductions. Because of this, be sure to take extra time and care to revise your conclusion.

Here’s the conclusion of Casey Copeman’s essay, which is included at the end of this chapter:

As James Moore and Sherry Watt say in their essay “Who Are Student Athletes?”, the “marriage between higher education and intercollegiate athletics has been turbulent, and always will be” (7). The NCAA has tried to make scholarly success at least as important as athletic success with requirements like Proposition 48 and Proposition 16. But there are still too many cases where under-prepared students are admitted to college because they can play a sport, and there are too still too many instances where universities let their athletes get away with being poor students because they are a sport superstar. I like cheering for my college team as much as anyone else, but I would rather cheer for college players who were students who worried about learning and success in the classroom, too.

Activity: Writing Conclusions

If you worked with the examples in the activity “Revising Bad Introductions,” take another look at the revised introductions you wrote. Based on the work you did in that exercise, write a fitting conclusion. Once again, since you don’t have the entire essay, you’ll have to take some liberties with what you decide to include in your conclusion.

Works Cited or Reference Information

If I were to give you one and only one “firm and definite” rule about research essay writing, it would be that you **must** have a section following the conclusion of your essay that explains to the reader where the evidence you cite comes from. This information is especially important in academic essays since academic readers are keenly interested in the evidence that supports your point.

If you’re following the Modern Language Association rules for citing evidence, this last section is called “Works Cited.” If you’re following the American Psychological Association rules, it’s called “References.” In either case, this is the place where you list the full citation of all the evidence you quote or paraphrase in your research essay. **Note that for both MLA and APA style, research you read but didn’t actually use in your research essay is not included.** Your teacher might want you to provide a “bibliography” with your research essay that does include this information, but this is not the same thing.

Frankly, one of the most difficult aspects of this part of the research essay is the formatting—alphabetizing, getting the spacing right, underlining titles or putting them in quotes, periods here, commas there, and so forth. Remember, check your citations on the Purdue OWL MLA and APA resources pages for more information on how to do this. But if you have been keeping and adding to an annotated bibliography as you have progressed through the process of research (as discussed in chapter six), this part of the essay can actually be merely a matter of checking your sources and “copying” the citation information from the word processing file where you have saved your annotated bibliography and “pasting” it into the word processing file where you are saving your research essay.

Sample from a Student Author

“The Corruption Surrounding University Athletics” by Casey K. Copeman

The assignment that Casey Copeman followed to write this research essay is similar to the assignment described earlier in this chapter:

Write a research essay about the working thesis that you have been working on with the previous writing assignments. Your essay should be about ten pages long, it should include ample evidence to support your point, and it should follow MLA style.

Of course, it’s also important to remember that Casey’s work on this project began long before she wrote this essay with the exercises she worked through to develop her working thesis, to gather evidence, and to evaluate and categorize it.

The Corruption Surrounding University Athletics

By Casey Copeman

Outline

I. Introduction

II. Origins and description of the problem

A. The significance of sports in our society

B. The drive and pressure for universities to win leads to admitting academically unqualified student athletes

III. The Eligibility Rules Proposition 48 and Proposition 16

A. Proposition 48 explained

B. Proposition 16 explained

C. Proposition 16 challenged but upheld in the courts

D. Academic eligibility rules still broken

IV. Rules Broken At School

A. The pressures faced by athletes and universities

1. The pressures of being a student athlete

2. The pressures put on universities to recruit “good players”

B. “Athletics” emphasized over studies indirectly and directly

1. The indirect message is about sports above academics

2. Occasionally, the message to emphasize sports is direct

3. Student-athletes often steered into “easy” classes

C. Good student athletes, mostly in sports other than football and men’s basketball, get a bad name

V. Conclusion

Most young people who are trying to get into college have to spend a lot of time studying and worrying. They study to get good grades in high school and to get good test scores, and they worry about whether or not all of the studying will be enough to get them into the college of their choice. But there is one group of college students who don't have to study and worry as much, as long as they are outstanding football or basketball players: student athletes.

Issues involving student athletes with unsatisfactory test scores, extremely low grade point averages, special privileges given to them by the schools, and issues concerning their coaches' influence on them academically, have all been causes of concern with university athletics. The result is a pattern where athletics at the university level are full of corruption surrounding the academic standards and admittance policy that are placed upon some university athletes. In this essay, I will explain what I see as the source of this corruption and the ways in which academic standards are compromised in the name of winning.

The problems surrounding corruption in university athletics have been around ever since sports have been considered important in American culture. People have emphasized the importance of sports and the significance of winning for a long time. According to Jerome Cramer in a special report published in Phi Delta Kappan, "Sports are a powerful experience, and America somehow took this belief of the ennobling nature of sports and transformed it into a quasi-religion" (Cramer K1). Cramer also says, "The original sin of sports in United States society seems to have been committed when we allowed our games to assume too much of our lives. It was as if we could measure our moral fiber by the won/lost record of our local team. Once schools began to organize sports, winning became a serious institutional consideration. Our innocence vanished when we refused to accept losing" (Cramer K1). This importance of sports and winning in the United States today is what has led to this corruption that we now see in our top universities when it comes to athletes and how they are treated by their schools.

The desire to always have a winning team has driven many universities to admit academically unqualified student athletes to their school just to improve their sports teams. According to James Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan, the corruption of university athletics usually begins with the process of recruiting and admitting student athletes. He states that, "At many universities, the tradition of athletic success requires coaches to produce not only competitive but championship-winning teams" (Duderstadt 191). This, in turn,

"puts enormous pressure to recruit the most outstanding high school athletes each year, since this has become the key determinant of competitive success in major college sports"(Duderstadt 192).

According to Duderstadt, "Coaches and admissions officers have long known that the pool of students who excel at academics and athletics is simply too small to fill their rosters with players who meet the usual admissions criteria" (Duderstadt 193). This pressure put on coaches to recruit the best athletes "leads them to recruit athletes who are clearly unprepared for college work or who have little interest in a college education" (Duderstadt 193). This obviously leads to a problem because although most universities have standards that must be met for students to be admitted, "in all too many cases, recruited athletes fail to meet even these minimum standards" (Duderstadt 193).

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) set some minimum standards for admission in January of 1986. They had decided that "the time had come to make sure that college athletes were not only athletically qualified, but that they also were academically competent to represent schools of higher learning" (Cramer K4). Proposition 48 required that "all entering athletes score a minimum of 700 on their Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and achieve a minimum high school grade point average in core academic courses of 2.0, or sit out their first year" (Duderstadt 194). This seemed like a fairly reasonable rule to most universities around the country, and some even thought, "a kid who can not score a combined 700 and keep a C average in high school should not be in college in the first place" (Cramer K4).

In 1992, the NCAA changed these requirements slightly with the introduction of proposition 16. According to the document "Who Can Play? An Examination of NCAA's Proposition 16," which was published on the National Center for Educational Statistics in August 1995, Proposition 16 requirements are "more strict than the current Proposition 48 requirements. The new criteria are based on a combination of high school grade point average (GPA) in 13 core courses and specified SAT (or ACT) scores."

Some coaches and college athletes have argued against proposition 48 and proposition 16 because they claim that they unfairly discriminate against African-American students. According to Robert Fullinwider's web-based article "Academic Standards and the NCAA," some "black

coaches were so incensed that they toyed with the idea of boycotting NCAA events.” Fullinwider goes on:

John Thompson, then-coach of Georgetown University’s basketball team, complained that poor minority kids were at a disadvantage taking the "mainstream-oriented" SAT. "Certain kids," he noted just after the federal court’s decision, "require individual assessment. Some urban schools cater to poor kids, low-income kids, black and white. To put everybody on the same playing field [i.e., to treat them the same in testing] is just crazy."

Fullinwider writes that the legality of Proposition 16 was challenged in March 1999 on the basis that it was discriminatory to African-American student athletes. However, in its summary of the case *Cureton v. NCAA*, the Marquette University Law School [You Make the Call](#) web site explains that the federal courts ultimately decided that Proposition 16 was not a violation of students’ civil rights and could be enforced by the NCAA.

With rules like Proposition 48 and Proposition 16, "the old practice of recruiting athletes who are clearly unqualified for admission with the hope that their contributions on the field will be sufficient before their inadequacy in the classroom, slowed somewhat" (Duderstadt 195). However, as facts show today, it seems as if these rules are harder to enforce in some universities than the NCAA originally thought.

There have been many documented instances of athletes being admitted to a university without even coming close to meeting the minimum requirements for academic eligibility set by the NCAA. One such instance happened just one year after Proposition 48 was enacted. North Carolina State University signed Chris Washburn, "one of the most highly recruited high school seniors in the nation" (Cramer K4). Although Washburn proved to be valuable to the team, it was later found out that "his combined score on the SAT was a whopping 470," and that he had "an abysmal academic record in high school" (Cramer K4). Both his SAT score and his poor grades in high school all fell much lower than the standards set by the NCAA.

According to Art Padilla, former vice president for academic affairs at the University of North Carolina System, student athletes like Chris Washburn are not uncommon at most universities (Cramer K5). He states, "Every major college sports institution has kids with that kind of academic record, and if they deny it, they are lying" (Cramer K5).

The admitting of unqualified students is not the only place where colleges seem to step out of bounds though. Once the athlete has been admitted and signed with the university, for some, a long list of corruption from the university is still to follow when it comes to dealing with their academics.

Furthermore, many universities face a lot of pressure to recruit good players to their schools regardless of their academic skills. Debra Blum reported in 1996 about the case of a star basketball player who wanted to attend Vanderbilt University. As Blum writes, "Vanderbilt denied him (basketball player Ron Mercer) admission, describing his academic record as not up to snuff. So he enrolled at Kentucky, where he helped his team to a national championship last season" (A51). The case of Vanderbilt losing Mercer caused a lot of "soul searching" at Vanderbilt, in part because there was a lot of pressure from "other university constituents, particularly many alumni ... to do what it takes to field more-competitive teams, especially in football and men's basketball" (A51).

But these pressures are also the point where school officials are tempted to break the rules. As John Gerdy wrote in his article "A Suggestion For College Coaches: Teach By Example," in universities where the purpose of recruiting a great athlete is to improve the team, they often claim, "intercollegiate athletics are about education, but it is obvious that they are increasingly about entertainment, money, and winning" (28).

Mixed messages are sent when some student-athletes "are referred to as "players" and "athletes" rather than "students" and "student-athletes" (Gerdy 28). It is clear that these student-athletes are sometimes only wanted for their athletic ability, and it is also clear that there are sometimes many pressures to recruit such students. As Austin C. Wherwein said, many student athletes "are given little incentive to be scholars and few persons care how the student athlete performs academically, including some of the athletes themselves" (Quoted in Thelin 183).

In some cases, coaches directly encourage students to emphasize their athletic career instead of their studies. One such instance, reported in Sports Illustrated by Austin Murphy, involves an Ohio State tailback, Robert Smith, who quit the football team "saying that coaches had told him he was spending too much time on academics" (Murphy 9). Smith claims that offensive coordinator Elliot Uzelac "encouraged him to skip a summer-school chemistry class because it was causing Smith, who was a pre-med student, to miss football practice" (Murphy 9).

Smith did not think this was right so he walked off the team (Murphy 9). Supposedly, "the university expressed support for Uzelac, who denied Smith's allegations" (Murphy 9).

Another way some universities sometimes manage the academic success of their student-athletes is to enroll them in easier classes, particularly those set up specifically for student-athletes. The curriculum for some of these courses is said to be "less than intellectually demanding"(Cramer K2). Jan Kemp, a remedial English professor at the University of Georgia who taught a class with just football players for students, was "troubled by the fact that many of her students seemed incapable of graduating from college" (Cramer K2). This seems surprising, but in fact some athletes from the University of Georgia "were described as being given more than four chances to pass developmental studies classes" without ever being successful (Cramer K2). Also, "school records show that in an effort to keep athletes playing, several were placed in the regular academic curriculum without having passed even the watered-down classes" (Cramer K2). Although this particular story comes from the University of Georgia, it is not just unique to that school. Many universities have been guilty of doing such things for their athletes just so they could continue to play on the team.

Of course, not all student-athletes are bad students. Many student-athletes actually do well in school and excel both athletically and academically. But although these true "student-athletes" do exist, they are often overshadowed by those negative images of athletes who do not do as well in school. And while all sorts of different sports have had academic problems with their athletes, the majority of corruption at the university level exists in football and basketball teams (Cramer K3). According to Duderstadt, "football and basketball are not holding their own when it comes to student academic honors" (Duderstadt 190). He says "Football and basketball have developed cultures with low expectations for academic performance. For many student-athletes in these sports, athletics are clearly regarded as a higher priority than their academic goals" (Duderstadt 191). So although this label of the bad student-athlete does not even come close to applying to all athletes, some universities are still considered, as John Thelin wrote in his book Games Colleges Play, "academically corrupt and athletically sound" (199).

As James Moore and Sherry Watt say in their essay "Who Are Student Athletes?", the "marriage between higher education and intercollegiate athletics has been turbulent, and always will be" (7). The NCAA has tried to make scholarly success at least as important as athletic

success with requirements like Proposition 48 and Proposition 16. But there are still too many cases where under-prepared students are admitted to college because they can play a sport, and there are still too many instances where universities let their athletes get away with being poor students because they are a sport superstar. I like cheering for my college team as much as anyone else, but I would rather cheer for college players who were students who worried about learning and success in the classroom, too.

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Considering Opposing Viewpoints: The Antithesis Exercise

From [Chapter 8 of *The Process of Research Writing*](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- Revisiting the Working (and inevitably changing) Thesis
- Why Write an Antithesis Essay?
- Generating Antithetical Points in Five Easy Steps
- Finding Antithetical Points on the Internet
- Strategies for Answering Antithetical Arguments
- But You Still Can't Convince Everyone...
- Assignment: Writing the Antithesis Essay
- * Questions to consider as you write your first draft
 - * Revision and Review
- * "A Student Example: "Are Casinos Good for Las Vegas? Defending Legalized Gambling," by Kerry Oaks

If you are coming to this chapter after working through some of the earlier exercises in this part of the book, you might find yourself quite attached to your topic and your working thesis. Perhaps you are so attached and focused on your topic that you have a hard time imagining why anyone would disagree with you.

This attachment is certainly understandable. After you have done so much hunting in the library and on the internet and thinking about your working thesis, you might have a hard time imagining how anyone could possibly disagree with your position, or why they would want to.

But it is important to remember that not all of your potential readers are going to automatically agree with you. If your topic or take on an issue is particularly controversial, you might have to work hard at convincing almost all of your readers about the validity of your argument.

The process of considering opposing viewpoints is the goal of this exercise, the Antithesis essay. Think about this exercise as a way of exploring the variety of different and opposing views to the main argument you are trying to make with your research project.

Revisiting the working (and inevitably changing) thesis

Here is a quick review of the characteristics of a good thesis:

- A thesis advocates a specific and debatable issue.
- A thesis can either be directly stated (as is often the case in academic writing) or implied.
- A thesis is NOT a statement of fact, a series of questions, or a summary of events.
- A thesis answers the two most basic reader questions “What’s your point?” and “Why should I care?”

While it is important that you start your research project with a working thesis that is as clear as you can possibly make it, it is also important to remember that **your working thesis is temporary and it will inevitably change as you learn more about your topic and as you conduct more research.**

Here are examples of some working theses:

- While some computer hackers are harmless, most of them commit serious computer crimes and represent a serious internet security problem.
- The international community should enact strict conservation measures to preserve fisheries and save endangered fish species around the world.
- *The Great Gatsby’s* depiction of the connection between material goods and the American dream is still relevant today.

Chances are, if you started off with a working thesis similar to one of these, your current working thesis has changed a bit. For example, let’s consider the working thesis “While some computer hackers are harmless, most of them commit serious computer crimes and represent

a serious internet security problem.” While the researcher may have begun with this thesis in mind, perhaps she changed it slightly, based on interactions with other students, her instructor, and her research.

Suppose she discovered journal articles and Web sites that suggested that, while many computer hackers are dangerous, many are also helpful in preventing computer crimes. She might be inclined then to shift her emphasis slightly, perhaps to a working thesis like, “While many hackers commit serious computer crimes and represent a serious internet security problem, they can also help law enforcement officials to solve and prevent crime.” This change is the same topic as the original working thesis (both are still about hackers and computer crime, after all), but it does suggest a different emphasis, from “hackers as threat and problem” to “hackers as potentially helpful.”

Of course, these changes in the working thesis are not the only changes that were possible. The original working thesis could have just as easily stayed the same as it was at the beginning of the process or research. Further, just because the emphasis of the working thesis may be in the process of changing doesn’t mean that other related points won’t find their way into the research project when it is put together. While this research writer might change her emphasis to write about “good” hackers as crime solvers, she still would probably need to discuss the fact that there are “bad” hackers who commit crimes.

The point here is simple: **your working thesis is likely to change in small and even large ways based on the research you do, and that’s good.** Changing the way you think about your research topic and your working thesis is one of the main ways the process of research writing becomes educational, interesting, and even kind of fun.

Activity

Either as a short writing exercise or with a group of your peers, consider the evolution of your working thesis. Where did it start out and how has it changed to what it is now? What sparked these changes in your working thesis and your point of view on your topic? If your working thesis has not changed (yet), why do you think this is the case?

Why Write an Antithesis Essay?

One of the key tests of a working thesis is the presence of logical points of disagreement. There’s not much point in researching and writing about how “computer crime is bad” or “fisheries are important” or similar broad arguments because everyone more or less would agree with these assertions. Generating an antithesis essay will help you:

test how “debatable” your working thesis actually is. If you are able to arrive at and write about the ways in which readers might disagree with your working thesis, then chances are, your working thesis is one that readers need to be persuaded about and need evidence to prove.

consider ways of addressing the anticipated objections to your thesis. There’s nothing wrong with reasonable readers disagreeing with your point of view on a topic, but if you hope to persuade at least some of them with your research, you will also need to satisfy the objections some of these readers might have.

revise your working thesis into a stronger position. If you’re having a hard time coming up with any opposition to your working thesis, you probably have to do more work on shaping and forming your working thesis into a more arguable position.

Generating Antithetical Points in Five Easy Steps

Generating potential objections to your working thesis—the points you can use to develop your antithesis essay—is a simple process. In fact, if your working thesis is on a controversial topic and you’ve already done a fair amount of research, you might need very little help generating antithetical points. If you are doing research on gun control, you have undoubtedly found credible research on both sides of the issue, evidence that probably supports or rejects your working thesis.

In addition to those points that seem straight-forward and obvious to you already, consider these five basic steps for generating ideas to consider your antithesis: have a working thesis, think about opposing viewpoints, think about the alternatives, and imagine hostile audiences. Once you have generated some plausible antithetical arguments, you can consider different ways to counter these positions. I offer some ideas on how to do that in the section “Strategies for Answering Antithetical Arguments.”

Step 1: Have a working thesis you have begun researching and thinking about.

If you are coming to this chapter before working through the working thesis essay exercises introduced earlier, you might want to take a look at that chapter now.

You also need to have at least some preliminary research and thinking about your working thesis done before you consider the antithesis. This research is likely to turn up evidence that will suggest more clearly what the arguments against your working thesis might actually be.

Step 2: Consider the direct opposite of your working thesis. Assuming you do have a working thesis that you've begun to research and think about, the next step in generating ideas for a working thesis is to consider the opposite point of view. Sometimes, this can be as simple as changing the verb or modifying term from positive to negative (or vice-versa). Consider these working theses and their opposites:

Working Thesis	The Opposite
Drug companies <i>should</i> be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV.	Drug companies <i>should not</i> be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV.
The international community <i>should not</i> enact strict conservation measures to preserve fisheries.	The international community <i>should</i> enact strict measures to preserve fisheries.

This sort of simple change of qualifiers can also be useful in exposing weak working theses because, generally speaking, the opposite of positions that everyone simply accepts as true are ones that everyone accepts as false. If you were to change the qualifying terms in the weak working theses “Drunk driving is bad” or “Teen violence is bad” to their opposites, you end up with theses for positions that are difficult to hold. After all, just as most people in modern America need little convincing that drunk driving or teen violence are “bad” things, few credible people could argue that drunk driving or teen violence are “good” things.

Usually, considering the opposite of a working thesis is more complex than simply changing the verb or modifying term from positive to negative (or vice-versa). For example:

Working Thesis	The Opposite(s)
While many hackers commit serious computer crimes and represent a serious internet security problem, they can also help law enforcement officials to solve and prevent crime.	Computer hackers do not represent a serious threat or internet security problem.
	There is little hackers can do to help law enforcement officials solve and prevent computer crime.

Both opposites are examples that counter the working thesis, but each takes a slightly different emphasis. The first one questions the first premise of the working thesis about the “threat” of computer hackers in the first place. The second takes the opposite view of the second premise.

Step 3: Ask “why” about possible antithetical arguments. Of course, these examples of creating oppositions with simple changes demand more explanation than the simple opposite. You need to dig further than that by asking and then answering—the question of *why*.

For example:

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

- The high cost of television advertising needlessly drives up the costs of prescriptions.
- Television commercials too frequently provide confusing or misleading information about the drugs.
- The advertisements too frequently contradict and confuse the advice that doctors give to their patients.

Why should the international community enact strict conservation measures to preserve fisheries? Because...

- Without international cooperation, many different kinds of fish will become extinct in the coming decades.
- Preventing over-fishing now will preserve fish populations for the future.
- Unchecked commercial fishing causes pollution and other damage to the oceans’ ecosystems.

Step 4: Examine alternatives to your working thesis. For example, consider the working thesis “Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television because the commercials too often contradict and confuse the advice that doctors give their patients.” This working thesis assumes that drug ads are an important cause of problems between doctors and patients. However, someone could logically argue that there are other more important causes of bad communication between doctors and patients. For example, the number of patients doctors see each day and the shortness of each visit certainly causes communication problems. The billing and bureaucracy of insurance companies also often complicates doctor/patient communication.

Now, unlike the direct opposite of your working thesis, the alternatives do not necessarily completely invalidate your working thesis. There’s no reason why a reader couldn’t believe that *both* drug advertisements on television *and* the bureaucracy of the insurance companies are the cause of bad doctor/patient communication. But it is important to consider the

alternatives within your research project in order to convince your readers that the position that you are advocating in your working thesis is more accurate. See the section “Weighing Your Position Against the Opposition” for answering these sorts of antithetical arguments.

Step 5: Imagine hostile audiences. Whenever you are trying to develop a clearer understanding of the antithesis of your working thesis, you need to think about the kinds of audiences who would disagree with you. By thinking about the opposites and alternatives to your working thesis, you are already starting to do this because the opposites and the alternatives are what a hostile audience might think.

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

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

Of course, some audiences will oppose your working thesis based on a different interpretation of the evidence and research. This sort of difference of opinion is probably most common with research projects that are focused on more abstract and less definitive subjects. A reader might disagree with a thesis like “*The Great Gatsby’s* depiction of the connection between material goods and the American dream is still relevant today” based on differences about how the book depicts “the American dream,” or about whether or not the novel is still relevant, and so forth.

But there are also different opinions about evidence for topics that you might think would have potentially more concrete “right” and “wrong” interpretations. Different researchers and scholars can look at the same evidence about a subject like conservation of fisheries and arrive at very different conclusions. Some might believe that the evidence indicates that

conservation is not necessary and would not be effective, while other researchers and scholars might believe the completely opposite position.

Regardless of the reasons why your audience might be hostile to the argument you are making with your working thesis, it is helpful to try to imagine your audience as clearly as you can. What sort of people are they? What other interests or biases might they have? Are there other political or social factors that you think are influencing their point of view? If you want to persuade at least some members of this hostile audience that your point of view and your interpretation of the research is correct, you need to know as much about your hostile audience as you possibly can. Of course, you'll never be able to know *everything* about your hostile audience, and you certainly won't be able to persuade all of them about your point. But the more you know, the better chance you have of convincing at least some of them.

Activity: Considering Opposites

Working through these steps, try to sketch out in more detail the antithetical points to your working thesis. Consider the opposites and the alternatives to your working thesis.

Try to imagine as clearly as you can potentially hostile readers. Make a list of readers that might be hostile to your thesis and note the reasons for their hostility.

Finding Antithetical Points on the Internet

The best (and worst!) thing about the internet is that almost anyone can say almost anything. This makes the internet fertile territory for finding out what the opposition thinks about the position you are taking in your working thesis.

A search of the web on almost any topic will point you to websites that take a wide variety of stances on that topic. When you do a search for "computer hackers" or "computer crime" on the web, you are just as likely to find links to law enforcement agencies and articles on internet security as you are to find links to sites that argue computer hackers are good, or even instructions on how to commit various computer crimes.

Usenet newsgroups are also excellent places to find antithetical positions. To search newsgroups, you can browse through the list of the newsgroups that you have access to at your university and read through the ones that have titles related to your topic. You can also

search newsgroups using the commercial service “Google Groups,” which is at <http://groups.google.com>.

Keep in mind that information you find on the internet always has to be carefully considered. This is particularly true with newsgroups, which have much more in common with forums like talk radio or “letters to the editor” in the newspaper than they do with academic research. This doesn’t mean this information is automatically unreliable, but you should be cautious about the extent to which you can or should trust the validity of anything you find on the internet.

Strategies for Answering Antithetical Arguments

It might not seem logical, but directly acknowledging and addressing positions that are different from the one you are holding in your research project can actually make your position stronger. When you take on the antithesis in your research project, it shows you have thought carefully about the issue at hand and you acknowledge that there is no clear and easy “right” answer.

There are many different ways you might incorporate the antithesis into your research project to make your own thesis stronger and to address the concerns of those readers who might oppose your point of view. For now, focus on three basic strategies: directly refuting your opposition, weighing your position against the opposition, and making concessions.

Directly Refuting Your Opposition. Perhaps the most obvious approach, one way to address those potential readers who might raise objections to your arguments is to simply refute their objections with better evidence and reasoning. To answer the argument that the international community should not enact measures to preserve fisheries, demonstrate with your evidence that it has indeed been effective. Of course, this is an example of yet another reason why it is so important to have good research that supports your position: when the body of evidence and research is on your side, it is usually a lot easier to make a strong point.

Answering antithetical arguments with the research that supports your point of view is also an example of where you as a researcher might need to provide a more detailed evaluation of your evidence. The sort of questions you should answer about your own research— who wrote it, where was it published, when was it published, etc.— are important to raise in countering antithetical arguments that you think come from suspicious sources. For example, chances are that an article about the problems of more strict drunk driving laws that appears in a trade journal for the restaurant industry is going to betray a self-interested bias.

Weighing Your Position Against the Opposition. Readers who oppose the argument you are trying to support with your research might do so because they value or “weigh” the implications of your working thesis differently than you do. Those opposed to a working thesis like “Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV” might think this because they think the advantages of advertising drugs on television—increased sales for pharmaceutical companies, revenue for advertising agencies and television stations, and so forth—are more significant than the disadvantages of advertising drugs on television. Those who would argue against the working thesis “Tougher gun control laws would be of little help in the fight against teen violence” probably think that the advantage of having fewer guns available to teenagers to use for violence is less important than the disadvantageous effects stronger gun control laws might have on lawful gun owners.

Besides recognizing and acknowledging the different ways of comparing the advantages and disadvantages suggested by your working thesis, the best way of answering these antithetical arguments in your own writing is to clearly explain how you weigh and compare the evidence. In other words, even if the readers who oppose your point of view are in some ways correct, the advantages you advocate in your working thesis are much more significant than the disadvantages.

For example, a writer might argue that any of the loss of profit to pharmaceutical companies, advertising agencies, and television stations would be a small price to pay for the advantages of banning prescription drug TV ads. A writer with a working thesis like “Tougher gun control laws would be of little help in the fight against teen violence” might have to defend his arguments against a hostile audience by suggesting that in the long-run, the costs of infringing the right to bear arms and our other liberties would far outweigh the few instances of teen violence that might be stopped with stronger gun control laws.

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

Sometimes, student researchers “make concessions” to the point of changing sides on their working thesis—that is, in the process of researching, writing, and thinking about their topic, a research moves from arguing a working thesis like “Most computer hackers are criminals and represent a great risk to internet security” to one like “Most computer hackers are merely curious computer enthusiasts and can help solve problems with internet security.”

This sort of shift in thought about an issue might seem surprising, but it makes perfect sense when you remember the purpose of research in the first place. When we study the evidence on a particular issue, we often realize that our initial and uninformed impression or feelings on an issue were simply wrong. That's the role of research: we put more trust in opinions based on research than in things based on "gut instinct" or feelings.

Usually, most concessions to antithetical perspectives on your working thesis are less dramatic and can be accomplished in a variety of ways. You might want to employ some qualifying terms to "hedge" a bit. For example, the working thesis "Drug companies should **not be allowed** to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might be qualified to "Drug companies should **be closely regulated** about what they are allowed to advertise in TV." The working thesis "The international community should enact **strict** conservation measures to preserve fisheries and **save** endangered fish species around the world" might be changed to "The international community should enact **stronger** conservation measures to preserve fisheries and **help** endangered fish species around the world." Both of these are still strong working theses, but they also acknowledge the sort of objections the opposition might have to the original working thesis.

But be careful in using qualifying terms! An over-qualified working thesis can be just as bad as a working thesis about something that everyone accepts as true: it can become so watered-down as to not have any real significance anymore. For example, theses like "Drug company television advertising is sometimes bad and sometimes good for patients" and "While there are good reasons for enacting stronger conservation measures for protecting endangered fish species, there are also good reasons to not make new conservation laws" are both over-qualified to the point of taking no real position at all.

Activity

Once you understand the antithetical arguments to your working thesis, how might you answer them? On a sheet of paper or in a word processing program, create two columns. In the left column, write a brief summary of as many antithetical arguments as you can. In the right column, answer each of the antithetical arguments listed in the left, referring to the strategies noted in this section or other fitting approaches.

But You Still Can't Convince Everyone...

If you are using research to convince an audience about something, then you must understand the opposite side of the argument you are trying to make. That means you need to include antithetical positions in your on-going research, you should think about the opposites and alternatives to the point you are making with your working thesis, you have to imagine your hostile audience as clearly as possible, and you should employ different strategies to answer your hostile audiences' objections.

But even after all this, you still can't convince everyone that you're "right." You probably already know this. We have all been in conversations with friends or family members where, as certain as we were that we were right about something and as hard as we tried to prove we were right, our friends or family were simply unwilling to budge from their positions. When we find ourselves in these sorts of deadlocks, we often try to smooth over the dispute with phrases like "You're entitled to your opinion" or "We will have to agree to disagree" and then we change the subject. In polite conversation, this is a good strategy to avoid a fight. But in academic contexts, these deadlocks can be frustrating and difficult to negotiate.

A couple of thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher and rhetorician Aristotle said that all of us respond to arguments based on three basic characteristics or appeals: *logos* or logic, *pathos* or emotional character, and *ethos*, the writer's or speaker's perceived character. (For more on the rhetorical appeals, see pages 229 – 236.) Academic writing tends to rely most heavily on *logos* and *ethos* because academics tend to highly value arguments based on logical research and arguments that come from writers with strong "character-building" qualifications—things like education, experience, previous publications, and the like. But it's important to remember that *pathos* is always there, and particularly strong emotions or feelings on a subject can obscure the best research.

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

Assignment: Writing the Antithesis Essay

Based on the most current and most recently revised version of your working thesis, write a brief essay where you identify, explain, and answer the antithesis to your position. Keep in mind that the main goal of this essay is to think about an audience of readers who might not agree with you and to answer at least some of the questions and complaints they might have about your research project. Be sure to include evidence about both the antithesis and your working thesis, and be sure to answer the objections hostile readers might have.

Questions to consider as you write your first draft

- Have you revisited your working thesis? Based on the research and writing you have done up to this point, how has your working thesis changed?
- Have you done enough research on the antithetical position to have a clear understanding of the objections? (You might want to review the work you've done with your annotated bibliography at this point). What does this research suggest about the opposition's points and your points?
- What sort of brainstorming have you done in considering the antithesis? Have you thought about the "opposite" of your thesis and the reasons why someone might hold that point of view? Have you considered the "alternatives" to your working thesis and why someone might find one or more of these alternative viewpoints more persuasive than your points?

- Have you clearly imagined and considered what your “hostile audience” is like? What sorts of people do you think would object to your working thesis? What kind of motivations would hostile audiences have to disagree with you?
- In considering the objections to your working thesis, do you believe that the evidence is on your side and you can refute hostile audiences’ objections directly with the research you have done?
- When you compare the points raised by the antithesis to the points of your working thesis, do you think that the advantages and values of your working thesis outweigh those of the antithesis?
- Are there some concessions that you’ve made to your working thesis based on the points raised by the antithetical point of view? How have you incorporated these concessions into your revised working thesis?

Revision and Review

During the peer review process, you should encourage your readers to review your rough draft with the same sort of skeptical view that a hostile audience is likely to take toward your points. If your readers already disagree with you, this won’t be difficult. But if they more or less agree with the argument you are trying to make with your research, ask them to imagine for a moment what a hostile reader might think as they examine your essay. You might even want to help them with this a bit by describing for your reviewers the hostile audience you are imagining.

- Do your readers clearly understand the antithetical positions you are focusing on in your essay? Do they think that the antithetical positions you are focusing on in your essay are the most important ones? Do they believe you have done enough research on the antithetical positions to adequately discuss them in your essay?
- What other objections to the argument you are trying to make with your working thesis do your readers have? In other words, have they thought of antithetical arguments that you haven’t considered in your essay?
- Do your readers think that you have clearly answered the antithetical arguments to your working thesis? Do they accept the logic of your arguments? Do they believe incorporating more evidence into the essay would make your answer to the antithetical arguments better?
- Imagining themselves as members of the “hostile audience,” do your readers find themselves at least partially persuaded by the answers you have to the antithetical arguments in your essay? Why or why not?

Example Essay from a Student Writer

“Are Casinos Good For Las Vegas? Defending Legalized Gambling,” by Kerry Oaks

For this assignment, the instructor asked students to write a short essay that addressed a few of the main antithetical arguments to each student’s working thesis. Kerry Oaks’ research up to this point had focused almost exclusively on the positive aspects of gambling in Las Vegas.

“Researching the other side of this argument was an important step for me,” Oaks said. “I still think that gambling—particularly in a place like Las Vegas—is good for the economy and everything else. But my research for the antithesis assignment also made me think that maybe casinos should spend more money on trying to prevent some of the problems they’re causing.”

Are Casinos Good For Las Vegas? Defending Legalized Gambling

Antithesis Essay Assignment

Few places in this country are as exciting as Las Vegas, Nevada, a city known for its “party” atmosphere and legalized gambling. My working thesis, which is “Casinos and legalized gambling have had a positive economic effect on Las Vegas,” has explored how and why Las Vegas became such a popular tourist destination. Needless to say, there are a lot critics who disagree with my working thesis. While these antithetical positions are important, I believe that they can be answered.

Some critics say that the economic and employment gains offered by legalized gambling are exaggerated. In an excerpt published on the PBS documentary show *Frontline* web site, John Warren Kindt says the economic benefits of legalized gambling have been exaggerated. While gambling initially leads to more jobs, it ultimately is a bad business investment.

However, the same sort of economic problems that Kindt describes happening in other parts of the country haven’t happened in Las Vegas. In fact, Las Vegas remains one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. For example, as Barbara Worcester wrote in her article, “People Flock to Las Vegas for Relocation, Employment,” the unemployment rate in Las Vegas in December 1999 was 3.1 percent, which is the lowest unemployment rate since August 1957, when it was 2 percent. (44).

Another argument is that casinos in the Las Vegas area cause crime, suicide, and murder. According to Jay Tolson’s article “Face of the Future?” “Clark County has almost 70 percent of the population of a state that leads the nation in its rates of suicide, high school dropouts, death by firearms, teenage pregnancies, and death from smoking.” (52).

Clearly, this is a real problem for the area and for the state, but it cannot all be blamed on the casinos. Frank Fahrenkopf, President of the American Gambling Association, said in an interview with the PBS documentary show *Frontline* that there's nothing about gambling in itself that creates crime and these problems. As Fahrenkopf was quoted on the *Frontline* web site, "Any enterprise that attracts large numbers of people. The crime rate at Orlando went up. It wasn't anything that Mickey and Minnie were doing that caused it, it was just that it was a draw of people to a community."

Even with these negative effects of crime and such, legalized gambling has still greatly improved the lives of people in Las Vegas. As Tolson writes, "there is still a sense that Las Vegas is a place where working people can realize the American Dream" (50) made possible in part by taxes on gambling instead of property or income.

Certainly, Las Vegas has all kinds of problems, but they are the same ones as those associated with any major and rapidly growing city in the United States. But on the whole, I think the benefits of casinos in Las Vegas outweigh the disadvantages of gambling. After all, there wouldn't be much of anything in Las Vegas if it weren't for the casinos that thrive there.

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Collaborative Writing/Projects

From [Chapter 4 of The Process of Research Writing](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

- Why Collaborate on Writing?
- Considering (and Balancing) the Two Extremes of Collaboration
- Peer Review as Collaboration
 - * A “sample recipe” for how peer review can work
 - * A few last things to remember about successful peer review
- Collaborative Writing on Larger Projects
- Three Ideas for Collaborative Projects
 - * Research Idea Groups
 - * Research Writing Partners
 - * Collaborative Research Writing Projects
- Collaborating With Computers and the Internet

Why Collaborate on Writing?

In my teaching experience, students have mixed feelings about collaboration. Many of my students initially say they don't want to work with their classmates on their writing. When it comes to in-class peer review sessions or more involved collaborative project such as small group work, they believe there is nothing they can learn about their writing from their classmates; “After all, “they tell me, “the teacher gives the grade.”

However, most of my students tell me *after* the course ends that the times in which they collaborated with their classmates were occasions where they felt they learned a lot about writing. While they might enter into collaborative exercises and writing projects reluctantly, it's been my experience that most students end up finding them worthwhile.

Collaborating in different ways on writing projects is a good idea for several reasons. First, composition and rhetoric teachers and scholars have known for a long time now that one of the best ways for students to improve their writing skills is to have them share their writing with other students. If you think about it for a moment, this is common sense. If you never show your writing to other readers, or if you limit your audience to simply the teacher, how will you as a writer learn about the effectiveness of your writing beyond a grade in a class?

Second, almost all “real writing” is the product of collaboration. Of course, you probably don't collaborate on your diary or journal entries, letters to relatives, or emails to your friends. But

almost all of the writing you read in academic or popular publications has involved different levels of collaboration, sometimes in surprising and hidden ways.

Considering (and Balancing) the Two Extremes of Collaboration

Collaboration always implies people working together toward a goal, but I like to think of the way collaboration actually works as being somewhere between two extremes.

One extreme is what I call "**very immediate and intimate**" *collaboration*, where writers collaborate *extremely* closely, literally sitting together in front of the computer keyboard or the pad of paper and going over each sentence of each paragraph together.

The **advantages** of this very close collaboration include:

- An equal and immediate sense for everyone involved about how the project is going;
- Writing projects that are more seamless: that is, all of the different parts fit together clearly as one complete text; and
- A greater sense by individuals within a group of their roles, since all the group members are working together in the same time and place.

The **disadvantages** of this type of collaboration include:

- “Hard workers” in the group might resent the group members who do not seem to contribute an equal part, or some members of the group might feel they are being silenced and manipulated by more forceful group members;
- It can be difficult to coordinate times and places to meet; and
- It is extremely time consuming, especially if the group is collaborating on creating a more detailed writing project.

The other extreme of collaboration is what I call “**very distant**” *collaboration*, where writers divide up the labor of a particular project into smaller tasks that can be then assigned to members of the group and put together later, assembly-line fashion.

Some of the **advantages** of this type of collaboration include:

- It is easy to set up tasks so each group member has the opportunity to contribute equally without duplicating the work of others;
- It can be done with few (if any) meetings where all of the group members need to be present; and
- Tasks can be accomplished quickly since all group members are simultaneously working on their parts of the project.

The **disadvantages** include:

- Because it is being done in parts, the completed project may seem disjointed and uneven;
- It can be difficult to manage this sort of collaboration since the individual parts of the project have to somehow be put together, usually by a group leader, someone who is named by the others, or someone who takes on the role; and
- There can be resentment within the group, either from leaders who other members of the group feel are doing a poor job, or of those within the group perceived as not doing their share of the work.

Where most collaborative projects end up on the “collaboration spectrum” depend on the nature of the collaborative task. For example, things like in-class peer review of each other’s’ rough drafts, in-class reading and writing assignments, or shorter collaborative writing projects tend to end up closer to “very immediate and intimate” collaboration. Things like collaborative

research writing projects, research oriented web sites, or to other longer and more detailed writing projects tend to be closer to the “very distant” collaboration side of the spectrum.

Clearly, one sort of collaboration isn’t automatically “better” than another; it depends on your purposes. The best approach to any collaborative project is to be conscious of the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of the collaborative spectrum and strive to emphasize the strengths of the approach within which you are working.

For example, one way to avoid some of the pitfalls of the “very immediate and intimate” types of collaboration is to make sure that each member of the group has a clear sense of their role in the writing project and is allowed to contribute. Conversely, the disadvantages of “very distant” types of collaboration might be avoided if members of the group strive to work on producing writing in a similar style and if there is frequent communication among group members.

Collaborative Writing on Larger Projects

Collaboration on large and ongoing writing projects can be a rewarding experience for both teachers and students for several reasons.

Collaborative groups provide a “support” mechanism that can often times be very important when working on a research project. Writing and researching are hard work, and it can be comforting and encouraging to have the support of classmates to help you successfully complete projects.

Collaborating with others can often make more elaborate and sophisticated research projects possible. Simply put, by “putting their heads together,” writers working in groups can usually do more research and more analysis of a topic than someone working alone.

Collaborating With Computers and the Internet

Two of the most significant obstacles to collaborative writing, especially collaboration on larger writing projects, are time and place. It can be difficult to set up a meeting outside of class time that fits into the schedule of all the members of the group. This can obviously make for a frustrating and unpleasant collaborative experience.

Computers and the internet have dramatically extended the possibilities of collaborative writing projects. With tools like e-mail, chat room, and instant messaging, students can

collaborate “asynchronously:” that is, they can work with each other without having to meet in a specific place or at a specific time. While “live” communication tools like chat and instant messaging require participants to be interacting at the same time, students can still collaborate with each other without having to be in the same place.

Chances are, you have already used email or instant messaging to do a form of “collaboration” online. Most of my students are familiar with these technologies, and many of my students use things like email or instant messaging to plan meetings or evening plans, even to do homework. Collaborative peer review doesn’t need to be any more complicated than this: emailing each other (usually by including a group of email addresses in the “to” line) or chatting with each other with one of the many commercial chat and instant messaging services.

The internet also has a lot of potential as a collaborative writing tool. For “very immediate and intimate” styles of collaborations, writers can work together on the same web site, but they can do it asynchronously. For projects that tend toward the “very distant” side of the collaboration spectrum, web writers can work on parts of a web site individually and then assemble them later.

Of course, collaborating with each other with computers and the internet is slightly different than collaborating “face-to-face” with each other. Here are some things to be think about and some things to avoid as you try to collaborate asynchronously:

Make sure everyone in your collaborative group is included in the discussion. This can be a problem with some email applications since automatically replying to the sender of a message doesn’t necessarily mean it will go to all of the members of your group. To make sure no one is left out, make sure that all members of the group have everyone’s correct email address, and make sure all of these addresses appear in the “To:” line of your email software. To include multiple email addresses in the “To:” line, separate each email address with a comma.

Make sure everyone in your collaborative group understands how to read and write messages in the format they are being sent. For example, if you and your group members decide to send attachments of writing projects to each other, make sure that everyone has access to the appropriate software and understands how to use it.

All of the group members need to read and respond to each other’s messages in a timely fashion. If some group members are in the habit of checking their email once every other week, that person will have to change their habits for the purposes of this project.

Collaboration with email works best when each member of the group checks their email at least once a day.

Keep in mind the rules of good “netiquette” when working with your group members. In Chapter 2, “Finding Sources,” I provided a brief guide to the practice of good online etiquette, or “netiquette.” I would encourage you to review those guidelines as you work with your group members online. Remember that simple misunderstandings and miscommunications, the sorts of things that are usually easy to clarify in “face-to-face” interactions, can sometimes become arguments or “flames” online. So be sure to use common sense courtesy, and remember that there are “real people” behind the emails that you are sending.

Remember that some things are better done “face-to-face,” so be prepared to schedule some more traditional collaboration time. Computers and the internet are rarely suitable to serve as a *complete* substitution for more traditional “face-to-face” collaboration experiences. While collaborating via e-mail is extremely convenient, it often isn’t very efficient. Writing and reading tasks that would only a few moments to discuss “face-to-face” can take days or longer to discuss online. So while using electronic tools like email can minimize the number of more traditional collaboration meetings you will need to have with your group members, it probably won’t eliminate them entirely.

Peer Review as Collaboration

From [Chapter 4 of *The Process of Research Writing*](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

One of the most common types of collaboration done in writing classes comes in the form of in-class “group work” or as peer review sessions. Peer review has become a common practice for contemporary composition and rhetoric classrooms. Basically, it is the process where small groups of students read, comment on, and make suggestions for other student’s work.

While successful peer review can be hard and takes practice, it really can work. But first, you have to be willing to accept two premises.

Your fellow students have valid comments to make on your writing projects. Students often assume that the only person whose opinion really matters is the teacher because, after all, the teacher is the one who assigns the grade. I understand the logic of the assumption that the “teacher is always right,” but I don’t think it’s true.

The best writing projects are ones that strive to fulfill a purpose and reach an audience that is beyond a particular class and a particular teacher. But beyond that, your classmates represent

an audience you should be trying to reach. You should listen to your classmate's suggestions because they are in same writing situation as you. After all, they too are trying to reach an audience that includes their fellow classmates, and they are also writing a project that will have to be read and evaluated by the teacher.

All writing projects can be improved by revision. Sometimes we have an overly romantic view of writing and of writers who are able to create "great works" without ever having to make any real changes. Rarely (if ever) has this been the case. Any writing project can be improved with revision.

As straightforward as these premises might be, they can often be difficult to accept. But with practice, patience, and work with your classmates, seeing these premises as valid becomes easier.

How peer review can work, step by step

I offer the following advice on how to get started with peer review sessions as a "recipe" where ingredients and methods can be altered to fit the particulars of the class, the writing project, time limitations, and so forth. After all, you and your teacher probably have ideas on what will or won't work for peer review in your specific contexts.

With the help of your teacher, break into groups of three to five students. Groups of five work well only if the writing project you are considering is short or if you have a lot of class time to go over each project. I would also recommend not working in pairs since that overly limits the size of the audience.

Some students and teachers like to work with the same peer collaborators for the entire semester, while others like to work with different collaborators with each project.

Exchange a copy of your writing project with each person in the group. You should come to the peer review session class with several copies of your writing project to share with others in your peer review group.

Select someone to start, and have that person read their essay out loud while the other members of the group read along. The extent to which you will be able to read your essays out loud will vary according to the particular circumstances of your class and of the assignment, but I would encourage you to try to include this step in the process of in-class peer review. Actually reading your writing out loud to others gives the reader and writer a real sense

of the voice of an essay and is a great way for writers and readers to catch small grammar errors.

While the writer “up” is reading, the readers should read along, marking comments in the margins of the draft they are reading. As a reader, you should note points you hope to come back to in group discussion. You can also mark any grammatical errors you might notice as you read.

When the writer is done reading, the readers should provide their comments. This is **not** the time for the writer to explain things that the readers say they didn’t understand. Rather, this is the time for the writer to *listen* to what the other members of the group have to say.

This is a crucial part of the process because the questions that readers have are ones that point to changes the writer should make in revision rather than being answered in person. After all, you will never be able to be there when other readers (your teacher or other people in your audience) try to understand your writing project. Readers’ questions have to be anticipated and answered in the writing itself. So, the role of the person who just finished reading is to try and be as open-minded (and open-eared!) to their classmates’ advice as possible.

Giving good advice to classmates in peer review sessions can be a tricky process. Readers often have a hard time expressing their comments to the person who’s writing is being discussed. On the one hand, it isn’t productive or nice to say things that might hurt the writer’s feelings; but on the other hand, it also isn’t productive to be so nice as to not say anything that can help the writer. So the goal here should be to somehow balance the two: advice that is “nice,” but also constructive.

Here are two suggestions to help make this step of readers giving writers constructive advice a bit easier:

Try to keep the focus of the constructive advice on the big issues. By “the big issues,” I mean things like the clarity of the points the writer is trying to make, the use of evidence, the points where readers are particularly persuaded or particularly confused, and so forth. This is not to say things like grammar and proofreading and such are not important—far from it. But those issues are more about “proofreading” than they are about changing the substance of an essay.

Consider some of the questions provided in this text. In sections titled “Questions to Ask While Writing and Researching” and “Review and Revision,” contain questions you should

consider very according to the writing exercise, but the goal is always the same: what changes can you make to your writing project to make it more accessible to your readers?

Making revisions as a result questions like these (and the ones provided by your teacher) will make it much easier for you and your group members to give each other useful advice, and it will also help keep the group on task.

A few final things to remember about successful peer review

Peer review takes practice. If you don't think peer review works that well for you and your classmates the first time you try it, give it another chance with a different writing project. Like most things in writing (or life!) that are rewarding and useful, good peer review takes practice and time. If you stick with it, you'll see that the peer review sessions you have toward the end of term are much more productive than the ones at the beginning of the term.

If you don't get good advice about your writing projects in class, seek out advice elsewhere. Show a draft of your writing project to someone who's opinion you value—friends, family, classmates—and ask them for suggestions in making the project better. If your school has a writing center, writing lab, or other sort of tutoring center, take a copy of the writing project to it and have a staff member look at your work.

It is always still up to you to choose what advice you want to follow. Inevitably, you will receive advice from your reviewers that is conflicting or that is advice you simply don't agree with. That is okay. Remember that you are not under any obligation to incorporate *all* the suggestions you receive, and part of the process of becoming a better writer is learning for yourself when you need to follow advice and when you need to follow your own instincts.

Concepts and Strategies for Revision

From [EmpoWord, Appendix A, Concepts and Strategies for Revision](#) pp. 417- 422; 426-431

As we discussed earlier, let's consider few definitions. What is an **essay**? It's likely that your teachers have been asking you to write essays for years now; you've probably formed some idea of the genre. But when I ask my students to define this kind of writing, their answers vary widely and only get at part of the meaning of "essay."

Although we typically talk of *an* essay (noun), I find it instructive to think about essay (verb): to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand. *An* essay (noun), then, is an attempt and an exploration. Popularized shortly before the Enlightenment Era by Michel de Montaigne, the

essay form was invested in the notion that writing invites discovery: the idea was that he, as a lay-person without formal education in a specific discipline, would learn more about a subject through the act of writing itself.

What difference does this new definition make for us, as writers?

Writing invites discovery. Throughout the act of writing, you will learn more about your topic. Even though some people think of writing as a way to capture a fully-formed idea, writing can also be a way to process through ideas: in other words, writing can be an act of thinking. It forces you to look closer and see more. Your revisions should reflect the knowledge you gain through the act of writing.

An essay is an attempt, but not all attempts are successful on the first try. You should give yourself license to fail, to an extent. If to essay is to try, then it's okay to fall short. Writing is also an iterative process, which means your first draft isn't the final product.

What Is Revision?

Now, what is **revision**? You may have been taught that revision means fixing commas, using a thesaurus to brighten up word choice, and maybe tweaking a sentence or two. However, I prefer to think of revision as “re | vision.”

Revision isn't just about polishing—it's about seeing your piece from a new angle, with “fresh eyes.” Often, we get so close to our own writing that we need to be able to see it from a different perspective in order to improve it. Revision happens on many levels. What you may have been trained to think of as revision—grammatical and mechanical fixes—is just one tier. Here's how I like to imagine it:



Even though all kinds of revision are valuable, your global issues are first-order concerns, and proofreading is a last-order concern. If your entire topic, approach, or structure needs revision,

it doesn't matter if you have a comma splice or two. It's likely that you'll end up rewriting that sentence anyway.

There are a handful of techniques you can experiment with in order to practice true revision. First, if you can, take some time away from your writing. When you return, you will have a clearer head. You will even, in some ways, be a different person when you come back—since we as humans are constantly changing from moment to moment, day to day, you will have a different perspective with some time away. This might be one way for you to make procrastination work in your favor: if you know you struggle with procrastination, try to bust out a quick first draft the day an essay is assigned. Then, you can come back to it a few hours or a few days later with fresh eyes and a clearer idea of your goals.

Second, you can challenge yourself to reimagine your writing using global and local revision techniques, like those included later in this appendix.

Third, you can (and should) read your paper aloud, if only to yourself. This technique distances you from your writing; by forcing yourself you read aloud, you may catch sticky spots, mechanical errors, abrupt transitions, and other mistakes you would miss if you were immersed in your writing. (Recently, a student shared with me that she uses an [online text-to-speech voice reader](#) to create this same separation. By listening along and taking notes, she can identify opportunities for local- and proofreading-level revision.)



Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you should rely on your **learning community**. Because you most likely work on tight deadlines and don't always have the opportunity to take time away from our projects, you should solicit feedback from your classmates, the LCSC Writing Center, your instructor, your peer workshop group, or your friends and family. As readers, they

have valuable insight to the rhetorical efficacy of your writing: their feedback can be useful in developing a piece which is conscious of audience. To begin setting expectations and procedures for your peer workshop, turn to the first activity in this section.

Throughout this text, I have emphasized that good writing cannot exist in a vacuum; similarly, good rewriting often requires a supportive learning community. Even if you have had negative experiences with peer workshops before, I encourage you to give them another chance. Not

only do professional writers consistently work with other writers, but my students are nearly always surprised by just how helpful it is to work alongside their classmates.

The previous diagram (of global, local, and proofreading levels of revision) reminds us that everyone has something valuable to offer in a learning community: because there are so many different elements on which to articulate feedback, you can provide meaningful feedback to your workshop, even if you don't feel like an expert writer.

During the many iterations of revising, remember to be flexible and to listen. Seeing your writing with fresh eyes requires you to step outside of yourself, figuratively. Listen actively and seek to truly understand feedback by asking clarifying questions and asking for examples. The reactions of your audience are a part of writing that you cannot overlook, so revision ought to be driven by the responses of your colleagues.

On the other hand, remember that the ultimate choice to use or disregard feedback is at the author's discretion: provide all the suggestions you want as a group member, but use your best judgment as an author. If members of your group disagree—great! Contradictory feedback reminds us that writing is a dynamic, transactional action which is dependent on the specific rhetorical audience.

Vocabulary

essay—a medium, typically nonfiction, by which an author can achieve a variety of purposes.

Popularized by Michel de Montaigne as a method of discovery of knowledge: in the original French, "essay" is a verb that means "to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand."

fluff—uneconomical writing: filler language or unnecessarily wordy phrasing. Although fluff occurs in a variety of ways, it can be generally defined as words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that do not work hard to help you achieve your rhetorical purpose.

iterative—literally, a repetition within a process. The writing process is iterative because it is non-linear and because an author often has to repeat, revisit, or re-approach different steps along the way.

learning community—a network of learners and teachers, each equipped and empowered to provide support through horizontal power relations. Values diversity insofar as it encourages growth and perspective, but also inclusivity. Also, a community that learns by adapting to its unique needs and advantages.

revision—the iterative process of changing a piece of writing. Literally, re-vision: seeing your writing with "fresh eyes" in order to improve it. Includes changes on global, local, and proofreading levels.

Changes might include:

- rewriting (trying again, perhaps from a different angle or with a different focus)
- adding (new information, new ideas, new evidence)
- subtracting (unrelated ideas, redundant information, fluff)
- rearranging (finding more effective vectors or sequences of organization)
- switching out (changing words or phrases, substituting different evidence)
- mechanical clean-up (standardizing punctuation, grammar, or formatting)

Revision Activities

Establishing Your Peer Workshop

Before you begin working with a group, it's important for you to establish a set of shared goals, expectations, and processes. You might spend a few minutes talking through the following questions:

- Have you ever participated in a Peer Workshop before? What worked? What didn't?
- What do you hate about group projects? How might you mitigate these issues?
- What opportunities do group projects offer that working independently doesn't? What are you excited for?
- What requests do you have for your Peer Workshop group members?

In addition to thinking through the culture you want to create for your workshop group, you should also consider the kind of feedback you want to exchange, practically speaking. In order to arrive at a shared definition for "good feedback," I often ask my students to complete the following sentence as many times as possible with their groupmates: "Good feedback is..."

The list could go on forever, but here a few that I emphasize:

"Good feedback is..."		
kind	actionable	not prescriptive (offers suggestions, not demands)
cognizant of process (i.e., recognizes that a first draft isn't a final draft)	respectful	honest

specific

comprehensive (i.e., global,
local, and proofreading)

attentive

Once you've discussed the parameters for the learning community you're building, you can begin workshopping your drafts, asking, "What does the author do well and what could they do better?" Personally, I prefer a workshop that's conversational, allowing the author and the audience to discuss the work both generally and specifically; however, your group should use whatever format will be most valuable for you.

Reverse Outlining

Have you ever written an outline before writing a draft? It can be a useful pre-writing strategy, but it doesn't work for all writers. If you're like me, you prefer to brain-dump a bunch of ideas on the paper, then come back to organize and refocus during the revision process. One strategy that can help you here is reverse outlining.

Divide a blank piece of paper into three columns, as demonstrated below. Number each paragraph of your draft, and write an equal numbered list down the left column of your blank piece of paper. Write "Idea" at the top of the middle column and "Purpose" at the top of the right column.

Paragraph Number	Idea (What is the paragraph saying?)	Purpose (What is the paragraph doing?)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
.		
.		

Now, wade back through your essay, identifying what each paragraph is saying and what each paragraph is doing. Choose a few keywords or phrases for each column to record on your sheet of paper.

- Try to use consistent language throughout the reverse outline so you can see where your paragraphs are saying or doing similar things.
- A paragraph might have too many different ideas or too many different functions for you to concisely identify. This could be a sign that you need to divide that paragraph up.

Here's a student's model reverse outline

¶	Idea (What is the ¶ saying?)	Purpose (What is the ¶ doing?)
1	Theatre is an important part of education and childhood development	Setting up and providing thesis statement
2	There have been many changes in recent history to public education in the United States	Providing context for thesis
3	Theatre programs in public schools have been on the decline over the past two decades	Providing context and giving urgency to the topic
4	a) Theatre has social/emotional benefits b) Theatre has academic benefits	Supporting and explaining thesis
5	a) Acknowledge argument in favor of standardized testing b) STEAM curriculum incorporates arts education into other academic subjects	Disarming audience, proposing a solution to underfunded arts programs
6	Socioeconomic inequality is also an obstacle to theatre education	Acknowledging broader scope of topic
7	Looking forward at public education reform, we should incorporate theatre into public education	Call to action, backing up and restating thesis

Reverse outline by Jacob Alexander, Portland Community College, 2018.

But wait—there's more!

Once you have identified the idea(s) and purpose(s) of each paragraph, you can start revising according to your observations. From the completed reverse outline, create a new outline with a different sequence, organization, focus, or balance. You can reorganize by

- combining or dividing paragraphs,
- re-arranging ideas, and
- adding or subtracting content.

Reverse outlining can also be helpful in identifying gaps and redundancies: now that you have a new outline, do any of your ideas seem too brief? Do you need more evidence for a certain argument? Do you see ideas repeated more than necessary?

After completing the reverse outline above, the student proposed this new organization:

Proposed changes based on reverse outline:
1
4a
4b
Combine 2 and 5a
Combine 3 and 6
5b
Write new paragraph on other solutions
7

by Jacob Alexander, Portland Community College, 2018.

You might note that this strategy can also be applied on the sentence and section level. Additionally, if you are a kinesthetic or visual learner, you might cut your paper into smaller pieces that you can physically manipulate.

Be sure to read aloud after reverse outlining to look for abrupt transitions.

You can see a simplified version of this technique demonstrated in [this video](#).

Local Revision Activity:

Cutting Fluff

When it's late at night, the deadline is approaching, and we've simply run out of things to say... we turn to **fluff**. Fluff refers to language which doesn't do work for you—language that simply takes up space or sits flat on the page, rather than working economically and impactfully. Whether or not you've used it deliberately, all authors have been guilty of fluffy writing at one time or another.

Fluff happens for a lot of reasons.

- Of course, reaching a word- or page-count is the most common motivation.
- Introductions and conclusions are often fluffy because the author can't find a way into or out of the subject, or because the author doesn't know what their exact subject will be.
- Sometimes, the presence of fluff is an indication that the author doesn't know enough about the subject or that their scope is too broad.
- Other times, fluffy language is deployed in an effort to sound "smarter" or "fancier" or "more academic"—which is an understandable pitfall for developing writers.

These circumstances, plus others, encourage us to use language that's not as effective, authentic, or economical. Fluff happens in a lot of ways; here are a few I've noticed:

<p><i>Thesaurus Syndrome</i></p>	<p>A writer uses inappropriately complex language (often because of the right-click → Synonyms function) to achieve a different tone. The more complex language might be used inaccurately or sound inauthentic because the author isn't as familiar with it.</p>
<p><i>Roundabout phrasing</i></p>	<p>Rather than making a direct statement ("That man is a fool."), the author uses couching language or beats around the bush ("If one takes into account each event, each decision, it would not be unwise for one to suggest that that man's behaviors are what some would call foolish.")</p>

<i>Abstraction or generalities</i>	If the author hasn't quite figured out what they want to say or has a too broad of a scope, they might discuss an issue very generally without committing to specific, engaging details.
<i>Digression</i>	An author might get off topic, accidentally or deliberately, creating extraneous, irrelevant, or unconnected language.
<i>Ornamentation or flowery language</i>	Similarly to Thesaurus Syndrome, often referred to as "purple prose," an author might choose words that sound pretty or smart, but aren't necessarily the right words for their ideas.
<i>Wordy sentences</i>	Even if the sentences an author creates are grammatically correct, they might be wordier than necessary.

Of course, there's a very fine line between detail and fluff. Avoiding fluff doesn't mean always using the fewest words possible. Instead, you should occasionally ask yourself in the revision process, *How is this part contributing to the whole? Is this somehow building toward a bigger purpose?* If the answer is no, then you need to revise.

The goal should not necessarily be "Don't write fluff," but rather "Learn to get rid of fluff in revision." In light of our focus on process, you are allowed to write fluff in the drafting period, so long as you learn to "prune" during revisions. (I use the word "prune" as an analogy for caring for a plant: just as you must cut the dead leaves off for the plant's health and growth, you will need to cut fluff so your writing can thrive.)

Here are a few strategies:

- Read out loud,
- Ask yourself what a sentence is doing, rhetorically,
- Combine like sentences, phrases, or ideas,
- Use signposts, like topic-transition sentences (for yourself during revision and for your reader in the final draft), and
- Be specific—stay cognizant of your scope (globally) and the detail of your writing (locally).

To practice revising for fluff, workshop the following excerpt by yourself or with a partner. Your goal is not to cut back to the smallest number of words, but rather to

prune out what you consider to be fluff and leave what you consider to be detail. You should be able to explain the choices you make.

There was a time long before today when an event occurred involving a young woman who was known to the world as Goldilocks. On the particular day at hand, Goldilocks made a spontaneous decision to wander through the forest, the trees growing up high above her flowing blonde pigtails. Some time after she commenced her voyage, but not after too long, she saw sitting on the horizon a small residency. Goldilocks rapped her knuckles on the door, but alas, no one answered the door. Therefore, Goldilocks decided that it would be a good idea to enter the unattended house, so she entered it. Atop the average-sized table in the kitchen of the house, there were three bowls of porridge, which is similar to oatmeal. Porridge is a very common dish in Europe; in fact, the Queen of England is well-known for enjoying at least one daily bowl of porridge per day. Goldilocks, not unlike the Queen of England, enjoys eating porridge for its nutritional value. On this day, she was feeling quite hungry and wanted to eat. She decided that she should taste one of the three bowls of porridge, from which steam was rising indicating its temperature. But, because she apparently couldn't tell, she imbibed a spoonful of the porridge and vocalized the fact that the porridge was of too high a temperature for her to masticate and consume: "This porridge is too hot!"

Chapter 5

Publishing Your Research

Overview

So the research and writing portions are done. Now what? As the final component to a research project, your professor may ask you to present or publish your work. Presentations allow you to showcase your expertise on a topic in a concise but visually stimulating way. Publishing your work may come in a variety of mediums beyond the written paper to include, though not limited to, infographics, PowerPoints, Prezis, portfolios, web-based platforms, and poster presentations. Not always, but sometimes there is an oral component attached, where you will explain your research to your professor, peers, or extended community. What follows are some tips and advice for creating captivating presentations as a culmination of all of your hard work.

Chapter Contents

The following section includes readings and exercises on:

- Infographics
- PowerPoint
- Prezi
- Research Portfolio
- Web-Based Research Project
- Poster Presentation

Not All Research Comes in “Papers” or Essays”

From [Chapter 11 of *The Process of Research Writing*](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

The traditional essay form (typed, double-spaced, thesis-driven, written in a linear “from beginning to end” style) is still the most common writing assignment in college classrooms, and this will probably remain the case for some time to come. Increasingly however, college teachers are considering alternatives to this form. Some of these alternatives have actually been common in composition classes for a while now—for example, the “I-Search” research essay (which was pioneered by Ken Macrorie in the late 1980s) and portfolio-based writing projects and assessments.

Others alternatives are more recent. The increased power and availability of computer technology has played a significant role in presenting research in a way that is different from the conventional essay. For example, the World Wide Web allows (some might even say *requires*) writers to publish documents that include graphics and photographs, and even audio and video files.

In some ways, these alternatives to the research essay still have the same basic requirements that I’ve discussed in all the previous sections. After all, you are still trying to convince and inform an audience about a particular point, and you do this with your use and interpretation of evidence.

In other ways, presenting your research in an alternative fashion and with alternative sorts of evidence change in interesting ways the role and place in research in both academic and non-academic settings. Besides that, writing about your research in a “non-traditional” way might shed a different and informative light on your topic, and it might even be fun.

Infographics

From [More Online Learning for Iowa Educators \(MOLLIE\)](#) authored by Evan Abbey

When listing off the different types of instructional resources a teacher can use, there are the greatest hits: videos, multimedia, textbooks, articles, literature, worksheets, and websites. It isn't often a teacher puts the term "infographic" in that list. For that matter, it isn't often a teacher even knows what makes "an infographic".

Infographics are the visualization of data or ideas, in order to convey complex information in a manner that can quickly be consumed. This tends to be visual and graphical in nature, drawing upon many standard representations (bar charts, pie charts, flow charts, Venn diagrams, common symbols).

Given that infographics are typically digital in form, at least in their original development, they have a natural fit within an online lesson. They are a blending of pictures, data, and ideas, and they allow you to use them for a visual anchor whether in a spoken/recorded lesson or a text-based one.

Kathy Schrock gives a quick overview of the infographic as a method for creative assessment. Indeed, with modern online tools, even intermediate students can create visually-appealing lessons. While using them as a student project is beyond the scope of our course, the lesson highlights some of the basics of the infographic.

Here are two videos on infographics:

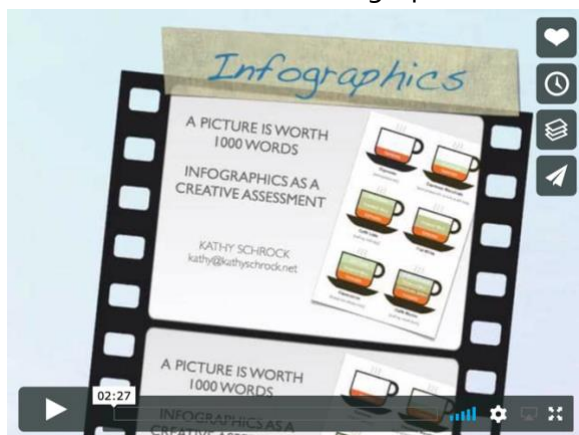
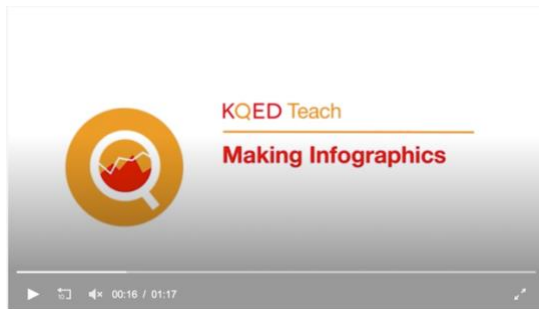


Figure 7 [Infographics as a Creative Assessment](#) by Kathy Schrock

Here is another resource from Idaho Public Television that gives a quick overview of infographics and their popularity:

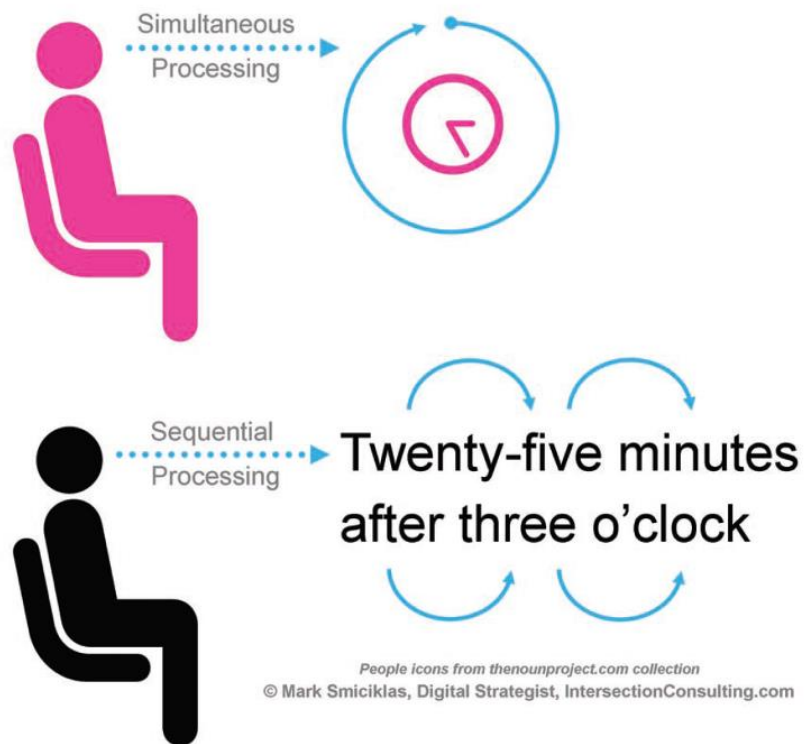


Why Infographics?

As mentioned before, infographics tie in acutely with the visual process within humans. This is a significant value. Fifty percent of your processing functionality and overall real estate in the brain is dedicated to visual functioning. Because of this, we process images much faster than we process text.

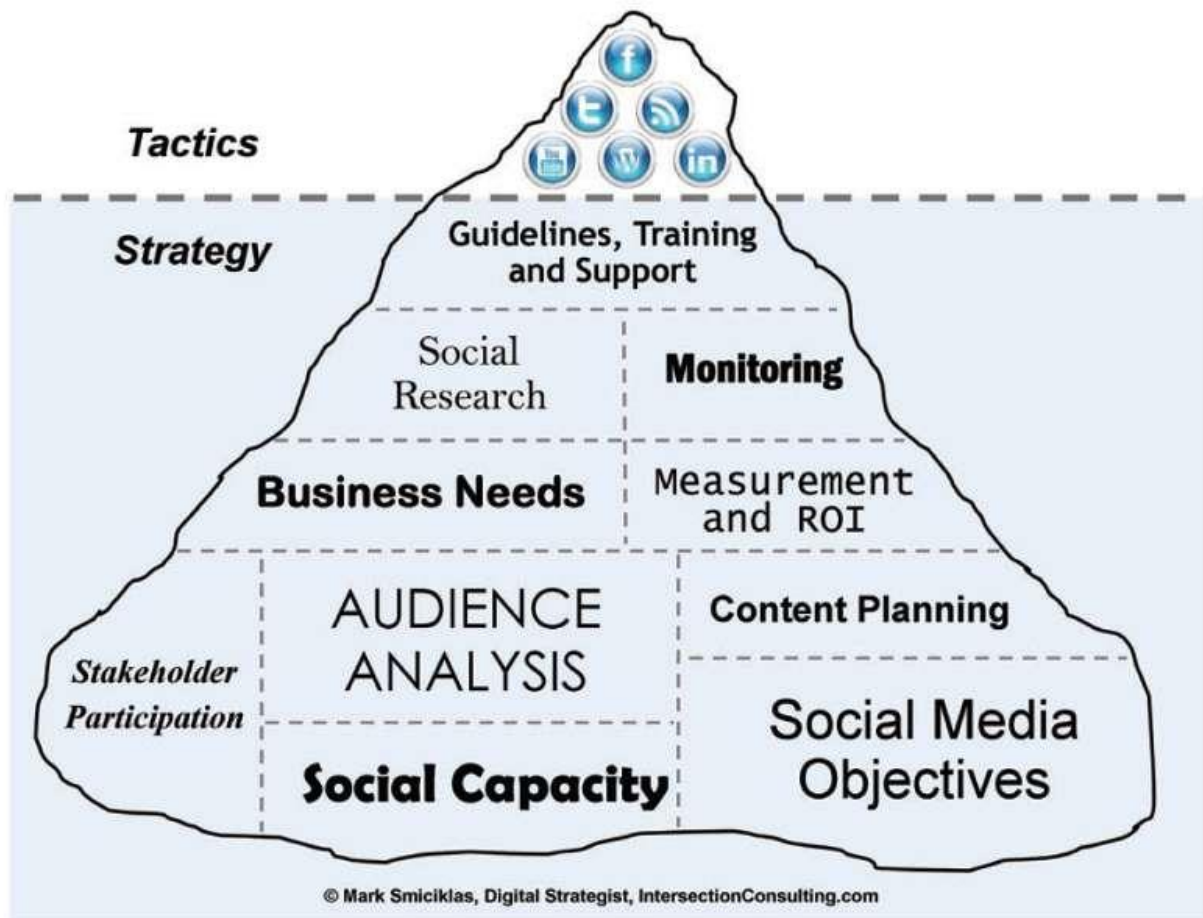
This is becoming more and more a necessity in the area of information overload. For example, while the horse and buggy age didn't require the processing of information quickly while driving, traveling in downtown Chicago now does, and it is important to keep information visual for better processing.

In addition, your brain gathers a large amount of information perpetually. To keep from going insane, your brain discards over 99% of the information it perceives before it moves the information over to conscious perception. Thus, novelty, or simply being different and unique, is an important visual quality that an infographic provides.



While perception is a critical issue, visual and mental schema allow a visual representation to easily connect to prior learning. Students can easily interpret an image like a Venn diagram, or a symbol like an iceberg, and can therefore fit this new representation into a model they already understand (in this case, that "you only see a small fraction of what goes into social media on the websites themselves).

Good infographics go even further. According to social scientist Nigel Holmes, an infographic is better defined as an ***explanation graphic***. An infographic can tell a narrative story, whether it is data or an idea. The designer can take the abstract concept and portray it visually to display the key story the data or ideas suggest.



A slideshow by [gives](#) some examples of how designers in the professional world utilize infographics to tell stories.

Case Study - AEA PD Online

We at AEA PD Online have begun to use infographics to talk about some complex topics regarding our work. The [short demo video](#) highlights two basic infographics and discusses the process by which they were created, how they are currently being used, and how they bring about meaning.

Infographics vs. Graphic Organizers

You might be thinking, "Infographics sounds like a very slick version of Graphical Organizers." Or, you might be thinking, "I could really use some ice cream right now." But, probably the first one.

You actually would be right to think so. Graphical organizers, as the name implies, takes complex information and structures it into a visual display. Graphical organizers are set up for the student to complete as a way to make sense of what has been taught.

The biggest difference between the two is the state of them. While they are essentially the same thing, the infographic has the information provided already within the organizer, ready for the audience to digest. The graphical organizer, then, is like a blank infographic, waiting for the student to enter in the information themselves.

Why not use graphic organizers?

Keeping with our definition of a graphic organizer as a blank infographic, it would seem like graphic organizers would be the better way to go. You would be providing the student a chance to engage with the curriculum and actively process it.

This is a bit of a false choice. Graphic organizers indeed are powerful tools for student learning and assessment, though students need proper scaffolding to use them effectively. So in other words... you should use them.

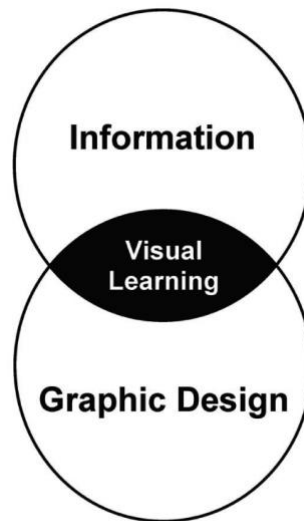
Infographics are not competing with graphic organizers; they are competing with text. Or more specifically, text in an article or textbook that a student will have to read.

Graphic Organizers = A great starting point

If you have had formal training (or even informal practice) with graphic organizers, then you have already started. Tools like Venn Diagrams or KWL charts can be used for an infographic very easily. The key is not to be confused by these terms; your past experience with graphic organizers is not that much different than work towards infographics.

The thing to realize is that "infographics" is a well-researched field of study, complete with many different theories and supporting techniques to raise quality in the level of communication the infographic provides. Sometimes as educators, we become insulated from

the larger world with some of our techniques. There is quite a bit to learn about design by studying how designers in many professions have used infographics.



© Mark Smiciklas, Digital Strategist, IntersectionConsulting.com

Structuring an Infographic

A mistake would be to jump right into the question of "what technology can we use for an infographic?" Trust me, there are some great online tools that simplify the infographic-building process. Not that they can make anything you visualize in your head into reality, but they take a lot of the anxiety out of the process.

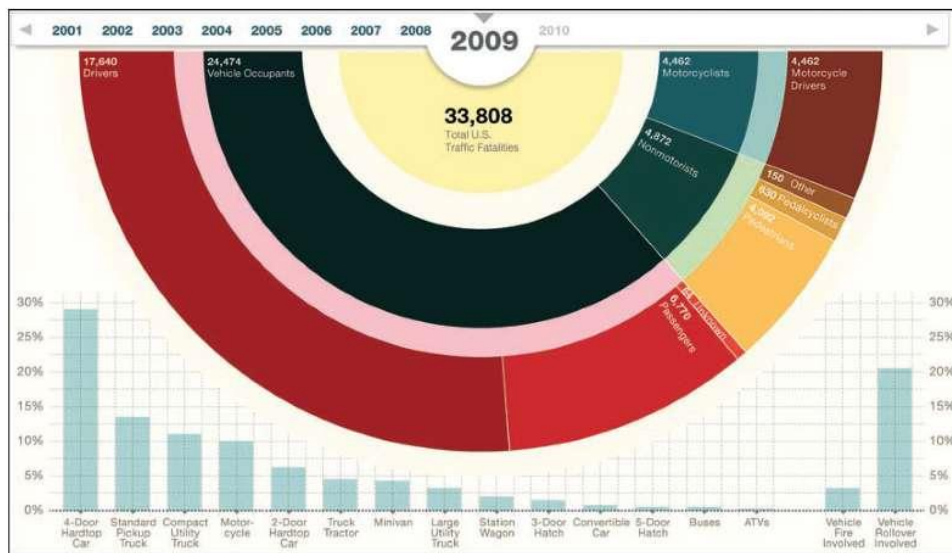
The most important thing is to understand the basics of how an infographic can be structured. Specifically, what is an infographic trying to demonstrate? Here are some of the basic categories:

Data

We live in a world with much more data than ever before. Data show complex realities as well as nuances. Because of this, the ability to read, understand, and interpret data is more important than ever.

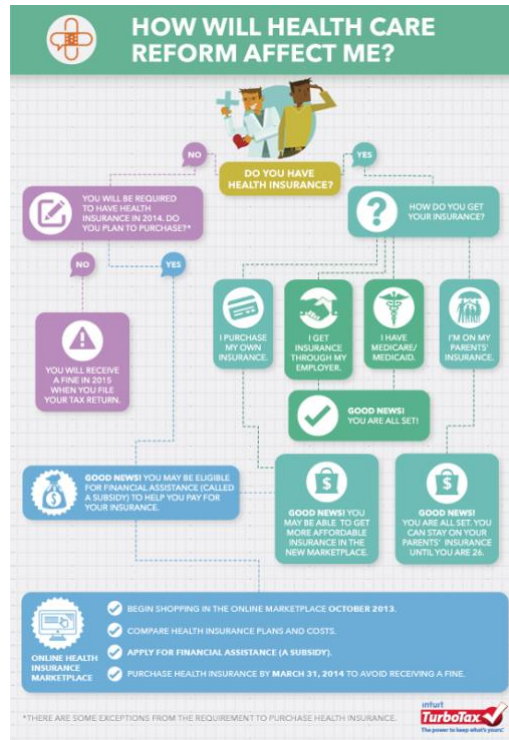
Consider this: In a health class or driver's education course, we may want to impress upon students the importance of being a safe driver. But, simply saying things like "You need to obey the laws of the land or you could get yourself killed" somewhat limits the learning process.

Consider instead presenting this infographic. What conclusions could students draw from this? What questions does it raise? An infographic like this is not only an easier way of visualizing complicated data sets, but it encourages deeper processing of the content.



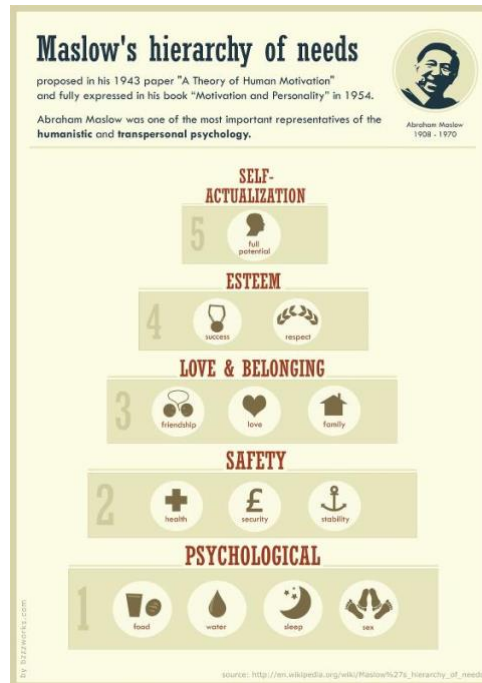
Ideas

The other large category of infographics is complex ideas. Sometimes an idea, even if it is not naturally a visual idea, makes more sense when displayed visually.



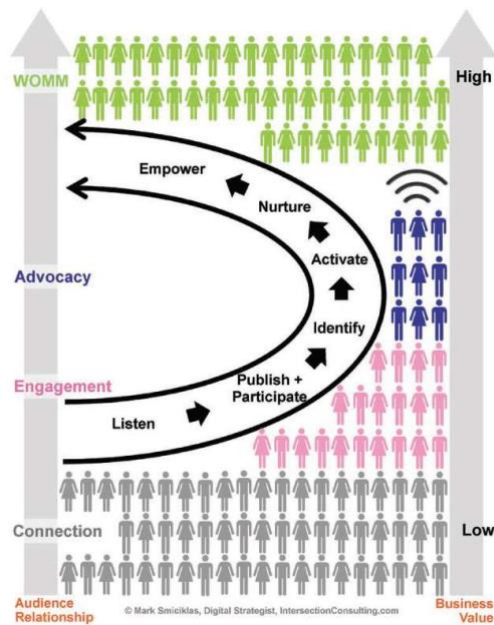
Hierarchies

Breaking down infographic structures a bit more, a common task of infographics is to display a hierarchy. This can be in items as diverse as organizational structures, pricing structures, or categorizations of an idea, like Maslow's hierarchy:



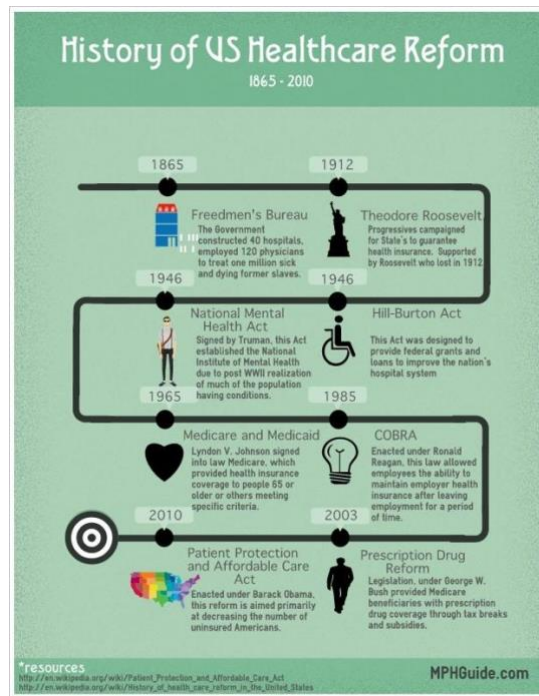
Relationships

Similarly, infographics often show how items relate to other items as well.



Chronology

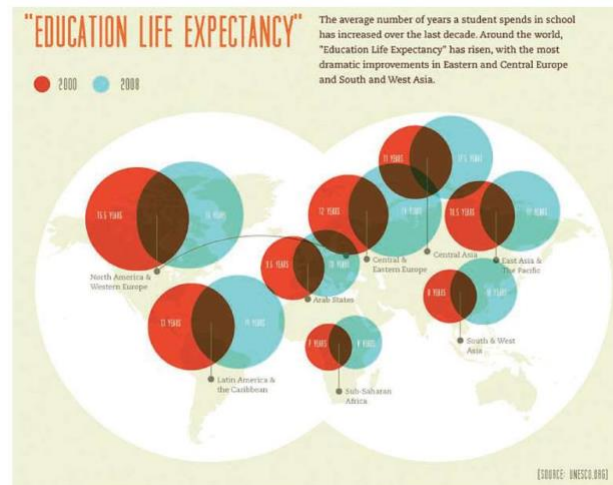
One of the easiest places to see the structure of an infographic is through a chronology. This includes timelines, flowcharts, and more.



Geography

Another common way to structure comparison data is via a map, where the data highlight the differences between the places.

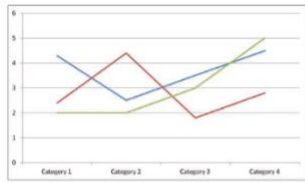
There are many more ways an infographic can be structured in addition to what is seen here.



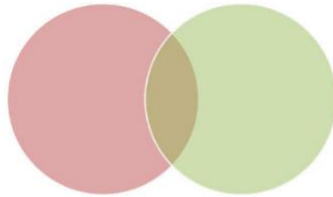
Types of Visual Structures

Considering how the actual information is structured is just one piece of the puzzle. Once you have determined how the actual information is structured, you then have to consider how it is visually structured.

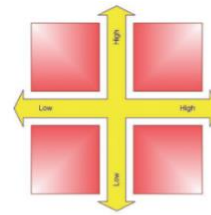
Beginning designers are well-suited to work with these basic structures to build their infographics. There are many education-specific ones (KWL, Literary Plot Chart, RAFT, Fishbone, etc.) that you can add to these basics.



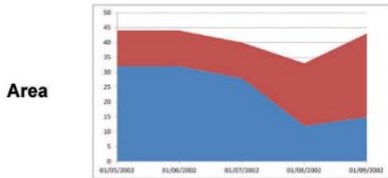
Line



Venn



Positioning Map



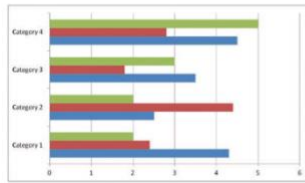
Area



Gears



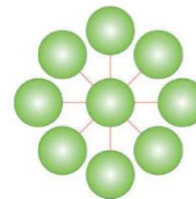
Matrix



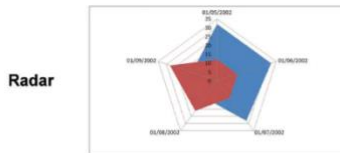
Bar



Formula



Circle Spoke



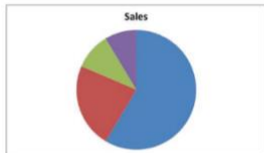
Radar



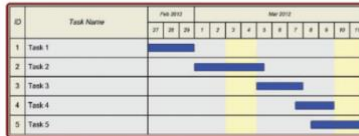
Flowchart



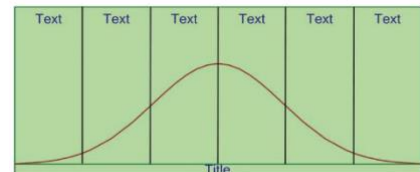
Timeline



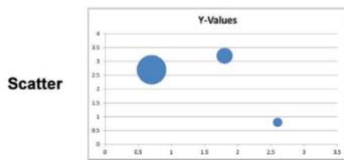
Pie



Gantt



Life Cycle



Scatter



Cycle

Creating an Infographic

Infographics are, of course, like anything else within instructional design. There is a tried-and-true process to making sound graphics. Using the ADDIE instructional model, let's take a look at the basic steps:

Analysis

Given the work that designing an infographic will take, it is important to have fully analyzed your intention before getting started.

You start your infographic building with a **gathering of the information or data** that you have available. From this, **consider your objectives**. What do students need to know that a visual representation will help better convey? Your objectives set the purpose of why you are building the infographic.

Design

You are now ready for your planning stage. This is where it is critical to understand the **basic structure of the data/information** that you have, as well as the **visual structure** that best communicates that information.

Here also, it benefits you to have some **background in good design principles**. Many of the things we looked at with visual design (including color, shape, contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity) play an equally important part here to making an effective and aesthetic design.

Much like storyboarding, this will require you to actually start to map out how this will look. Using scratch paper and a pencil, **some brainstorming doodles** can help you visualize your ideas.

Develop

Now you are ready to put those ideas into production. The development process takes a considerable amount of time. However, it takes an even more considerable amount of time if you haven't fully fleshed out your design beforehand.

At this stage, you will be **accessing a tool** for the development of an infographic. As we will see, this can either be a computer application like Photoshop, GIMP, or even Power Point, or an online tool (where there are many to choose from).

Once the tool has been selected, you will begin your building process by **finding visuals** you can use (whether real images or graphical representations/symbols), as well as creating the **text** from your storyboard. The design process then involves you **moving around those elements** into a visually appealing and meaningful display.

Implement

Obviously, this means **using the completed graphic** within the context of a lesson or course. However, this can be done differently depending on the overall design of the course.

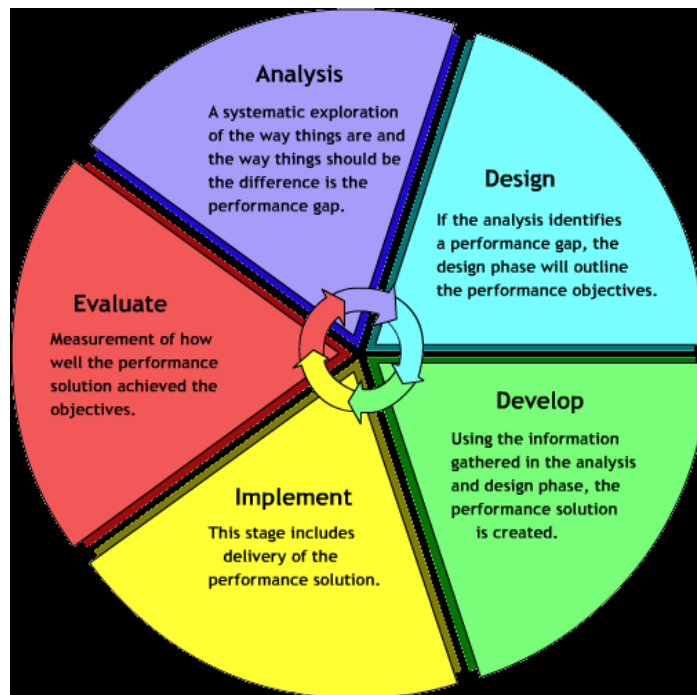
If you are using it as part of the "learnture" style recorded lesson, you have to consider if this will be seen as an image in the recorded lesson as you narrate. If so, will you zoom in on certain portions of the infographic? Will it also be available to be downloaded separately from the lesson?

Text-based lessons, or even stand-alone resources, bring about their own questions for implementation. How will you have students interact with the information? How will you assess the effectiveness of the graphic?

Evaluate

This leads us to our last stage (well... last before we start the cycle again). You need to have an assessment strategy that will provide you feedback on the graphic. Was it readable? Was it clear? We will take a look at all the elements of quality from an infographic later within the lesson.

Much like any other instructional design project, the feedback you receive directly feeds into further analysis, where you either revise, build on, or start from scratch.



What is Quality?

There are two different ways of looking at this question, one of which is beyond the scope of this lesson. The question "how effective is this infographic" is a good metacognitive question for students in the classroom and belongs as part of a media literacy curriculum.

Our focus, however, is on the design of the infographic as we are building it, so it has a slightly different scope. Since the lesson is functionally an instructional design project much like the text-based lesson, the criteria from the text-based lesson rubric that we used still apply:

- Objectives

- Aesthetical/Visual Design
- Instructional Design/Usability
- Interactivity & Assessment*
- Text Quality

Perhaps the one that is an ill-fit is "interactivity & assessment," since for a lesson that means the student isn't simply sitting and reading. Of course... that is exactly what she is doing with an infographic. However, if you are using an infographic in the context of the course, the evaluation would be more on what you do with the infographic. Is it simply placed there, with a hope for "read and glean"? Or did you wrap it in the context of purposeful classroom activities and assessments?

Kathy Schrock has also created a [rubric for infographic quality](#).

Down and Dirty

While the overall rubric is helpful for you to measure the effectiveness of an infographic, there are some immediate considerations you need to make while designing it:

- 1) Is it legible? Can you read it and make sense of it?
- 2) How much time did it take you to "digest" the information?
- 3) Can you sum up the point or message in two sentences or less?
- 4) Are there spelling or grammar errors?
- 5) Color and graphics - Are they legible and easy to read?
- 6) Gestalt - Does it look and feel like the graphic is one cohesive piece, or are their things that seem disconnected?
- 7) Visuals - Do the visuals help reinforce learning either through previously understood symbolic representation (iceberg, Venn diagram, etc.) or through simplifying the relationships of the information? Or do they seem superfluous?

You can find SoDa Speaks' video on the [Five Rules for Infographic Success](#) website.

Technological Options

We've been holding off for a long time. It is time to look at the technological options to creating the graphics.

First, let's recap the basics of infographics and determine what we need in a program. Obviously, we need the ability to manipulate images, including resize them, move them around, combine them with others, crop them, change their coloring, make the background transparent, etc.

In addition, we need the ability to totally manipulate text, including placing it anywhere, resizing it, rotating it, using an infinite amount of colors, etc. For this reason, a program like iPhoto doesn't cut the mustard. Which given mustard's consistency, is not a surprise.

That is the minimum, however, and even that isn't going to help out. What is more ideal is a program with pre-built templates, where you can simply add the content or make small adjustments like color and cropping. It should be able to draw from a large library of symbols (like stock stick-figure or pie-chart images).

1. Desktop Design Applications

We'll start with the category that I don't recommend, unless you do some design work in other areas (like newsletters or posters or such). There are several tools you can use here. The king is Adobe Photoshop, which has enjoyed many years as the industry leader, and many people have used it in one form or another. Photoshop provides so many tools, however, that many people get overwhelmed. There are [many other options](#) (including free ones).

As we mentioned earlier, this represents more the minimum in what we are looking for. While a creative designer likes to have total control in the design process, in the interest of time, a beginner will appreciate having more templates and stock images available.

2. Online Apps

Web 2.0 to the rescue. Much like making the web a tool for writing and collaborating (and sharing videos of your cat doing nothing), web 2.0 also has made the web a tool for design. In

the next few pages, we'll highlight a few of the tools out there. Keep in mind, this area changes rapidly, so there might be several other, better options emerge by the time you are reading this. It pays to do an active search of what the web holds.

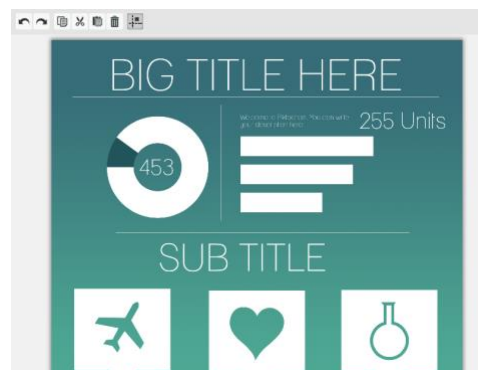
The key for these online apps is that they are much more built for the casual designer. They come with plug-and-chug templates that makes the design process much easier. They are more likely to not be able to do the "perfect" job for what you might be visualizing, but that is a good trade-off for a beginner.

Because of this fact, these tools tend to shape what your image of your graphic looks like in your head. The best example to use is [Wordle](#), which was pretty revolutionary for infographics in being able to quickly take text and transform it visually based on how often words are used. Many individuals today talk about "making a wordle" or displaying their information in "wordle-form" since the infographic has become so well-known.

Piktochart

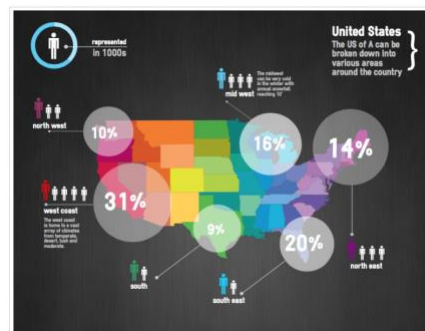
[Piktochart](#) is quickly becoming the leader for infographics, as it has gained recognition for its "long-style" infographics that have become increasingly popular on the web. There are many themes you can customize, including fully built ones or more scaled back ones like the "minimalist" theme below.

Note, there is a pay version for this that has many more bells and whistles, but the basic editor is free.



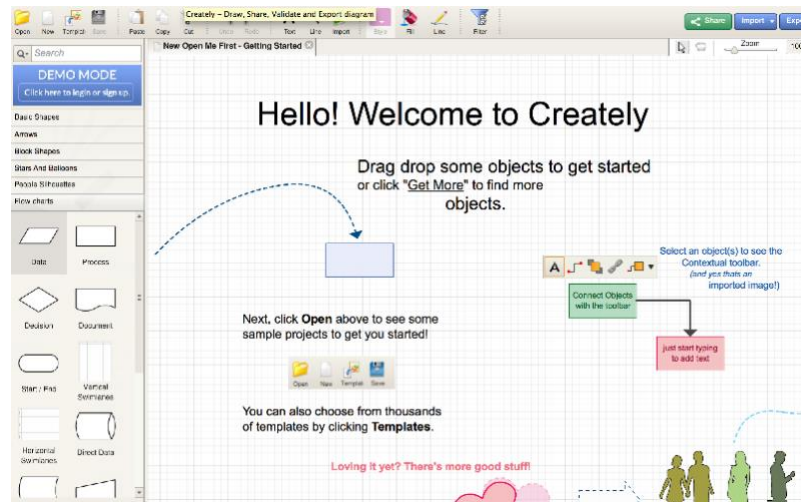
Easel.ly

Much like Piktochart, [Easel.ly](#) comes with many pre-made templates that allow you to customize straight from the site.



Creately

Creately.com is much like Inspiration, a tool many educators are familiar with. It creates flowcharts and relationship drawings with a pre-built library of icons.



Tableau

Tableau.com is another of the Piktochart "long-style" clones that allows you to essentially create several infographics in one. It too contains many handy easy-to-use filters and styles as part of its template.



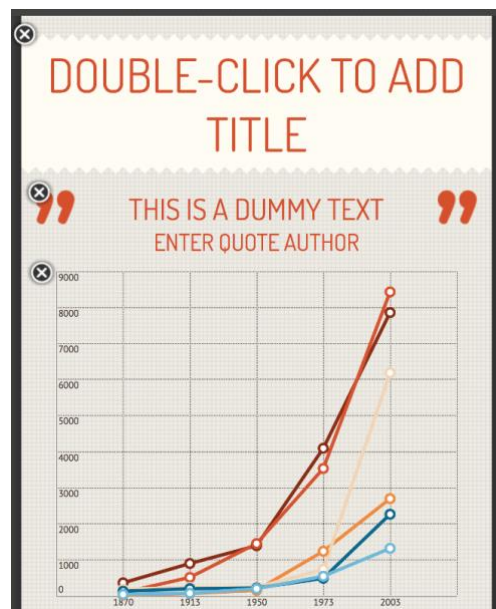
Vennage

Vennage.com allows you to create timeline-style ("chronology" structure) infographics. It can also transform those into flipbooks, lists, or maps depending on the data that you entered. This means Vennage is an interactive form of infographic.



InfoGram

Another in the Piktochart "long-style" clones is infoqr.am, which is very similar in its pre-built infographics.



PowerPoints

From [Excelsior Online Writing Lab](#)


Creating Effective PowerPoint Presentations

PowerPoint presentations are quite common in both academic and professional settings, and, because they are such an important part of how you'll likely present your ideas and information to an audience, it's helpful to have some basic information on how to create an effective PowerPoint presentation.

The basic purpose of a PowerPoint presentation is to give you a way to present key ideas to an audience with visual support. Your PowerPoint presentation shouldn't be full of text. It is meant to provide you with speaking points, and detailed notes should be kept from your audience. You want to keep your slides clear, clean, short, focused, and you want to keep your audience from using the expression that we sometimes hear in reference to long, boring PowerPoint presentations, "death by PowerPoint."

Tips: Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when creating an effective PowerPoint presentation.

1. **Remember to avoid too much text.** You should keep your text brief and include talking points only. Detailed notes can be inserted into the notes section of PowerPoint, but only you should see those notes, unless a professor asks to see your notes to evaluate your PowerPoint as an assignment.
2. **Be consistent and clear with your font choices.** Helvetica is a nice font for presentations. Make sure your font is large enough that an audience in a room would be able to see your text, even if audience members are sitting in the back of the room.
3. **Be careful with your color choices for text and background.** You want to make sure your audience can read your text easily. Black on white text is easiest to read but is also boring for a presentation. Still, when you add color, just be sure you are adding color that works and doesn't distract.
4. **Add images.** Text on slides for every slide is boring. Add appropriate images to your slides. Relevant charts and graphs are excellent, as are pictures that will connect to your content.
5. **Make sure your main points are clear.** Remember to connect your ideas well and provide background information and transitions when necessary.
6. **Keep your audience in mind.** Your audience will affect the overall tone and appearance of your presentation. Sometimes, humor can be appropriate. Other times, a more serious tone may be necessary. Just as you evaluate your situation any time you write a paper, you should evaluate your situation for creating a PowerPoint presentation.



For a visual overview of some important advice on how you can create good PowerPoint presentations with a clear purpose, check out this short video, [How to Give an Awesome \(PowerPoint\) Presentation](#) by Wienotfilms. (May 2011).

Beginner PowerPoint User Instructions

If you have never used PowerPoint before, check out this helpful video, [Technology for Teachers and Students'](#), which will overview some of the basics of PowerPoint presentation. This one is a little longer, but if you really need a detailed, how-to video, this will be a good resource.

Sample PowerPoints

Check out the sample PowerPoint presentations below, one from a student and one from a professional. Think about what works well for you and what strategies you might be able to model in your own presentations.

[Examples of student presentations](#)

In the student sample, though the presentation is simple, the images add to the overall purpose of the presentation, and the student has listed references at the end of the presentation. This is a common requirement for college assignment presentation.

In the professional sample below, you'll notice animations, smooth transitions, and content that appears in stages. Though this kind of presentation may be difficult for a novice, this sample can give you an idea of what PowerPoint is capable of and how you can use the many features of the software to tell your story.

[Pure Presentation](#). (April 2011). This is a great PowerPoint example—solar power.

Prezis

Prezis are like PowerPoints in that they are a visual representation of your information, and we often use them for presentations, both online and in person. However, Prezis differ from PowerPoint in style and layout. They can be 3D and can offer a fresh alternative to PowerPoint presentations.

The same basic presentation rules apply to Prezi presentations: keep the text to a minimum; add visuals; be clear with your message. However, in some ways, Prezis can give you a little more flexibility with your presentations, as you can manipulate all parts of a “slide” or “frame” and even embed “slides” within others. And you can add images or “slides” wherever you like.

Prezi has a free version, which allows you to use the program and save your presentations to the web. All you have to do is create an account.

Beginner Prezi User Instructions

If you are new to Prezi but are interested in giving it a try, check out this helpful video on how to get started with your first Prezi presentation. [Prezi tutorial: getting started](#) by PreziVideoChannel. (June 2012).

Sample Prezis

Prezis are an exciting way to give presentations online and in person. Check out the sample Prezis below. Think about what works well and what doesn't. Think about effects and strategies you see in these samples that might work well for your presentation.

In the sample from a beginning Prezi user, you'll notice the use of some images to support the text. You can add either music or narration to your Prezis. In the advanced version of the same Prezi, you'll notice the author has taken full advantage of Prezis' abilities to add multimedia, such as background music and an embedded YouTube video. You will have the added bonus of learning how to use APA format. [Sample Prezis: The Basics of APA Format](#)

A quiz over PowerPoints and Prezis can be found here with instructions on how to download your results:

The Research Portfolio/Narrative Essay

From [Chapter 11 of *The Process of Research Writing*](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

A **research portfolio** is a collection of writing you've done in the process of completing your research. Of course, the details about what is included in this portfolio will vary based on the class assignments. However, if you've been following through the exercises in the textbook, chances are your portfolio will consist of some combination of these projects:

- The topic proposal exercise
- The critique exercise
- The antithesis exercise
- The categorization and evaluation exercise
- The annotated bibliography exercise

A research portfolio might also include your work on some of the various exercises from the textbook and other assignments given to you from your teacher.

The goal of the exercises here is to help you work through the process of research writing, and to help you write an essay along the lines of what was discussed about the research essay. However, as an alternative to using this previous work to write a research essay, you could write an essay about these exercises to tell the story of researching your topic.

This project, "The Research Portfolio/Narrative Essay" is similar to a more conventional research essay in that the writer uses cited evidence to support the point exemplified in a working thesis. However, it is different in that the writer focuses on the *process* of researching his topic, a narrative about how he developed and explored the working thesis.

The Assignment

Write a seven to ten page narrative essay about the process of working through the previously assigned exercises in the class. Be sure to explain to your audience—your teacher, classmates, and other readers interested in your topic—the steps you took to first develop and then work through your research project.

Sample by a Student Author

“The Story of My Working Thesis Malfunction” by Amanda Kenger

In the course where Amanda wrote this essay, students were given the option to either follow the option for writing a more “conventional” research essay, or to write a research portfolio/narrative essay following the assignment described in this chapter. Amanda said that she originally chose to write a portfolio/narrative essay because “I thought it would be a piece of cake. I was wrong.” She soon realized that this assignment required her to think carefully about how to present her research to her readers, and it required her to follow an approach that was different from her previous academic writing experiences. Overall, Amanda was glad she chose this writing option “because it gave me an opportunity to do something out of the ordinary.”

The Story of My Working Thesis Malfunction

When we were first given the assignment for the final research project, I was sure that I was going to write a traditional research paper. I have done all of the research, written out the annotated bibliography, and have created a fairly decisive working thesis. However, I finally decided to work through the research portfolio essay option after looking at the work I created during the semester and realizing how much things have changed from start to finish.

I wrote four essays that examine my thesis and my sources and my working thesis changed with each essay. It transformed from my original idea that three events in history changed television censorship to my final working thesis, “Janet Jackson's 2004 Super Bowl wardrobe malfunction has changed the way that Americans view television.”

Each of the essays I wrote has had an effect on my final working thesis. This is especially surprising for me because previously, when I came up with an idea or a thesis, my mind is

usually made up. But I think that story of working through the different exercises this semester shows how much my original working thesis changed.

I first decided on the idea for my original working thesis through writing my topic proposal essay. This essay got me thinking about the evolution of television censorship from shows like I Love Lucy to Desperate Housewives. I began to think of events in television history that would have caused a domino effect in censorship. So in my topic proposal essay, I said that there were three events in TV history that drastically changed the way that television was censored. The first of these three events was Elvis on The Ed Sullivan Show. His sexual dance moves sent shockwaves through conservative America. For the second event, I chose George Carlin's classic comedy skit "Filthy Words." The skit included "seven words you can never say on television" and was played over the radio by a small town DJ. The controversy surrounding the skit eventually snowballed into a lawsuit, and finally a Supreme Court case. For the third event I chose Janet Jackson's 2004 Super Bowl halftime show performance. Her "wardrobe malfunction" on live television became grounds for the institution of a delay on all live broadcasts.

One of the reasons that I decided to choose three events was because I wanted to trace some longer trends in television, and also because I was worried about not having enough evidence to support my thesis in a research essay. I can see now though that I had too much going on in my original thesis. I was going to have far too much information and my paper would probably lose its focus. Also, when I look back at my topic proposal essay now, I see that I only cited one reference each for Presley and Carlin, and I wrote that I found, "hundreds of articles on several databases and on the World Wide Web" about Jackson. That should have been my first red flag that the bulk of the information available to me was going to be on Jackson.

Regardless, when I completed my topic proposal essay, my working thesis was, "Three main events in history have changed censorship: Elvis on The Ed Sullivan Show, George Carlin's Supreme Court case, and Janet Jackson on the 2004 Super Bowl."

My evaluation of my own working thesis continued throughout my critique essay. For this essay, I chose to critique an article called "The New Puritanism" by Eric Gillin and Greg Lindsay, published in Advertising Age and accessed electronically through the Wilson Select database. This article investigated the consequences of Jackson's Super Bowl stunt and, to my

surprise, these consequences were not only felt in television. The wave of conservatism that Jackson created was felt strongly in the world of advertising and big business. The article poses the seemingly unanswerable question of how to make everyone content with mass media content.

Gillin and Lindsay lean towards the idea that the conflict that lies in censorship is a generational one. They write "74% of consumers ages 12 to 20 said CBS overreacted in its response". They also describe some of the possible solutions that have been proposed to solve the censorship conflict. Some of these suggestions include running parallel ad campaigns with designated ratings.

This article finally caused me to realize the seriousness of Jackson's actions. "The New Puritanism" pointed out several ways in which advertising companies and big businesses like Wal-Mart altered their campaigns and content after the incident. For example, Wal-Mart pulled Maxim magazine off of their shelves and Budweiser pulled some of their commercials off of the air. Gillin and Lindsay describe an impossible situation in both television and advertising, and warn, "sex or violence... may be off the mainstream for good" (6).

Gillin's and Lindsay's article first got me thinking about the fusion of academic culture and popular culture. Going into this project, I assumed that every academic article was going to take the side of the FCC. Much to my surprise, almost all the academic articles I found carried warnings of the FCC's over-involvement in the media.

This article also made me look once again at my working thesis. When I was searching for an article to critique, I could not find any on Carlin or Elvis. The sources that I had for the Carlin and Elvis consisted mostly of web sites or page long narratives. I found it very difficult to locate any article that I would be able to use in my critique essay. Another red flag. However, after my critique essay I felt more confident in stating that Jackson's halftime show changed media censorship.

When it came time for me to write my antithesis essay, I was really worried. Almost all of the articles I found warned about the dangers of the FCC's power. I was concerned that I would not be able to find any evidence that supported my antithetical arguments. I finally found my answer on a website created by United States Senator Sam Brownback. Senator Brownback served as one of the sponsors for the Broadcast Decency Act of 2004. He wants stronger regulations from the FCC and other parts of the government. On his web site, Brownback stated

that Jackson's halftime show "is just the most memorable example of the growing volume of inappropriate material that is broadcast..." He argues that Jackson's halftime show did not serve as an important event in censorship history, only the most recognizable. Brownback goes on: We live in a nation where we hold the First Amendment in high regard. In an effort to maintain the free exchange of information, thoughts, and opinions, we strive to avoid government involvement in communications content. At the same time, we are nation raising children. With the turning of a tuning knob, or a click of the remote, Americans are presented with the content of the public airwaves and the culture it generates. Broadcasters can express any viewpoint and idea they want, but they have a legal and moral duty to ensure that viewers, especially minors, are not presented with explicit material.

In response to this, I found an article on the web site "Intellectual Conservative Politics and Philosophy" by Wendy McElroy titled "Censorship is Not a Solution for Trashy TV." She directly challenges Brownback and says that the consequences of the Broadcast Decency Act "may be far worse than a bit of trashy exhibitionism on TV." McElroy's article defended my idea that Jackson's halftime show changed censorship in that it propelled the Broadcast Decency Act into the public interest.

Critic Tom Shales, writing for Television Week, agrees. In an article I found via the Wilson Select database titled "The Real Indecency Is The Show in Washington," Shales said: Clearly the saddest and most infuriating irony of the whole mess is that Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael Powell is demagoguing this "issue" into a national frenzy, or at least a federal frenzy, about indecency in the media, thus distracting attention from his attempt to impose a radical relaxation of media ownership rules on the country.

When I wrote my antithesis paper I was still thinking of using Carlin's Supreme Court case in my thesis. I included a paragraph arguing that Carlin's "filthy words" are still filthy by today's standards. I still believe this to be true, and I think I made a solid argument defending my thesis. The problem was that I did not include any citations to back up my argument. My main reason for holding onto Carlin in my thesis was to make sure that I had enough research in my essay. However, the antithesis paper reaffirmed for me that Jackson "wardrobe malfunction" incident was a good subject for my essay. The antithesis essay put my doubts to rest by showing me that there were people that disagreed with my thesis and also that I could argue my position.

It was because of the categorization essay that I was finally able to decide on my thesis. After I put all of my sources into credible and non-credible categories, I discovered that most of the non-credible sources were on Elvis or Carlin. I simply did not have credible sources on either of the two and made the final decision to cut them completely out of my working thesis. I also divided my citations into sources that were for the FCC and sources that were against the FCC. Again I saw the reoccurring theme that most of my sources were against the FCC and its involvement in mass media. In "The Darker Reaches of the Government," Anthony Mathews warns that if the FCC and the United States government continue to control our television media, "no constitutional guarantee of basic freedoms will exist"(243). It seemed that most of my research made a similar point about the importance of keeping our First Amendment rights in tact.

Even though the categorization exercise was by far the most difficult for me to complete, I learned the most about my working thesis by doing it. The essay made me think more seriously about my sources. In a way, it only makes sense that most of my articles were against the FCC's involvement in media because the articles are part of the media. Why would a journalist, author or any writer suggest that the FCC should censor mass media when their articles, journals and books could be just as easily censored?

Our First Amendment rights are not limited to television and other technologies, a point that I neglected to consider at the beginning of the semester. Also it proved challenging to put my sources into credible and non-credible categories. I would not cite People as a credible source if I was writing about pharmaceuticals, but I felt that I had to consider the magazine an expert on my subject of Janet Jackson. In other words, it seems to me that credible and non-credible sources can differ depending on the subject matter.

I wish that I could have done the categorization and evaluation exercise earlier in the semester. After taking one look at my notes and prewriting for that exercise, I realized that I had more than enough information on Jackson to write an essay. If I had categorized my sources sooner I would have revised my working thesis much earlier in the semester. And beyond that, I think that this was the exercise where I learned the most about research writing. I plan on working through some of the categorizing exercises the next time I have to write a research essay, especially making a chart to help me sort through my evidence. Perhaps by doing so I will

be able to see more clearly what sources will work in my essay and what points I can include in my working thesis.

Even though my working thesis has changed drastically throughout the duration of the semester, I feel that I am now finally happy with my thesis: "Janet Jackson's 2004 Super Bowl wardrobe malfunction has changed the way that Americans view television." I have good evidence supporting my thesis, I can defend my thesis against an antithetical argument and I know where my own opinion lies. I don't know if I will ever use my knowledge of Jackson's wardrobe malfunction in my everyday life, though if it does come up in conversation, I'll have my answer. But I do think that the skills I learned through revising my working thesis and writing these essays will prove useful in many future essays to come.

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The Poster Session Project

From [Chapter 11 of *The Process of Research Writing*](#) | Steven D. Krause | Spring 2007

At many academic conferences in a variety of different disciplines, faculty and student participants often have the option to present their research to other conference participants in a **poster session**. It's similar in some ways to a science fair of the sort you might remember from junior high school: participants literally make a poster or some other sort of multi-media presentation (photographs, charts, sound recordings, video) that represent the presenter's research.

The poster session project is different from the other alternatives to the traditional research paper previously discussed because it is a *supplement* rather than a *replacement* for other research writing projects. But poster sessions are important supplements to other writing projects because they provide a different way for researchers to interact with each other and their projects, and they can work well for students in composition courses, too.

The Assignment

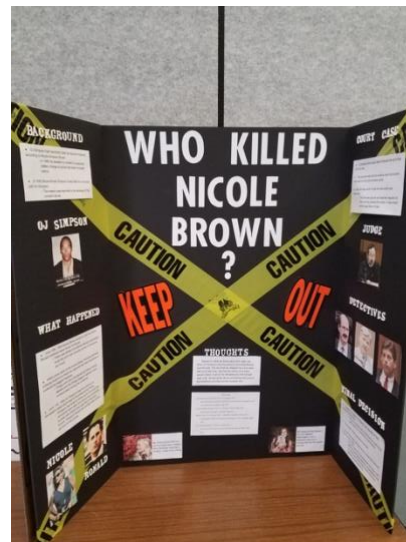
Based on the work you have completed with your research project, create a presentation for poster session. Your presentation could be a poster, but it does not have to be limited to just a poster. You might include other sorts of models or representations, audio files, video, etc.—use your imagination! During our poster session, you will be expected to answer questions from others about your presentation.

Poster sessions can be small, limited to a single class, or, as the example of the Eastern Michigan University "Celebration of Student Writing" demonstrates, they can be very large. You might also supplement their poster with a short essay that explains what choices you made in putting together your presentation and why.

Student Samples

A Program-Wide Poster Session: Lewis-Clark State College Research Symposium

Lewis-Clark State College provides an opportunity for students and faculty to present their research to the campus through the LCSC Research Symposium every May. The English 102 students participate by submitting their posters for a session. The posters range from traditional research posters to infographics. This allows and opportunity for students to share their work and practice presenting research to an audience outside of the classroom. Sample of projects from English 102 shown below. For more information on the LCSC Research Symposium visit the program's [website](#).



Appendix

Overview

These sections on revision, peer-review, annotation, reading, and metacognition cover techniques and knowledge you will need throughout the semester.

From *EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology & Handbook for College Writers* by Shane Abrams

Concepts and Strategies for Revision

Let's start with a few definitions. What is an **essay**? It's likely that your teachers have been asking you to write essays for years now; you've probably formed some idea of the genre. But when I ask my students to define this kind of writing, their answers vary widely and only get at part of the meaning of "essay."



Although we typically talk of *an* essay (noun), I find it instructive to think about essay (verb): to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand. *An* essay (noun), then, is an attempt and an exploration. Popularized shortly before the Enlightenment Era by Michel de Montaigne, the essay form was invested in the notion that writing invites discovery: the idea was that he, as a lay-person without formal education in a specific discipline, would learn more about a subject through the act of writing itself.

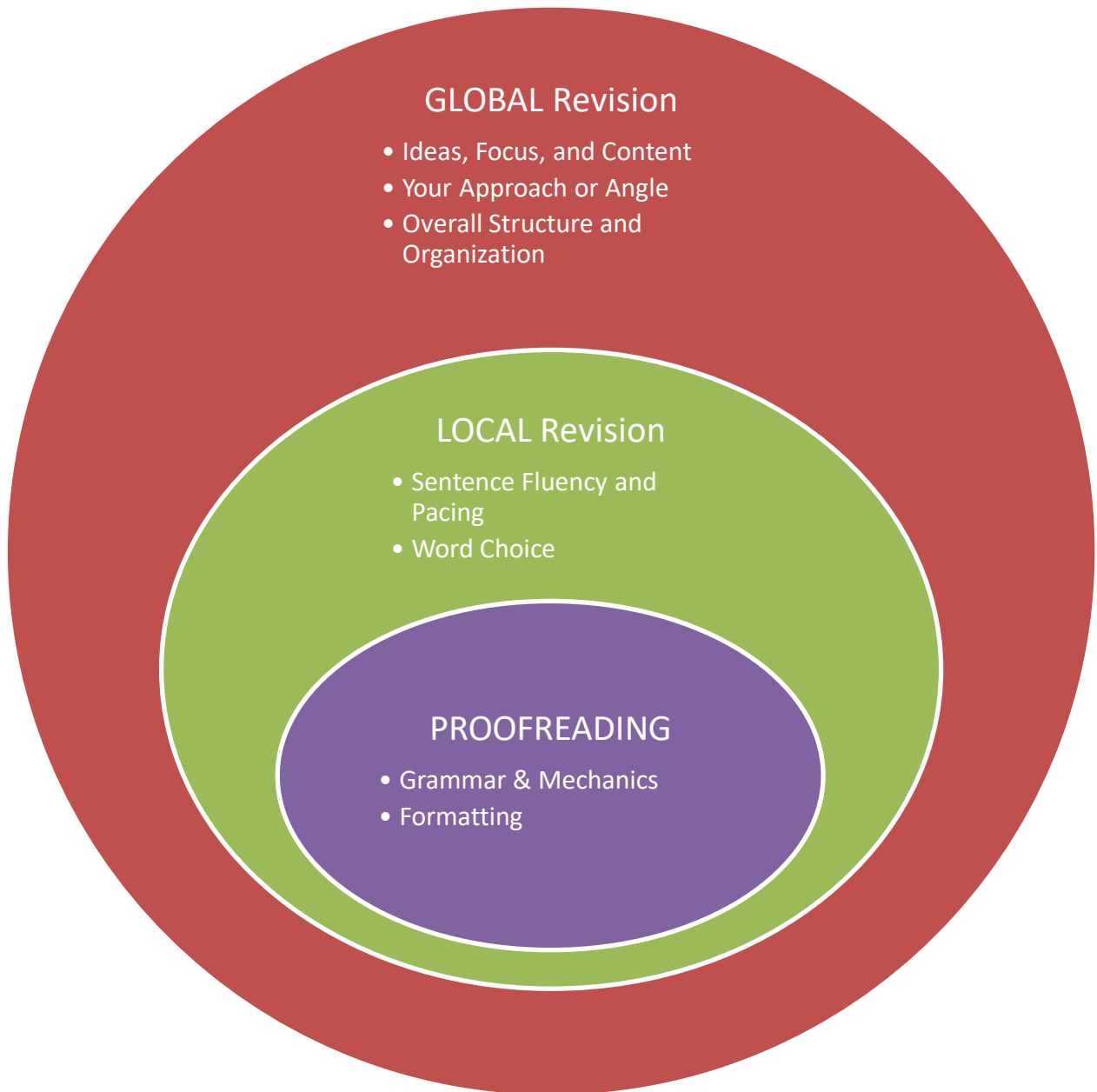
What difference does this new definition make for us, as writers?

- **Writing invites discovery.** Throughout the act of writing, you will learn more about your topic. Even though some people think of writing as a way to capture a fully-formed idea, writing can also be a way to process through ideas: in other words, writing can be an act of thinking. It forces you to look closer and see more. Your revisions should reflect the knowledge you gain through the act of writing.
- **An essay is an attempt, but not all attempts are successful on the first try.** You should give yourself license to fail, to an extent. If to essay is to try, then it's okay to fall short. Writing is also an iterative process, which means your first draft isn't the final product.

Now, what is **revision**? You may have been taught that revision means fixing commas, using a thesaurus to brighten up word choice, and maybe tweaking a sentence or two. However, I prefer to think of revision as “re | vision.”

Revision isn't just about polishing—it's about seeing your piece from a new angle, with “fresh eyes.” Often, we get so close to our own writing that we need to be able to see it from a different perspective in order to improve it. Revision happens on many levels. What you may have been trained to think of as revision—grammatical and mechanical fixes—is just one tier.

Here's how I like to imagine it:



Even though all kinds of revision are valuable, your global issues are first-order concerns, and proofreading is a last-order concern. If your entire topic, approach, or structure needs revision, it doesn't matter if you have a comma splice or two. It's likely that you'll end up rewriting that sentence anyway.

There are a handful of techniques you can experiment with in order to practice true revision. First, if you can, take some time away from your writing. When you return, you will have a clearer head. You will even, in some ways, be a different person when you come back—since we as humans are constantly changing from moment to moment, day to day, you will have a different perspective with some time away. This might be one way for you to make procrastination work in your favor: if you know you struggle with procrastination, try to bust out a quick first draft the day an essay is assigned. Then, you can come back to it a few hours or a few days later with fresh eyes and a clearer idea of your goals.

Second, you can challenge yourself to reimagine your writing using global and local revision techniques, like those included later in this appendix.

Third, you can (and should) read your paper aloud, if only to yourself. This technique distances you from your writing; by forcing yourself you read aloud, you may catch sticky spots, mechanical errors, abrupt transitions, and other mistakes you would miss if you were immersed in your writing. (Recently, a student shared with me that she uses an [online text-to-speech voice reader](#) to create this same separation. By listening along and taking notes, she can identify opportunities for local- and proofreading-level revision.)



Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you should rely on your **learning community**. Because you most likely work on tight deadlines and don't always have the opportunity to take time away from our projects, you should solicit feedback from your classmates, the Writing Center, your instructor, your Peer Workshop group, or your friends and family. As readers, they have valuable insight to the rhetorical efficacy of your writing: their feedback can be useful in developing a piece which is conscious of audience. To begin setting expectations and procedures for your Peer Workshop, turn to the first activity in this section.

Throughout this text, I have emphasized that good writing cannot exist in a vacuum; similarly, good rewriting often requires a supportive learning community. Even if you have had negative experiences with peer workshops before, I encourage you to give them another chance. Not only do professional writers consistently work with other writers, but my students are nearly always surprised by just how helpful it is to work alongside their classmates.

The previous diagram (of global, local, and proofreading levels of revision) reminds us that everyone has something valuable to offer in a learning community: because there are so many different elements on which to articulate feedback, you can provide meaningful feedback to your workshop, even if you don't feel like an expert writer.

During the many iterations of revising, remember to be flexible and to listen. Seeing your writing with fresh eyes requires you to step outside of yourself, figuratively.

Listen actively and seek to truly understand feedback by asking clarifying questions and asking for examples. The reactions of your audience are a part of writing that you cannot overlook, so revision ought to be driven by the responses of your colleagues.

On the other hand, remember that the ultimate choice to use or disregard feedback is at the author's discretion: provide all the suggestions you want as a group member, but use your best judgment as an author. If members of your group disagree—great! Contradictory feedback reminds us that writing is a dynamic, transactional action which is dependent on the specific rhetorical audience.

Vocabulary

essay—a medium, typically nonfiction, by which an author can achieve a variety of purposes.

Popularized by Michel de Montaigne as a method of discovery of knowledge: in the original French, “essay” is a verb that means “to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand.”

fluff—uneconomical writing: filler language or unnecessarily wordy phrasing. Although fluff occurs in a variety of ways, it can be generally defined as words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that do not work hard to help you achieve your rhetorical purpose.

iterative—literally, a repetition within a process. The writing process is iterative because it is non-linear and because an author often has to repeat, revisit, or reapproach different steps along the way.

learning community—a network of learners and teachers, each equipped and empowered to provide support through horizontal power relations. Values diversity insofar as it encourages growth and perspective, but also inclusivity. Also, a community that learns by adapting to its unique needs and advantages.

revision—the iterative process of changing a piece of writing. Literally, re-vision: seeing your writing with “fresh eyes” in order to improve it. Includes changes on global, local, and proofreading levels. Changes might include:

- rewriting (trying again, perhaps from a different angle or with a different focus)
- adding (new information, new ideas, new evidence)
- subtracting (unrelated ideas, redundant information, fluff)
- rearranging (finding more effective vectors or sequences of organization)
- switching out (changing words or phrases, substituting different evidence)
- mechanical clean-up (standardizing punctuation, grammar, or formatting)

Revision Activities

Establishing Your Peer Workshop

Before you begin working with a group, it's important for you to establish a set of shared goals, expectations, and processes. You might spend a few minutes talking through the following questions:

- Have you ever participated in a Peer Workshop before? What worked? What didn't?
- What do you hate about group projects? How might you mitigate these issues?
- What opportunities do group projects offer that working independently doesn't? What are you excited for?
- What requests do you have for your Peer Workshop group members?

In addition to thinking through the culture you want to create for your workshop group, you should also consider the kind of feedback you want to exchange, practically speaking. In order to arrive at a shared definition for "good feedback," I often ask my students to complete the following sentence as many times as possible with their groupmates: "Good feedback is..."

The list could go on forever, but here a few that I emphasize:

“Good feedback is...”		
kind	actionable	not prescriptive (offers suggestions, not demands)
cognizant of process (i.e., recognizes that a first draft isn't a final draft)	respectful	honest
specific	comprehensive (i.e., global, local, and proofreading)	attentive

Once you've discussed the parameters for the learning community you're building, you can begin workshopping your drafts, asking, "What does the author do well and what could they do better?" Personally, I prefer a workshop that's conversational, allowing the author and the audience to discuss the work both generally and specifically; however, your group should use whatever format will be most valuable for you. Before starting your workshop, try to get everyone on the same page logistically by using the flowchart on the following two pages.

Establishing Your Peer Workshop

To set the tone and expectations for your unique workshop group, talk through the following prompts. Record your answers on the companion sheet. Part One asks you to establish a climate or culture for your group; Part Two will help you talk through logistics.

(1) Culture of your Workshop

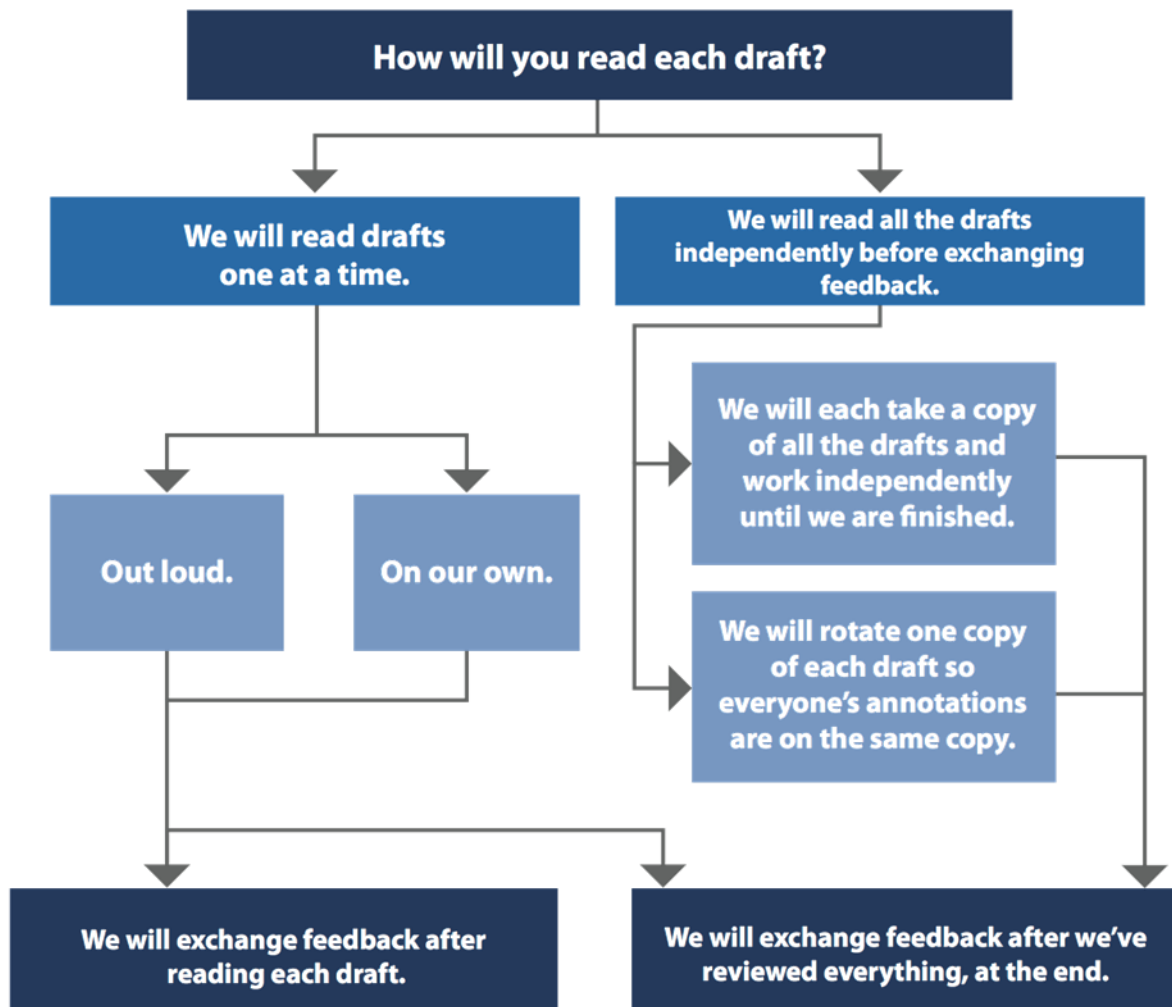
(a.) Choose the 3-5 descriptors of good feedback that are most important to the members of your group.

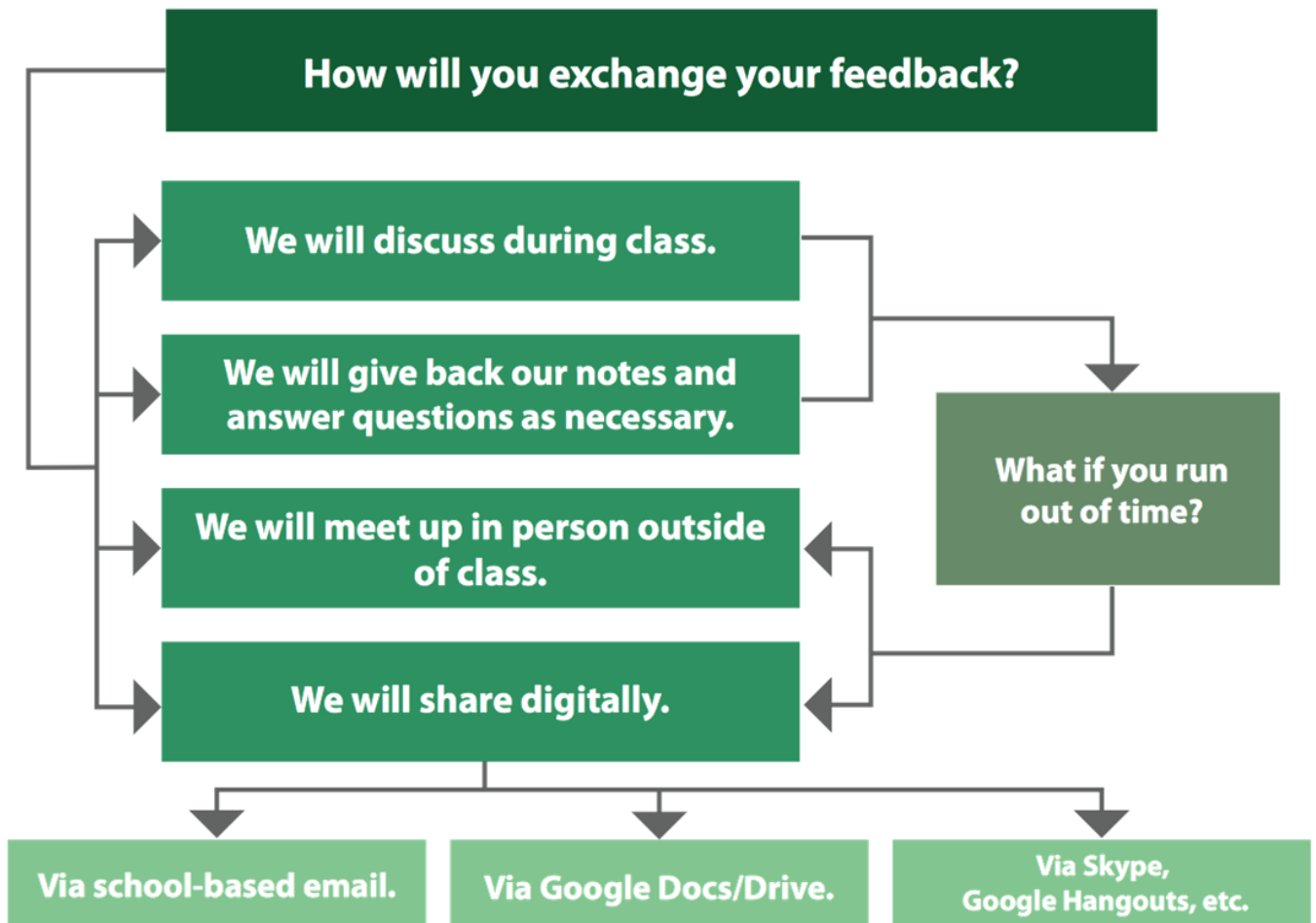
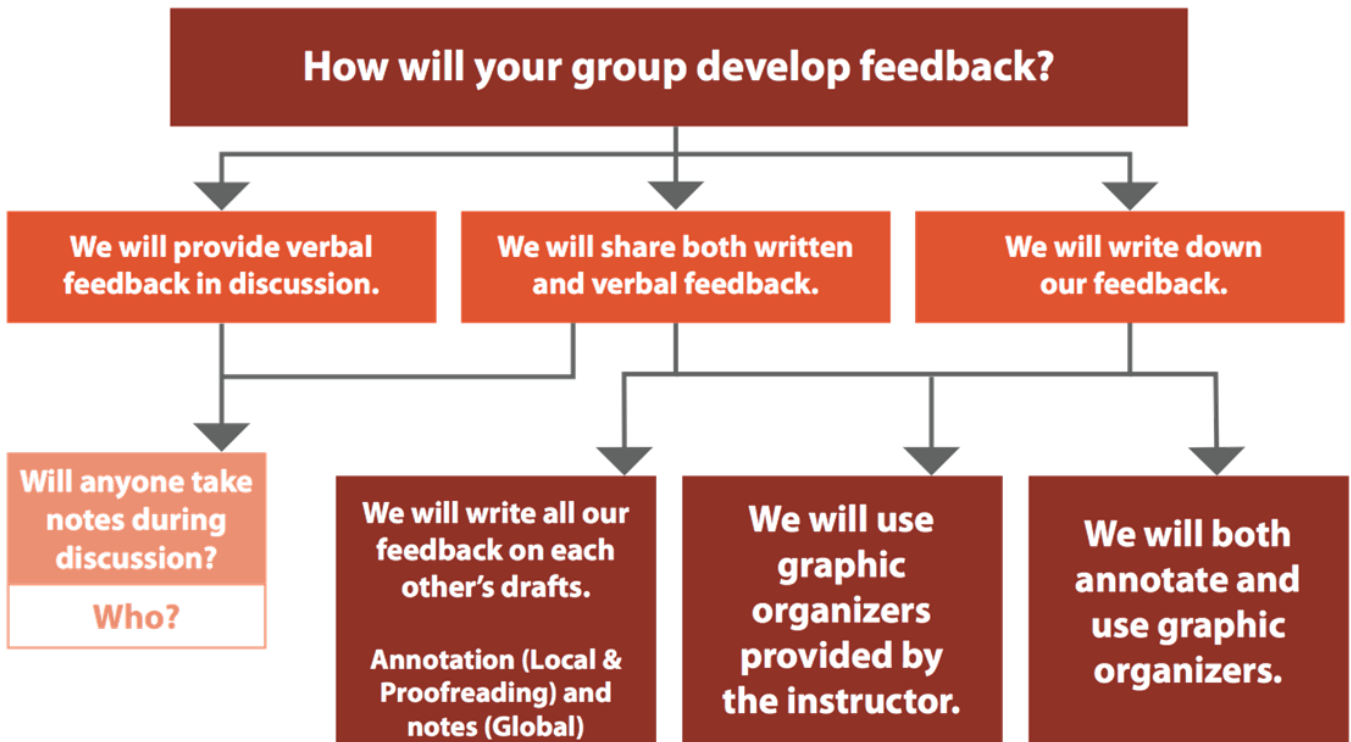
(b.) Discuss for 3-5 minutes: What do each of you need for this Peer Workshop to be effective?

FROM EACH OTHER? FROM THE INSTRUCTOR? FROM YOURSELVES? FROM YOUR ENVIRONMENT?

Record responses on a separate sheet of paper.

(2) Procedures for your Workshop





Global Revision Activity for a Narrative Essay

This assignment challenges you to try new approaches to a draft you've already written. Although you will be "rewriting" in this exercise, you are not abandoning your earlier draft: this exercise is generative, meaning it is designed to help you produce new details, ideas, or surprising bits of language that you might integrate into your project.

First, choose a part of your draft that (a) you really like but think could be better, or (b) just isn't working for you. This excerpt should be no fewer than 100 words and can include your entire essay, if you want.

Then, complete your choice of one prompt from the list below: apply the instruction to the excerpt to create new content. Read over your original once, but do not refer back to it after you start writing. Your goal here is to deviate from the first version, not reproduce it. The idea here is to produce something new about your topic through constraint; you are reimagining your excerpt on a global scale.

After completing one prompt, go back to the original and try at least one more, or apply a different prompt to your new work.

1. Change genres: For example, if your excerpt is written in typical essay form, try writing it as poetry, or dialogue from a play/movie, or a radio advertisement.
2. Zoom in: Focus on one image, color, idea, or word from your excerpt and zoom way in. Meditate on this one thing with as much detail as possible.
3. Zoom out: Step back from the excerpt and contextualize it with background information, concurrent events, information about relationship or feelings.
4. Change point-of-view: Try a new vantage point for your story by changing pronouns and perspective. For instance, if your excerpt is in first-person (I/me), switch to second- (you) or third-person (he/she/they).
5. Change setting: Resituate your excerpt in a different place, or time.
6. Change your audience: Rewrite the excerpt anticipating the expectations of a different reader than you first intended. For example, if the original excerpt is in the same speaking voice you would use with your friends, write as if your strictest teacher or the president or your grandmother is reading it. If you've written in an "academic" voice, try writing for your closest friend—use slang, swear words, casual language, whatever.
7. Add another voice: Instead of just the speaker of the essay narrating, add a listener. This listener can agree, disagree, question, heckle, sympathize, apologize, or respond in any other way you can imagine. (See "the nay-sayer's voice" in Chapter Nine.)
8. Change timeline (narrative sequence): Instead of moving chronologically forward, rearrange the events to bounce around.

9. Change tense: Narrate from a different vantage point by changing the grammar. For example, instead of writing in past tense, write in present or future tense.
10. Change tone: Reimagine your writing in a different emotional register. For instance, if your writing is predominantly nostalgic, try a bitter tone. If you seem regretful, try to write as if you were proud.

Reverse Outlining

Have you ever written an outline before writing a draft? It can be a useful pre-writing strategy, but it doesn't work for all writers. If you're like me, you prefer to brain-dump a bunch of ideas on the paper, then come back to organize and refocus during the revision process. One strategy that can help you here is reverse outlining.

Divide a blank piece of paper into three columns, as demonstrated below. Number each paragraph of your draft, and write an equal numbered list down the left column of your blank piece of paper. Write "Idea" at the top of the middle column and "Purpose" at the top of the right column.

¶	Idea (What is the ¶ saying?)	Purpose (What is the ¶ doing?)
1		
2		
3		
4...		

Now, wade back through your essay, identifying what each paragraph is saying and what each paragraph is doing. Choose a few key words or phrases for each column to record on your sheet of paper.

- Try to use consistent language throughout the reverse outline so you can see where your paragraphs are saying or doing similar things.
- A paragraph might have too many different ideas or too many different functions for you to concisely identify. This could be a sign that you need to divide that paragraph up.

Here's a student's model reverse outline

¶	Idea (What is the ¶ saying?)	Purpose (What is the ¶ doing?)

1	Theatre is an important part of education and childhood development	Setting up and providing thesis statement
2	There have been many changes in recent history to public education in the United States	Providing context for thesis
3	Theatre programs in public schools have been on the decline over the past two decades	Providing context and giving urgency to the topic
4	a) Theatre has social/emotional benefits b) Theatre has academic benefits	Supporting and explaining thesis
5	a) Acknowledge argument in favor of standardized testing b) STEAM curriculum incorporates arts education into other academic subjects	Disarming audience, proposing a solution to underfunded arts programs
6	Socioeconomic inequality is also an obstacle to theatre education	Acknowledging broader scope of topic
7	Looking forward at public education reform, we should incorporate theatre into public education	Call to action, backing up and restating thesis

Reverse outline by Jacob Alexander, Portland Community College, 2018.

But wait—there's more!

Once you have identified the idea(s) and purpose(s) of each paragraph, you can start revising according to your observations. From the completed reverse outline, create a new outline with a different sequence, organization, focus, or balance. You can reorganize by

- combining or dividing paragraphs,
- re-arranging ideas, and
- adding or subtracting content.

Reverse outlining can also be helpful in identifying gaps and redundancies: now that you have a new outline, do any of your ideas seem too brief? Do you need more evidence for a certain argument? Do you see ideas repeated more than necessary?

After completing the reverse outline above, the student proposed this new organization:

Proposed changes based on reverse outline:
1
4a
4b
Combine 2 and 5a
Combine 3 and 6
5b
Write new paragraph on other solutions
7

by Jacob Alexander, Portland Community College, 2018.

You might note that this strategy can also be applied on the sentence and section level. Additionally, if you are a kinesthetic or visual learner, you might cut your paper into smaller pieces that you can physically manipulate.

Be sure to read aloud after reverse outlining to look for abrupt transitions.

You can see a simplified version of this technique demonstrated in [this video](#).

Local Revision Activity:

Cutting Fluff

When it's late at night, the deadline is approaching, and we've simply run out of things to say... we turn to **fluff**. Fluff refers to language which doesn't do work for you—language that simply takes up space or sits flat on the page, rather than working economically and impactfully. Whether or not you've used it deliberately, all authors have been guilty of fluffy writing at one time or another.

Fluff happens for a lot of reasons.

- Of course, reaching a word- or page-count is the most common motivation.
- Introductions and conclusions are often fluffy because the author can't find a way into or out of the subject, or because the author doesn't know what their exact subject will be.

- Sometimes, the presence of fluff is an indication that the author doesn't know enough about the subject or that their scope is too broad.
- Other times, fluffy language is deployed in an effort to sound "smarter" or "fancier" or "more academic"—which is an understandable pitfall for developing writers.

These circumstances, plus others, encourage us to use language that's not as effective, authentic, or economical. Fluff happens in a lot of ways; here are a few I've noticed:

<i>Thesaurus Syndrome</i>	A writer uses inappropriately complex language (often because of the right-click → Synonyms function) to achieve a different tone. The more complex language might be used inaccurately or sound inauthentic because the author isn't as familiar with it.
<i>Roundabout phrasing</i>	Rather than making a direct statement ("That man is a fool."), the author uses couching language or beats around the bush ("If one takes into account each event, each decision, it would not be unwise for one to suggest that that man's behaviors are what some would call foolish.")
<i>Abstraction or generalities</i>	If the author hasn't quite figured out what they want to say or has a too broad of a scope, they might discuss an issue very generally without committing to specific, engaging details.
<i>Digression</i>	An author might get off topic, accidentally or deliberately, creating extraneous, irrelevant, or unconnected language.
<i>Ornamentation or flowery language</i>	Similarly to Thesaurus Syndrome, often referred to as "purple prose," an author might choose words that sound pretty or smart, but aren't necessarily the right words for their ideas.
<i>Wordy sentences</i>	Even if the sentences an author creates are grammatically correct, they might be wordier than necessary.

Of course, there's a very fine line between detail and fluff. Avoiding fluff doesn't mean always using the fewest words possible. Instead, you should occasionally ask yourself in the revision

process, *How is this part contributing to the whole? Is this somehow building toward a bigger purpose?* If the answer is no, then you need to revise.

The goal should not necessarily be “Don’t write fluff,” but rather “Learn to get rid of fluff in revision.” In light of our focus on process, you are allowed to write fluff in the drafting period, so long as you learn to “prune” during revisions. (I use the word “prune” as an analogy for caring for a plant: just as you must cut the dead leaves off for the plant’s health and growth, you will need to cut fluff so your writing can thrive.)

Here are a few strategies:

- Read out loud,
- Ask yourself what a sentence is doing, rhetorically,
- Combine like sentences, phrases, or ideas,
- Use signposts, like topic-transition sentences (for yourself during revision and for your reader in the final draft), and
- Be specific—stay cognizant of your scope (globally) and the detail of your writing (locally).

To practice revising for fluff, workshop the following excerpt by yourself or with a partner. Your goal is not to cut back to the smallest number of words, but rather to prune out what you consider to be fluff and leave what you consider to be detail. You should be able to explain the choices you make.

There was a time long before today when an event occurred involving a young woman who was known to the world as Goldilocks. On the particular day at hand, Goldilocks made a spontaneous decision to wander through the forest, the trees growing up high above her flowing blonde pigtails. Some time after she commenced her voyage, but not after too long, she saw sitting on the horizon a small residency. Goldilocks rapped her knuckles on the door, but alas, no one answered the door. Therefore, Goldilocks decided that it would be a good idea to enter the unattended house, so she entered it. Atop the average-sized table in the kitchen of the house, there were three bowls of porridge, which is similar to oatmeal. Porridge is a very common dish in Europe; in fact, the Queen of England is well-known for enjoying at least one daily bowl of porridge per day. Goldilocks, not unlike the Queen of England, enjoys eating porridge for its nutritional value. On this day, she was feeling quite hungry and wanted to eat. She decided that she should taste one of the three bowls of porridge, from which steam was rising indicating

its temperature. But, because she apparently couldn't tell, she imbibed a spoonful of the porridge and vocalized the fact that the porridge was of too high a temperature for her to masticate and consume: "This porridge is too hot!"

Engaged Reading Strategies

There are a lot of ways to become a better writer, but the best way I know is to read a lot. Why? Not only does attentive reading help you understand grammar and mechanics more intuitively, but it also allows you to develop your personal voice and critical worldviews more deliberately. By encountering a diversity of styles, voices, and perspectives, you are likely to identify the ideas and techniques that resonate with you; while your voice is distinctly *yours*, it is also a unique synthesis of all the other voices you've been exposed to.



But it is important to acknowledge that the *way* we read matters. At some point in your academic career, you've probably encountered the terms "**active reading**" or "**critical reading.**" But what exactly does active reading entail?

It begins with an acknowledgment that reading, like writing, is a process: active reading is complex, iterative, and recursive, consisting of a variety of different cognitive actions. Furthermore, we must recognize that the reading process can be approached many different ways, based on our backgrounds, strengths, and purposes.

However, many people don't realize that there's more than one way to read; our early training as readers fosters a very narrow vision of critical literacy. For many generations in many cultures across the world, developing reading ability has generally trended toward efficiency and comprehension of main ideas. Your family, teachers, and other folks who taught you to read trained you to read in particular ways. Most often, novice readers are encouraged to ignore detail and nuance in the name of focus: details are distracting. Those readers also tend to project their assumptions on a text. This practice, while useful for global understanding of a text, is only *one* way to approach reading; by itself, it does not constitute "engaged reading."

In her landmark article on close reading, Jane Gallop explains that ignoring details while reading is effective, but also problematic:

When the reader concentrates on the familiar, she is reassured that what she already knows is sufficient in relation to this new book. Focusing on the surprising, on the other

hand, would mean giving up the comfort of the familiar, of the already known for the sake of learning, of encountering something new, something she didn't already know.

In fact, this all has to do with learning. Learning is very difficult; it takes a lot of effort. It is of course much easier if once we learn something we can apply what we have learned again and again. It is much more difficult if every time we confront something new, we have to learn something new.

Reading what one expects to find means finding what one already knows. Learning, on the other hand, means coming to know something one did not know before. Projecting is the opposite of learning. As long as we project onto a text, we cannot learn from it, we can only find what we already know. Close reading is thus a technique to make us learn, to make us see what we don't already know, rather than transforming the new into the old (Gallop 11).

To be engaged readers, we must avoid projecting our preconceived notions onto a text. To achieve deep, complex understanding, we must consciously attend to a text using a variety of strategies.

The following strategies are implemented by all kinds of critical readers; some readers even use a combination of these strategies. Like the writing process, though, active reading looks different for everyone. These strategies work really well for some people, but not for others: I encourage you to experiment with them, as well as others not covered here, to figure out what *your* ideal critical reading process looks like.

Vocabulary

annotation—engaged reading strategy by which a reader marks up a text with their notes, questions, new vocabulary, ideas, and emphases.

critical/active reading—also referred to in this text as engaged reading, a set of strategies and concepts to interrupt projection and focus on a text.

SQ3R—an engaged reading strategy to improve comprehension and interrupt projection.
Survey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite, **R**evue.

Annotation

Annotation is the most common and one of the most useful engaged reading strategies. You might know it better as “marking up” a text. Annotating a reading is visual evidence to your teacher that you read something—but more importantly, it allows you to focus on the text itself by asking questions and making notes to yourself to spark your memory later.

Take a look at the sample annotation on the next page. Note that the reader here is doing several different things:

Underlining important words, phrases, and sentences.

Many studies have shown that underlining or highlighting alone does not improve comprehension or recall; however, limited underlining can draw your eye back to curious phrases as you re-read, discuss, or analyze a text.

Writing marginal notes.

Even though you can't fit complex ideas in the margins, you can:

- use keywords to spark your memory,
- track your reactions,
- remind yourself where an important argument is,
- define unfamiliar words,
- draw illustrations to think through an image or idea visually, or
- make connections to other texts.

In addition to taking notes directly on the text itself, you might also write a brief summary with any white space left on the page. As we learned in Chapter Two, summarizing will help you process information, ensure that you understand what you've read, and make choices about which elements of the text to focus on.

For a more guided process for annotating an argument, follow these steps:

Most “kits” that you find in novelty stores give you materials and instructions about how to construct an object: a model plane, a bicycle, a dollhouse. This kit asks you to *deconstruct* one of our readings, identifying its thesis, breaking down its argument, and calling attention to the

definition - the act of saying farewell

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" → Why would a goodbye, especially to someone who has died, forbid mourning?

As virtuous men pass mildly away, A
And whisper to their souls to go, B } Reminds me of Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night"

Whilst some of their sad friends do say A
The breath goes now, and some say, No: B

So let us melt, and make no noise, C
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move; D } - no crying/no mourning WEATHER IMAGERY

'Twere profanation of our joys C
To tell the laity our love. D

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears, E
Men reckon what it did, and meant; F
But trepidation of the spheres, E
Though greater far, is innocent. F

Dull sublunary lovers' love G } definition - fear, hesitation; or trembling, shaking
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit H } definition: below man/from Earth
Absence, because it doth remove G
Those things which elemented it. H

But we by a love so much refined, I } Name/quality/love and attached to the world of sense/logic
That our selves know not what it is, J
Inter-assured of the mind, I
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss. J

Our two souls therefore, which are one, K } Sputer invasion, i.e., Like gold hammered into airy thinness
Though I must go, endure not yet L } SIMPLE
A breach, but an expansion, K } Like gold hammered into airy thinness
Like gold to airy thinness beat. L

If they be two, they are two so A
As stiff twin compasses are two; M
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show A
To move, but doth, if the other do. M

And though it in the center sit, N
Yet when the other far doth roam, N (A/slit)
It leans and hearkens after it, N
And grows erect, as that comes home. N (A/slit)

Such wilt thou be to me, who must, O
Like th' other foot, obliquely run; P
Thy firmness makes my circle just, O
And makes me end where I begun. P

CONCEPT

compass, like the tool used to draw circles

reliance on one another

attached but separate

orbit, like planet imagery above

ways it supports its ideas. Dissecting a text is no easy task, and this assignment is designed to help you understand the logic and rhetoric behind what you just read.

Print out a clean copy of the text and annotate it as follows:

1. **With a black pen, underline the writer's thesis.** If you think the thesis occurs over several sentences, underline all of them. If you think the text has an implicit (present but unstated) thesis, underline the section that comes closest to being the thesis and *rewrite* it as a thesis in the margins of the paper.
2. **With a different color pen, underline the "steps" of the argument. In the margins of the paper, paraphrase those steps and say whether or not you agree with them.** To figure out the steps of the argument, ask: What was the author's thesis? What ideas did they *need* to talk about to support that thesis? Where and how does each paragraph discuss those ideas? Do you agree with those ideas?
3. **With a different color pen, put [brackets] around any key terms or difficult concepts that the author uses, and define those terms in the margins of the paper.**
4. **With a different color pen, describe the writer's *persona* at the top of the first page.** What kind of person is "speaking" the essay? What kind of expertise do they have? What kind of vocabulary do they use? How do they treat their intended audiences, or what do they assume about you, the reader?
5. **Using a highlighter, identify any rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos). In the margins, explain *how* the passage works as an appeal.** Ask: *What* is the passage asking you to buy into? *How* does it prompt me to reason (logos), feel (pathos), or believe (ethos)?
6. **At the end of the text, and in any color pen, write any questions or comments or questions *you* have for the author.** What strikes you as interesting/odd/infuriating/insightful about the argument? Why? What do you think the author has yet to discuss, either unconsciously or purposely?

For a more guided process for annotating a short story or memoir, follow these steps:

This activity was developed by Brian Gazaille, University of Oregon, 2018. Reproduced with permission of the author.

Print out a clean copy of the text and annotate it as follows:

1. In one color, chart the story's **plot**. Identify these elements in the margins of the text by writing the appropriate term next to the corresponding part[s] of the story. (Alternatively, draw a chart on a separate piece of paper.) Your plot chart must include the following terms: **exposition, rising action, crisis, climax, falling action, dénouement**.
2. At the top of the first page, identify the story's **point of view** as fully as possible. (Who is telling the story? What kind of narration is given?) In the margins, identify any sections of text in which the narrator's position/intrusion becomes significant.
3. Identify your story's **protagonist** and highlight sections of text that supply **character description or motivation**, labeling them in the margins. In a different color, do the same for the **antagonist(s)** of the story.
4. Highlight (in a different color) sections of the text that describe the story's **setting**. Remember, this can include place, time, weather, and atmosphere. Briefly discuss the significance of the setting, where appropriate.
5. With a different color, identify key uses of figurative language—**metaphors, similes, and personifications**—by [bracketing] that section of text and writing the appropriate term.
6. In the margins, identify two distinctive **lexicons** ("word themes" or kinds of vocabulary) at work in your story. Highlight (with new colors) instances of those lexicons.
7. Annotate the story with any comments or questions *you* have. What strikes you as interesting? Odd? Why? What makes you want to talk back? Does any part of the text remind you of something else you've read or seen? Why?

SQ₃R

This is far and away the most underrated engaged reading strategy I know: the few students I've had who know about it swear by it.

The SQ₃R (or SQRRR) strategy has five steps:

Survey (or Skim): Get a general idea of the text to prime your brain for new information. Look over the entire text, keeping an eye out for bolded terms, section headings, the "key" thesis or argument, and other elements that jump out at you. An efficient and effective way to skim is by looking at the *first* and *last* sentences of each paragraph.

Question: After a quick overview, bring yourself into curiosity mode by developing a few questions about the text. Developing questions is a good way to keep yourself engaged, and it will guide your reading as you proceed.

- What do you anticipate about the ideas contained in the text?
- What sort of biases or preoccupations do you think the text will reflect?

Read: Next, you should read the text closely and thoroughly, using other engaged reading strategies you've learned.

- Annotate the text: underline/highlight important passages and make notes to yourself in the margins.
- Record vocabulary words you don't recognize.
- Pause every few paragraphs to check in with yourself and make sure you're confident about what you just read.
- Take notes on a separate page as you see fit.

Recite: As you're reading, take small breaks to talk to yourself aloud about the ideas and information you're processing. I know this seems childish, but self-talk is actually really important and really effective. (It's only as adolescents that we develop this aversion to talking to ourselves because it's frowned upon socially.) If you feel uncomfortable talking to yourself, try to find a willing second party—a friend, roommate, classmate, significant other, family member, etc.—who will listen. If you have a classmate with the same reading assignment, practice this strategy collaboratively!

Review: When you're finished reading, spend a few minutes "wading" back through the text: not diving back in and re-reading, but getting ankle-deep to refresh yourself. Reflect on the ideas the text considered, information that surprised you, the questions that remain unanswered or new questions you have, and the text's potential use-value. The [Cornell note-taking system](#) recommends that you write a brief summary, but you can also free-write or talk through the main points that you remember. If you're working with a classmate, try verbally summarizing.

While reading

After reading

Double-Column Notes

This note-taking strategy seems very simple at first pass, but will help keep you organized as you interact with a reading.

<u>Notes & Quotes</u>	<u>Questions & Reactions</u>

Divide a clean sheet of paper into two columns; on the left, make a heading for “Notes and Quotes,” and on the right, “Questions and Reactions.” As you read and re-read, jot down important ideas and words from the text on the left, and record your intellectual and emotional reactions on the right. Be sure to ask prodding questions of the text along the way, too!

By utilizing both columns, you are reminding yourself to stay close to the text (left side) while also evaluating how that text acts on you (right side). This method strengthens the connection you build with a reading.

Increasing Reading Efficiency

Although reading speed is not the most important part of reading, we often find ourselves with too much to read and too little time. Especially when you’re working on an inquiry-based research project, you’ll encounter more texts than you could possibly have time to read thoroughly. Here are a few quick tips:

Encountering an Article in a Hurry:

1. Some articles, especially scholarly articles, have abstracts. An abstract is typically an overview of the discussion, interests, and findings of an article; it's a lot like a summary. Using the abstract, you can get a rough idea of the contents of an article and determine whether it's worth reading more closely.
2. Some articles will have a conclusion set off at the end of the article. Often, these conclusions will summarize the text and its main priorities. You can read the conclusion before reading the rest of the article to see if its final destination is compatible with yours.
3. If you're working on a computer with search-enabled article PDFs, webpages, or documents, use the "Find" function (Ctrl + F on a PC and ⌘ + F on a Mac) to locate keywords. It's possible that you know what you're looking for: use technology to get you there faster.

Encountering a Book in a Hurry:

Although print books are more difficult to speed-read, they are very valuable resources for a variety of reading and writing situations. To get a broad idea of a book's contents, try the following steps:

1. Check the Table of Contents and the Index. At the front and back of the book, respectively, these resources provide more key terms, ideas, and topics that may or may not seem relevant to your study.
2. If you've found something of interest in the Table of Contents and/or Index, turn to the chapter/section of interest. Read the first paragraph, the (approximate) middle two to three paragraphs, and the last paragraph. Anything catch your eye? (If not, it may be worth moving on.)
3. If the book has an introduction, read it: many books will develop their focus and conceptual frameworks in this section, allowing you to determine whether the text will be valuable for your purposes.
4. Finally, check out [this video](#) that has both practical tips to increase reading speed and conceptual reminders about the learning opportunities that reading creates.

Metacognition



Figure 8 & 2 "[Glaciers of Glacier Bay National Park.](#)" National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 12 March 2018,

Glaciers are known for their magnificently slow movement. To the naked eye, they appear to be giant sheets of ice; however, when observed over long periods of time, we can tell that they are actually rivers made of ice/

Despite their pace, though, glaciers are immensely powerful. You couldn't notice in the span of your own lifetime, but glaciers carve out deep valleys (like the one to the right) and grind the earth down to bedrock. Massive changes to the landscape and ecosystem take place over hundreds of thousands of years, making them difficult to observe from a human vantage point.



However, humans too are always changing, even within our brief lifetimes. No matter how stable our sense of self, we are constantly in a state of flux, perpetually changing as a result of our experiences and our context. Like with glaciers, we can observe change with the benefit of time; on the other hand, we might not perceive the specific ways in which we grow on a daily basis. When change is gradual, it is easy to overlook.

Particularly after challenging learning experiences, like those embraced by this textbook, it is crucial that you reflect on the impact those challenges had on your knowledge or skillsets, your worldviews, and your relationships.

Throughout your studies, I encourage you to occasionally pause to evaluate your progress, set new goals, and cement your recent learning. If nothing else, take 10 minutes once a month to free-write about where you were, where you are, and where you hope to be.

You may recognize some of these ideas from previous sections: indeed, what I'm talking about is the rhetorical gesture of reflection. Reflection is "looking back in order to look forward," a way of peering back through time to draw insight from an experience that will support you (and your audience) as you move into the future.

I would like to apply this concept in a different context, though: instead of reflecting on an experience that you have narrated, as you may have in Section 1, you will reflect on the progress you've made as a critical consumer and producer of rhetoric through a **metacognitive** reflection.

Simply put, metacognition means "thinking about thinking." For our purposes, though, metacognition means thinking about how thinking evolves. Reflection on your growth as a writer requires you to evaluate how your cognitive and rhetorical approaches have changed.



In this context, your metacognitive reflection can evaluate two distinct components of your learning:

- **Concepts that have impacted you:** New ideas or approaches to rhetoric or writing that have impacted the way you write, read, think, or understanding of the world.
 - Ex: Radical Noticing, Inquiry-Based Research
- **Skills that have impacted you:** Specific actions or techniques you can apply to your writing, reading, thinking, or understanding of the world.
 - Ex: Reverse Outlining, Imagery Inventory

Appendix C: Metacognition

Of course, because we are “looking back in order to look *forward*,” the concepts and skills that you identify should support a discussion of how those concepts and skills will impact your future with rhetoric, writing, the writing process, or thinking processes. Your progress to this point is important, but it should enable even more progress in the future.

Vocabulary

metacognition—literally, “thinking about thinking.” May also include how thinking evolves and reflection on growth.

Metacognitive Activities

There are a variety of ways to practice metacognition. The following activities will help you generate ideas for a metacognitive reflection. Additionally, though, a highly productive means of evaluating growth is to look back through work from earlier in your learning experience. Drafts, assignments, and notes documented your skills and understanding at a certain point in time, preserving an earlier version of you to contrast with your current position and abilities, like artifacts in a museum. In addition to the following activities, you should compare your current knowledge and skills to your previous efforts.

Writing Home from Camp

For this activity, you should write a letter to someone who is not affiliated with your learning community: a friend or family member who has nothing to do with your class or study of writing. Because they haven’t been in this course with you, imagine they don’t know anything about what we’ve studied.

Your purpose in the letter is to summarize your learning for an audience unfamiliar with the guiding concepts or skills encountered in your writing class. Try to boil down your class procedures, your own accomplishments, important ideas, memorable experiences, and so on.

Metacognitive Interview

With one or two partners, you will conduct an interview to generate ideas for your metacognitive reflection. You can also complete this activity independently, but there are a number of advantages to working collaboratively: your partner(s) may have ideas that you

hadn't thought of; you may find it easier to think out loud than on paper; and you will realize that many of your challenges have been shared.

During this exercise, one person should interview another, writing down answers while the interviewee speaks aloud. Although the interviewer can ask clarifying questions, the interviewee should talk most.



For each question, the interviewee should speak for 1-2 minutes. Then, for after 1-2 minutes, switch roles and respond to the same question. Alternate the role of interviewer and interviewee for each question such that every member gets 1-2 minutes to respond while the other member(s) takes notes.

After completing all of the questions, independently free-write for five minutes. You can make note of recurring themes, identify surprising ideas, and fill in responses that you didn't think of

at the time.

- What accomplishments are you proud of from this term—in this class, another class, or your non-academic life?
- What activities, assignments, or experiences from this course have been most memorable for you? Most important?
- What has surprised you this term—in a good way or a bad way?
- Which people in your learning community have been most helpful, supportive, or respectful?
- Has your perspective on writing, research, revision, (self-)education, or critical thinking changed this term? How so?
- What advice would you give to the beginning-of-the-term version of yourself?

Sample Reflective Texts by Student Authors

Model Metacognitive Reflection 1

I somehow ended up putting off taking this class until the very end of my college career. Thus, coming into it I figured that it would be a breeze because I'd already spent the past four years writing and refining my skills. What I quickly realized is that these skills have become extremely narrow; specifically focused in psychological research papers. Going through this

Appendix C: Metacognition

class has truly equipped me with the skills to be a better, more organized, and more diverse writer.

I feel that the idea generation and revision exercises that we did were most beneficial to my growth as a writer. Generally, when I have a paper that I have to write, I anxiously attempt to come up with things that I could write about in my head. I also organize said ideas into papers in my head; rarely conceptualizing them on paper. Instead I just come up with an idea in my head, think about how I'm going to write it, then I sit down and dive straight into the writing. Taking the time to really generate various ideas and free write about them not only made me realize how much I have to write about, but also helped me to choose the best topic for the paper that I had to write. I'm sure that there have been many times in the past when I have simply written a paper on the first idea that came to my mind when I likely could have written a better paper on something else if I really took the time to flesh different ideas out.

Sharing my thoughts, ideas, and writings with my peers and with you have been a truly rewarding experience. I realized through this process that I frequently assume my ideas aren't my comfort zone in this class and forced myself to present the ideas that I really wanted to talk about, even though I felt they weren't all that interesting. What I came to experience is that people were really interested in what I had to say and the topics in which I chose to speak about were both important and interesting. This class has made me realize how truly vulnerable the writing process is.

This class has equipped me with the skills to listen to my head and my heart when it comes to what I want to write about, but to also take time to generate multiple ideas. Further, I have realized the important of both personal and peer revision in the writing process. I've learned the importance of stepping away from a paper that you've been staring at for hours and that people generally admire vulnerability in writing.

Essay by an anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

Model Metacognitive Reflection 2

I entered class this term having written virtually nothing but short correspondence or technical documents for years. While I may have a decent grasp of grammar, reading anything I wrote was a slog. This class has helped me identify specific problems to improve my own

writing and redefine writing as a worthwhile process and study tool rather than just a product. It has also helped me see ulterior motives of a piece of writing to better judge a source or see intended manipulation.

This focus on communication and revision over perfection was an awakening for me. As I've been writing structured documents for years, I've been focusing on structure and grammatical correctness over creating interesting content or brainstorming and exploring new ideas. Our class discussions and the article "Shitty First Drafts" have taught me that writing is a process, not a product. The act of putting pen to paper and letting ideas flow out has value in itself, and while those ideas can be organized later for a product they should first be allowed to wander and be played with.

Another technique I first encountered in this class was that of the annotated bibliography. Initially this seemed only like extra work that may prove useful to a reader or a grader. After diving further into my own research however, it was an invaluable reference to organize my sources and guide the research itself. Not only did it provide a paraphrased library of my research, it also shined light on patterns in my sources that I would not have noticed otherwise. I've already started keeping my own paraphrased notes along with sources in other classes, and storing my sources together to maintain a personal library.

People also say my writing is dry, but I could never pin down the problem they were driving at. This class was my first exposure to the terms logos, ethos, and pathos, and being able to name and identify different styles of argumentation helped me realize that I almost exclusively use logos in my own writing. Awareness of these styles let me contrast my own writing with how extensively used paths and ethos are in most non-fiction writing found in books and news articles. I've noticed how providing example stories or posing questions can keep readers engaged while meaningfully introducing sources in the text, rather than as a parenthetical aside, improves the flow of writing and helps statements land with more authority.

As for narrative writing, I found the Global Revision Exercise for the first essay particularly interesting. To take a piece of writing and intentionally force a different voice or perspective on it showed how I can take improve a boring part of my paper by using a unique voice or style. This could be useful for expanding on reflective sections to evoke a particular feeling in the reader, or in conjunction with the Image Building Exercise to pull the reader into a specific moment.

Appendix C: Metacognition

This class was a requirement for me from which I didn't expect to gain much. English classes I have taken in the past focused on formulaic writing and grammar or vague literary analysis, and I expected more of the same. Ultimately, I was pleasantly surprised by the techniques covered which are immediately applicable in other classes and more concrete analysis of rhetoric which made the vague ideas touched on before reach a more tangible clarity.

Essay by Benjamin Duncan, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

Additional Recommended Resources

[“Students' Right to Their Own Language”](#) from NCTE’s Conference on College Composition and Communication

[“Revising Drafts”](#) by the Writing Center at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

[“I need you to say “I”: Why First Person Is Important in College Writing”](#) by Kate McKinney Maddalena

[“Annoying Ways People Use Sources”](#) by Kyle D. Stedman

[Your Logical Fallacy Is...](#)

“Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott from *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Anchor, pp 21-27.

“Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love” by Jim W. Corder

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/465760>

“The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters” by Jane Gallop

from *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, volume 16, issue 3, 2000, pp. 7-17.

[Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) (OWL) covers many aspects of academic and professional writing. Of particular interest for students of English 102 are the following webpages:

- [Research and Citation Resources](#)
- [MLA Style & Citation](#)
- [APA Style & Citation](#)
- [Chicago/Turabian Style & Citation](#)

[A Pocket Style Manual](#) (7th edition, 2016), edited by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers

[Conventions 101: A Functional Approach to Teaching \(and Assessing!\) Grammar and Punctuation](#) by Chauna Ramsey is a collection of cumulative units of study for conventional errors common in student writing.

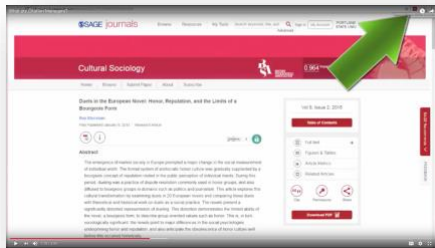
[Grammar Girl](#) by Mignon Fogarty is an excellent site for memorable lessons on grammar and writing.

[North Carolina State University Citation Builder](#)

Additional Recommended Resources

Citation Management Software

Overview Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCTizduU54o>



Zotero: <https://www.zotero.org/>

Mendeley: <https://www.mendeley.com/>

Glossary

Term	Definition
analysis	the cognitive process and/or rhetorical mode of studying constituent parts to demonstrate an interpretation of a larger whole.
annotated bibliography	a research tool that organizes citations with a brief paragraph for each source examined.
annotation	engaged reading strategy by which a reader marks up a text with their notes, questions, new vocabulary, ideas, and emphases.
argument	a rhetorical mode in which different perspectives on a common issue are negotiated. See Aristotelian and Rogerian arguments.
Aristotelian argument	a mode of argument by which a writer attempts to convince their audience that one perspective is accurate.
audience	the intended consumers for a piece of rhetoric. <i>Every</i> text has at least one audience; sometimes, that audience is directly addressed, and other times we have to infer.
authorial intent	the inferred or speculated intention of a writer. Must be overlooked in the process of text wrestling analysis.
believer	a posture from which to read; reader makes efforts to appreciate, understand, and agree with the text they encounter.
blockquote	a direct quote of more than four lines which is reformatted according to stylistic guidelines.
bootstrapping	the process of finding new sources using hyperlinked subject tags in the search results of a database.
call-to-action	a persuasive writer's directive to their audience; usually located toward the end of a text. Compare with purpose.
characterization	the process by which an author builds characters; can be accomplished directly or indirectly.
citation mining	the process of using a text's citations, bibliography, or notes to track down other similar or related sources.
claim of evaluation	an argument determining relative value (i.e., better, best, worse, worst). Requires informed judgment based on evidence and a consistent metric.

Glossary

claim of phenomenon	an argument exploring a measurable but arguable happening. Typically more straightforward than other claims, but should still be arguable and worth discussion.
claim of policy	an argument that proposes a plan of action to address an issue. Articulates a stance that requires action, often informed by understanding of both phenomenon and evaluation. Often uses the word “should.” See call-to-action.
close reading	a technique of reading that focuses attention on features of the text to construct an interpretation. (This is in contrast to interpretive methods that rely on research, historical context, biography, or speculation.)
complaint tradition	the recurring social phenomenon in which a generation complains about the way things have changed since their earlier years. Coined by Leonard Greenbaum.
confirmation bias	a cognitive bias by which a person seeks only ideas which confirm their existing worldview, thus convincing themselves that that worldview is universal and/or truthful.
connotation	the associated meanings of a word, phrase, or idea beyond its ‘dictionary’ definition; the complex, subjective, and dynamic meanings of a word, phrase, or idea the shift based on interpretive position. Contrast with denotation.
constraint-based writing	a writing technique by which an author tries to follow a rule or set of rules in order to create more experimental or surprising content, popularized by the Oulipo school of writers.
CRAAP Test	a technique for evaluating the credibility and use-value of a source; researcher considers the C urrency, R elevance, A ccuracy, A uthority, and P urpose of the source to determine if it is trustworthy and useful.
credibility	the degree to which a text—its content, its author, and/or its publisher—is trustworthy and accurate.
critical/active reading	also referred to in this text as “engaged reading,” a set of strategies and concepts to interrupt projection and focus on a text. See Appendix B: Engaged Reading Strategies.
defamiliarization	a method of reading, writing, and thinking that emphasizes the interruption of automatization. Established as “остранение” (“estrangement”) by Viktor Shklovsky, defamiliarization attempts to turn the everyday into the strange, eye-catching, or dramatic.
denotation	the dictionary definition of a word, phrase, or idea; the standard and objective meaning of a word, phrase, or idea which, theoretically, does not vary based on interpretive position. Contrast with connotation.

description	a rhetorical mode that emphasizes eye-catching, specific, and vivid portrayal of a subject. Often integrates imagery and thick description to this end.
dialogue	a communication between two or more people. Can include any mode of communication, including speech, texting, e-mail, Facebook post, body language, etc.
direct quote	the verbatim use of another author's words. Can be used as evidence to support your claim, or as language to analyze/close-read to demonstrate an interpretation or insight.
diegetic gap	from "diegesis," the temporal distance between a first-person narrator narrating and the same person acting in the plot events. I.e., the space between author-as-author and author-as-character.
doubter	a posture from which to read; reader makes efforts to challenge, critique, or undermine the text they encounter.
dynamic character	a character who noticeably changes within the scope of a narrative, typically as a result of the plot events and/or other characters. Contrast with static character.
epiphany	a character's sudden realization of a personal or universal truth. See dynamic character.
essay	a medium, typically nonfiction, by which an author can achieve a variety of purposes. Popularized by Michel de Montaigne as a method of discovery of knowledge: in the original French, "essay" is a verb that means "to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand."
ethnography	a study of a particular culture, subculture, or group of people. Uses thick description to explore a place and its associated culture.
ethos	a rhetorical appeal based on authority, credibility, or expertise.
evidence	a part or combination of parts that lends support or proof to an arguable topic, idea, or interpretation.
figurative language	language which implies a meaning that is not to be taken literally. Common examples include metaphor, simile, personification, onomatopoeia, and hyperbole.
flat character	a character who is minimally detailed, only briefly sketched or named. Generally less central to the events and relationships portrayed in a narrative. Contrast with round character.
fluff	uneconomical writing: filler language or unnecessarily wordy phrasing. Although fluff occurs in a variety of ways, it can be generally defined as words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that do not work hard to help you achieve your rhetorical purpose.

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genre	a specific category, subcategory, style, form, or medium (or combination of the above) of rhetoric. A genre may have a “generic imperative,” which is an expectation or set of expectations an audience holds for a particular genre of rhetoric; the foundational assumptions that particular genres carry.
imagery	sensory language; literal or figurative language that appeals to an audience’s imagined sense of sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste.
inquiry-based research	research and research writing that is motivated by questions, not by answers.
interpretation	the process of consuming rhetoric to create meaning. “An interpretation” refers to a specific meaning we build as we encounter a text, focusing on certain ideas, language, or patterns.
interpretive position	the unique position from which each of us interprets a text—necessarily different for all people at any given time, and often different for the same person at different times in their life. Impacted by your purpose, posture, lens, and background.
iterative	literally, a repetition within a process. The writing process is iterative because it is non-linear and because an author often has to repeat, revisit, or reapproach different steps along the way. Analysis is iterative because it requires repeated critical encounters with a text.
kairos	the setting (time and place) or atmosphere in which an argument is actionable or ideal. Consider alongside “occasion.”
lens	a metaphor for the conceptual framework a reader applies to an analysis. A “lens” brings certain elements into focus, allowing the reader to attend to specific parts of a text to develop an interpretation.
logical fallacy	a line of logical reasoning which follows a pattern of that makes an error in its basic structure. For example, <i>Kanye West is on TV; Animal Planet is on TV. Therefore, Kanye West is on Animal Planet.</i>
logos	a rhetorical appeal to logical reasoning.
medium	the channel, technology, or form through which rhetoric is constructed and communicated. Different rhetorical situations value different media, and different media value different kinds of rhetoric.
metacognition	literally, “thinking about thinking.” May also include how thinking evolves and reflection on growth.
mode	the style and techniques employed by of a piece of rhetoric to achieve its purpose. Different rhetorical situations value different

	modes, and different modes value different kinds of rhetoric. Compare to genre.
mood	the emotional dimension which a reader experiences while encountering a text. Compare with tone.
motif	a recurring image or phrase that helps convey a theme. Similar to a symbol, but the relationship between symbol and symbolized is more one-to-one than between motif and theme.
multimedia / multigenre	a term describing a text that combines more than one media and/or more than one genre (e.g., an essay with embedded images; a portfolio with essays, poetry, and comic strips; a mixtape with song reviews).
multipartial	a neologism from 'impartial,' refers to occupying and appreciating a variety of perspectives rather than pretending to have no perspective. Rather than unbiased or neutral, multipartial writers are balanced, acknowledging and respecting many different ideas.
narration	a rhetorical mode involving the construction and relation of stories. Typically integrates description as a technique.
narrative pacing	the speed with which a story progresses through plot events. Can be influenced by reflective and descriptive writing.
narrative scope	the boundaries of a narrative in time, space, perspective, and focus.
narrative sequence	the order of events included in a narrative.
the naysayer's voice	a voice that disagrees with the writer or speaker included within the text itself. Can be literal or imaginary. Helps author respond to criticism, transition between ideas, and manage argumentation.
occasion	the sociohistorical circumstances that prompt the production of a piece of rhetoric, determined by personal experiences, current events, language, and culture. Every text has an occasion.
ongoing conversation	an analogy for the network of discourse surrounding a topic, issue, or idea. Adopted from Kenneth Burke.
paraphrase	author reiterates a main idea, argument, or detail of a text in their own words without drastically altering the length of the passage(s) they paraphrase. Contrast with summary.
<i>pathos</i>	a rhetorical appeal to emotion.
pattern	a notable sequence; structure or shape; recurring image, word, or phrase found in a piece of rhetoric.
plot	the events included within the scope of a narrative.

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point-of-view	the perspective from which a story is told, determining both grammar (pronouns) and perspective (speaker's awareness of events, thoughts, and circumstances).
primacy effect	a psychological effect experienced by most audiences: the opening statements of a text are more memorable than much of the content because they leave a 'first impression' in the audience's memory. See recency effect.
process	a complex and multifaceted sequence that results in a product. As applied in "writing process," non-linear and iterative. Contrast with product.
product	the end result of a creative process. Often shows little evidence of the process that created it.
projection	an automatized method of reading and encountering the world by which a person allows their current assumptions to determine the content and nature of their encounters. Contradicts genuine learning. See confirmation bias. Adopted from Jane Gallop.
purpose	the intended result of a piece of rhetoric. Can be stated using an infinitive verb phrase ("to entertain," "to persuade," "to explain"). Every text has at least one purpose, sometimes declared explicitly, and other times implied or hidden.
recency effect	a psychological effect experienced by most audiences: the concluding statements of a text are more memorable than much of the content because they are more recent in the audience's memory. See primacy effect.
reference	a connection a text makes to another text. Can be explicit or implicit; might include allusion, allegory, quotation, or parody. Referencing text adopts some characteristics of the referenced text.
reflection	a rhetorical gesture by which an author looks back, through the diegetic gap, to demonstrate knowledge or understanding gained from the subject on which they are reflecting. May also include consideration of the impact of that past subject on the author's future—"Looking back in order to look forward."

research question/path of inquiry	a question, series of questions, or inquisitive topic that guides an inquiry-based research project.
response	a mode of writing that values the reader's experience of and reactions to a text. Should also unpack what parts of the text contribute to that experience in an effort to practice analytical thinking.
revision	<p>the iterative process of changing a piece of writing. Literally, revision: seeing your writing with "fresh eyes" in order to improve it. Includes changes on Global, Local, and Proofreading levels. Changes might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rewriting (trying again, perhaps from a different angle or with a different focus) • adding (new information, new ideas, new evidence) • subtracting (unrelated ideas, redundant information, fluff) • rearranging (finding more effective vectors or sequences of organization) • switching out (changing words or phrases, substituting different evidence) • mechanical clean-up (standardizing punctuation, grammar, or formatting)
rhetoric	<p>a combination of textual strategies designed* to do something to someone. In other words, 'rhetoric' refers to language, video, images, or other symbols (or some combination of these) that informs, entertains, persuades, compels, or otherwise impacts an audience.</p> <p>* Note: whether or not a text is <i>deliberately</i> designed to achieve a purpose, it will still have an impact. See authorial intent.</p>
rhetorical appeal	a means by which a writer or speaker connects with their audience to achieve their purpose. Most commonly refers to <i>logos</i> , <i>pathos</i> , and <i>ethos</i> .
rhetorical situation	the circumstances in which rhetoric is produced, understood using the constituent elements of subject, occasion, audience, and purpose. Each element of the rhetorical situation carries assumptions and imperatives about the kind of rhetoric that will be

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	well received. Rhetorical situation will also influence mode and medium.
Rogierian argument	a mode of argument by which an author seeks compromise by bringing different perspectives on an issue into conversation. Acknowledges that no one perspective is absolutely and exclusively 'right'; values disagreement in order to make moral, political, and practical decisions.
round character	a character who is thoroughly characterized and dimensional, detailed with attentive description of their traits and behaviors. Contrast with flat character.
signpost	a phrase or sentence that directs your reader. It can help you make connections, guide your reader's interpretation, ease transitions, and re-orient you to your thesis. Also known as a "signal phrase."
SQ3R	an engaged reading strategy to improve comprehension and interrupt projection. S urvey, Q uestion, R ead, R ecite, R evue.
stakes	the potential value or consequence of an exploration or argument; what stands to be gained from investigation of a subject or advocacy for a position. Consider also "stakeholders," the people or institutions that stand to gain from the outcome of an investigation or argument.
static character	a character who remains the same throughout the narrative. Contrast with dynamic character.
subject	the topic, focus, argument, or idea explored in a text
summary	a rhetorical mode in which an author reiterates the main ideas, arguments, and details of a text in their own words, condensing a longer text into a smaller version. Contrast with paraphrase.
syllogism	a line of logical reasoning similar to the transitive property (If $a=b$ and $b=c$, then $a=c$). For example, <i>All humans need oxygen; Kanye West is a human. Therefore, Kanye West needs oxygen.</i>
symbol	an artifact (usually something concrete) that stands in for (represents) something else (often something abstract).
synthesis	a cognitive and rhetorical process by which an author brings together parts of a larger whole to create a unique new product. Examples of synthesis might include an analytical essay, found poetry, or a mashup/remix.
text	any artifact through which a message is communicated. Can be written or spoken; digital, printed, or undocumented; video, image, or language. Every text is rhetorical in nature. See rhetoric.
text wrestling	a rhetorical mode in which an author analyzes a text using close reading, then presents an interpretation supported by evidence from the text.

thesis (statement)	a 1-3 sentence statement outlining the main insight(s), argument(s), or concern(s) of an essay; not necessary in every rhetorical situation; typically found at the beginning of an essay, though sometimes embedded later in the paper. Also referred to as a "So what?" statement.
thick description	economical and deliberate language which attempts to capture complex subjects (like cultures, people, or environments) in written or spoken language. Coined by anthropologists Clifford Geertz and Gilbert Ryle.
tone	the emotional register of the text. Compare with mood.
use-value	the degree to which a text is usable for your specific project. A source is not inherently good or bad, but rather useful or not useful. Use-value is influenced by many factors, including credibility. See credibility and CRAAP Test.

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