

Writing Rhetorically: Framing First Year Writing

WRITING RHETORICALLY: FRAMING FIRST YEAR WRITING

Framing First-Year Writing

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LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network



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This textbook has been heavily adapted from material taken from [English Composition I: Rhetorical Methods-Based](#), an OER developed and authored by Lumen Learning. Each chapter's author has edited and created new content using Lumen Learning's text as its primary source material, except where otherwise indicated. Where applicable, other source materials have been noted at the chapter level.

CONTENTS

About This Book	xi
Introduction	1
Adaptation Statement	3

Course Contents and Syllabus

Course Contents at a Glance	7
English Composition I Syllabus and Course Policies	10

Major Writing Assignments, Student Worksheets, and Rubrics

Rubric: Discussion Questions and Your Turn Exercises	19
Assignment: Narrative and Description	20
Student Worksheet: Narrative and Description	26
Assignment: Definition and Exemplification	28
Student Worksheet: Definition and Exemplification	34
Assignment: Compare and Evaluate	36
Student Worksheet: Compare and Evaluate	39
Assignment: Cause-Effect and Argument	41
Student Worksheet: Cause-Effect and Argument	44

Chapter 1: Invention

Invention	49
Kirk Fontenot	

Chapter 2: Arrangement

Arrangement	57
Wanda M. Waller	

Chapter 3: Drafting and Revising

Drafting and Revising	65
Will Rogers	

Chapter 4: Editing and Proofreading

Editing and Proofreading	75
Shelly Rodrigue	

Chapter 5: Narrative

Narrative	83
Shelly Rodrigue	

Chapter 6: Description

Description	95
Shelly Rodrigue	

Chapter 7: Definition

Definition	105
Kirk Fontenot	
Video: Thesis Explained	120
Effective Thesis Statements	121

Chapter 8: Illustration/Example

Illustration/Example	127
Kirk Fontenot	

Chapter 9: Compare/Contrast

Compare/Contrast	145
Will Rogers	

Chapter 10: Evaluation

Evaluation	161
Will Rogers	

Chapter 11: Cause and Effect

Cause and Effect	177
Wanda M. Waller	

Chapter 12: Argument

Argument	191
Wanda M. Waller	

Chapter 13: MLA Research and Citation

MLA Research and Citation	205
Kirk Fontenot	

Chapter 14: Grammar and Mechanics Mini-Lessons

Grammar and Mechanics Mini-Lessons	219
Mini-Lesson: Subjects and Verbs, Irregular Verbs, Subject-Verb Agreement	220
Mini-Lesson: Sentence Types	221
Mini-Lesson: Fragments I	222
Mini-Lesson: Run-ons and Comma Splices I	223
Mini-Lesson: Comma Usage	225
Mini-Lesson: Parallelism	226
Mini-Lesson: The Apostrophe	227
Mini-Lesson: Capital Letters	228
Grammar Practice: Interactive Quizzes	229
De Copia: Demonstration of the Variety of Language	230
Style Exercise: Voice	232

Appendix A: Checklist for Accessibility	233
Glossary	236

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This writing course is built around four major writing assignments in order to introduce students to some of the basic writing skills necessary for success in college. Each paper asks students to focus on two different but complementary rhetorical modes of writing. Another way to say this is that this book helps students master a set of standard moves that are vital to critical inquiry at the college level. As you begin your college careers, you will need to develop and become fluent in certain essential intellectual tasks that are central to sophisticated inquiry into complex questions. Perhaps more than any other introductory course you take, this class will help you no matter what your major is because it teaches you the building blocks of academic writing. Equally important, it gives you a chance to get some practice with using those building blocks. As you move through your undergraduate classes, you will continue to use these and other building blocks or tools to meet the intellectual challenges that you will encounter as part of your curriculum.

The first paper asks you to pay attention to the descriptive language you choose to communicate in one of the most basic structures of human thought: narrative. From there, the second paper asks you to think about a more focused task in which you explain a complex term or concept and support your explanation with illustrations or examples. Both papers give you experience thinking about sequence, language, and abstract ideas. In addition to this, they prepare you to execute more complex tasks, tasks that highlight the challenging practice of analysis, or breaking things into parts and finding different relationships between those parts.

In the evaluate and compare paper, you will identify criteria (individual traits) that you'll use to assess two different things and determine the relative merits and weaknesses of each. Not only is this a skill you'll need for college, but it's one you'll need for the rest of your life. (How else will you be able to decide which smartphone is best for you?)

Your final paper asks you to describe and make an argument about a cause-and-effect relationship that you see somewhere in the world. Another project that asks you to undertake at least two complex intellectual tasks, this paper incorporates pieces of all the papers in the class that have led up to it. Not only does this final assignment ask you to think abstractly about concrete things; it asks you to learn new analytical maneuvers and practice others that you developed earlier in the semester.

In addition to chapters on each of these eight different rhetorical modes, this textbook also includes four chapters that will coach you through the writing process as something that doesn't just happen overnight. (Well, it's not supposed to happen overnight, at least.) As you work on each major paper, you will have a chance to think about each of the different stages of the writing process. By thinking about writing as a process with clearly defined stages and concrete goals for each stage, you'll develop a chronological understanding of how to write a paper by following a set of predetermined steps. This is faster and more efficient than muddling through a chaotic, unfocused wandering on your way to a final draft. Once you get practice at working through each

step of the process, the task of writing a paper will become an easy task to plan and undertake from start to finish.

As you complete both minor and major writing assignments, be sure to consult the rubrics included in this textbook, particularly those included with the assignment sheet for each major paper. Key to understanding any assignment is knowing how it will be scored or evaluated. And, finally, don't hesitate to contact your professor if you have any questions or concerns. They're not psychic, and if you're struggling, it never hurts to let them know what's going on.

Good luck and happy writing!

The Creation of This Book

This textbook was created as part of the Interactive OER for Dual Enrollment project, facilitated by [LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network](#) and funded by a \$2 million [Open Textbooks Pilot Program grant from the Department of Education](#).

This project supports the extension of access to high-quality post-secondary opportunities to high school students across Louisiana and beyond by creating materials that can be adopted for dual enrollment environments. Dual enrollment is the opportunity for a student to be enrolled in high school and college at the same time.

The cohort-developed OER course materials are released under a license that permits their free use, reuse, modification and sharing with others. This includes a corresponding course available in [MoodleNet](#) and [Canvas Commons](#) that can be imported to other Learning Management System platforms. For access/questions, contact [Affordable Learning Louisiana](#).

If you are adopting this textbook, we would be glad to know of your use via this [brief survey](#).

Review Statement

This textbook and its accompanying course materials went through at least two review processes:

- Peer reviewers, coordinated by Jared Eusea, River Parish Community College, used an online course development standard rubric for assessing the quality and content of each course to ensure that the courses developed through Interactive OER for Dual Enrollment support online learners in that environment. The evaluation framework reflects a commitment to accessibility and usability for all learners.
 - Reviewers
 - Jesse Walczak
 - Emily Aucoin
 - Begona Perez-Mira
- The Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) collaborated with LOUIS to review course materials and ensure their appropriateness for dual enrollment audiences. Review criteria were drawn from factors that apply across dual enrollment courses and subject areas, such as determining appropriate reading levels; assessing the fit of topics and examples for high school DE students; applying high-level principles for quality curriculum design, including designing for

accessibility, appropriate student knowledge checks, and effective scaffolding of student tasks and prior knowledge requirements; and addressing adaptability, open educational practices, and principles related to inclusion and representational social justice.

- Reviewers
 - Danielle R Potier
 - Sheri Sison

ADAPTATION STATEMENT

This textbook was adapted and remixed from Lumen Learning's OER [*English I Composition: Rhetorical-Methods Based*](#), except where otherwise noted in the supplementary chapter adaptation statement at the end of chapters where this is applicable. This remix (*Writing Rhetorically: Framing First Year Writing*) of the original Lumen Learning textbook is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#). Kirk Fontenot, Shelly Rodrigue, William Rogers, and Wanda Waller are listed as the authors of this adaptation. Original chapters included in the textbook are those on arrangement and argument (Wanda Waller) and proofreading & editing (Shelly Rodrigue). With the exception of the chapters on invention, drafting & revising, and evaluation (see additional chapter sources notes at the end of each chapter), all other chapters in the book are a blend of the original text in *English I Composition: Rhetorical-Methods Based* and significant new, original writing by the authors. Each chapter's list of Student Learning Outcomes is new, original content, as well as all assignment sheets, student worksheets, rubrics, and H5P.

COURSE CONTENTS AND SYLLABUS

COURSE CONTENTS AT A GLANCE



Module 1: Invention

Module 2: Arrangement

Module 3: Drafting and Revising

Module 4: Editing and Proofreading

Module 5: Narrative

Module 6: Description

Module 7: Definition

Module 8: Illustration/Example

Module 9: Compare/Contrast

Module 10: Evaluation

Module 11: Cause and Effect

Module 12: Argument

Module 13: MLA Research and Citation

Module 14: Grammar and Mechanics Mini-Lessons

- Grammar and Mechanics Mini-Lessons
- Mini-Lesson: Subjects and Verbs, Irregular Verbs, Subject-Verb Agreement
- Mini-Lesson: Sentence Types

- Mini-Lesson: Fragments I
- Mini-Lesson: Run-Ons and Comma Splices I
- Mini-Lesson: Comma Usage
- Mini-Lesson: Parallelism
- Mini-Lesson: The Apostrophe
- Mini-Lesson: Capital Letters



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ENGLISH COMPOSITION I SYLLABUS AND COURSE POLICIES



Except where otherwise noted, Writing Rhetorically: Framing First Year Writing is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) by Kirk Fontenot, Shelly Rodrigue, William Rogers, and Wanda Waller.

Course Number and Title:

CENL 1013: English Composition I

Course Brief Description:

Introduces students to the critical thinking, reading, writing, and rhetorical skills required in the college/university and beyond, including citation and documentation, writing as a process, audience awareness, and writing effective essays. Four major writing assignments focus on developing mastery of a variety of rhetorical methods (narrative, description, definition, exemplification, comparison/contrast, evaluation, cause and effect, and argumentation). 3 credit hours.

Prerequisite Knowledge:

Students should be comfortable with writing complex sentences and paragraphs as part of a longer, multipage composition. They should have a strong grasp of spelling and basic grammatical rules. Students will also need to be comfortable with reading, analyzing, and discussing others' writing. Experience with conducting research and integrating and documenting external sources is not necessary.

Course Goals:

There are six student learning objectives (SLOs) for this course.

SLO 1: Writing as a process

Students will adopt a multi-step, recursive writing process that includes prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading.

SLO 2: Purpose, audience, voice, tone, and style

Students will apply appropriate language and tone for an intended audience and rhetorical situation.

SLO 3: Organization, structure, and format of essay

Students will write academic essays in logically sequenced paragraphs including an introduction, supportive body, and conclusion.

SLO 4: Persuasion, rhetorical tactics/situation, thesis development

Students will use persuasive strategies and rhetorical patterns in written original arguments.

SLO 5: Handling and gathering evidence/support

Students will demonstrate effective support of assertions with rhetorically appropriate strategies to evaluate, represent, and respond to the ideas and research of others.

SLO 6: Grammar

Students will apply rules and conventions of grammar, word choice, punctuation, and spelling in a variety of sentence structures.

Course Materials:

Course Moodle site

[Writing Rhetorically: Framing First-Year Writing](#) textbook; adaptation by Kirk Fontenot, Shelly Rodrigue, Will Rogers, and Wanda Waller

Instructor Contact Information:

Instructor Name:

- Email:
- Phone:
- Office:
- Office Hours:
- Communication Policy: Instructor will reply to emails within 24 hours or, if on a weekend, by the end of the next business day. Holidays and university breaks may impact response times.

Course Schedule:

Module	Topics and Concepts	Corresponding Course Materials
1	Introductions and writing diagnostic	Complete: Writing Diagnostic (in class)
	Narration	Read: Chapter 5 in textbook
	Point of view	Complete (in textbook):
2	Transitional words	Discussion Questions – Professional Example
	Narrative examples	Discussion Questions – Student Example
	Paper 1: Personal Narrative Essay Assignment Sheet and Worksheet	Your Turn Exercise
		<i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i>
		Read: Chapter 6 in textbook
		Complete:
	Description	Discussion Questions – Professional Example
	Objective vs. subjective	
3	Organization	Discussion Questions – Student Example
	Connotations vs. denotations	Your Turn Exercise
	Description examples	<i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i>
		<i>Rough draft of paper 1 DUE end of week</i>
	How to begin the writing process	
	Methods of prewriting	Read: Chapter 1 in textbook
4	Specific details vs. general ideas	Complete: Apply Your Turn exercise to your rough draft
	Moving from prewriting to drafting	
	Writing definitions	Final draft of paper 1 DUE beg. of week
5	Denotation and connotation	Read: Chapter 7 in textbook
	Elements and structure of the definition essay	Complete:

Module	Topics and Concepts	Corresponding Course Materials
	Paper 2: Definition and Example Essay Assignment and Worksheet	<p>Discussion Questions – Professional Example</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Student Example</p> <p>Your Turn Exercise</p> <p><i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i></p> <p>Read: Chapter 8 in textbook</p> <p>Complete:</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Professional Example</p>
6	<p>Writing illustrations and examples</p> <p>Specific details vs. general statements</p> <p>Transitional phrases and phrases of illustration</p>	<p>Discussion Questions – Student Example</p> <p>Your Turn Exercise</p> <p><i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i></p> <p>Rough draft of paper 2 DUE end of week</p>
7	<p>Arrangement</p> <p>Understanding parts of essays</p> <p>Techniques of introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions</p>	<p>Read: Chapter 2 in textbook</p> <p>Complete: Apply Your Turn exercise to your rough draft</p> <p>Final draft of paper 2 DUE beg. of week</p>
8	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Discussion of opinions and review judgment/thesis</p> <p>Criteria for review</p> <p>Paper 3: Compare and Evaluate Essay Assignment and Worksheet</p>	<p>Read: Chapter 9 in textbook</p> <p>Complete:</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Professional Example</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Student Example</p> <p>Your Turn Exercise</p> <p><i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i></p>

Module	Topics and Concepts	Corresponding Course Materials
9	<p>Compare and contrast</p> <p>Purpose of compare and contrast</p> <p>Discussion of similarities/differences</p> <p>Structure of compare-and-contrast essays</p>	<p>Read: Chapter 10 in textbook</p> <p>Complete:</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Professional Example</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Student Example</p> <p>Your Turn Exercise</p> <p><i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i></p>
10	<p>Different drafting methods</p> <p>What kind of writer are you?</p> <p>Revision methods (reverse outline, read aloud, peer review and response)</p>	<p>Read: Chapter 3 in textbook</p> <p>Complete: 75-minute draft activity; reverse outline</p> <p>Rough draft of paper 3 DUE end of week</p>
11	Open Week (fall/spring break or other discretionary activities)	<p>Final draft of paper 3 DUE beg. of week</p> <p>Read: Chapter 11 in textbook</p>
12	<p>Structure of a cause-and-effect essay</p> <p>Paper 4: Cause/Effect and Argument Essay Assignment Sheet and Student Worksheet</p>	<p>Complete:</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Professional Example</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Student Example</p> <p>Your Turn Exercise</p> <p><i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i></p>
13	Structure of the argument essay	<p>Read: Chapter 12 in textbook</p> <p>Complete:</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Professional Example</p> <p>Discussion Questions – Student Example</p>

Module	Topics and Concepts	Corresponding Course Materials
		<p>Your Turn Exercise</p> <p><i>Submit all 3 responses to Moodle in 1 doc</i></p> <p>Rough draft of paper 4 DUE end of week</p>
	Revising English 101 essays	
	Content editing	
14	Line editing	<p>Read: Chapter 4 in textbook</p> <p>Complete: Apply Your Turn exercise to your rough draft</p>
	Copy editing	
	Proofreading	
15	Final Week – Open for peer review, catchup, etc.	Final draft of paper 4 DUE end of semester

Course Policies:

Technology Requirements

- Students must have access to a computer that can connect reliably to broadband internet, as well as the ability to navigate the school's LMS (Learning Management System). For synchronous online courses, students must have web cameras, microphones, Zoom, and a reliable high-speed internet connection. Chrome, Firefox, and Safari are recommended web browsers to use for accessing the school's LMS and submitting materials online.

Computer Skills

- Students must have at least basic proficiency in word processing applications (MS Word, Google Docs, etc.) and be able to submit files to an online system. Word processing files should be saved with the .docx extension.
- Regardless of the course's modality (online or f2f), students must be prepared to check the LMS and receive announcement emails on a daily basis during the week in order to keep up with the class.

Evaluation

- Discussion questions and Your Turn activities provide low-stakes formative assessments for students.
- H5P exercises are for self-evaluation to check comprehension only and are not graded.
- Four major papers, each with a preliminary rough draft due at least a week before the final draft, will provide high-stakes, summative assessments for students.
 - Instructors will provide feedback for rough drafts of major papers prior to the weekend before the paper is due.

Grading Policy

The students' grades for the course will be made up of their scores on discussion questions and Your Turn activities, four major writing assignments, and attendance.

Paper 1 = 20%

Paper 2 = 20%

Paper 3 = 20%

Paper 4 = 20%

Discussion questions and YT exercises = 15%

Attendance = 5%

- *[Grading scale and late work policy, if applicable.]*

University Policies and Support:

- **Code of Conduct**
- **Online Etiquette**
- **Academic Integrity**
- **Diversity Statement**
- **Accessibility and Disability Services**
- **Technology Support**
- **Academic Support Services**

MAJOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS, STUDENT WORKSHEETS, AND RUBRICS

RUBRIC: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND YOUR TURN EXERCISES

Rubric: Discussion Questions and Your Turn Exercises

Instructors: Use this rubric to score Discussion Questions and Your Turn responses found in this textbook.

Students: Refer to this rubric as you complete Discussion Questions and Your Turn responses to be sure you understand how your work will be evaluated and scored.

Category	Unacceptable	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Exceptional
Content	Your turn/discussion questions are very incomplete or not attempted	Key points are not clear. Question not adequately answered. Your turn/discussion questions are vague or incomplete.	Your turn exercises and discussion questions are not comprehensive or completely stated. Key points are addressed but not well supported.	Your turn exercises and discussion questions are accurate and complete. Key points are stated and supported.	Your turn exercises and discussion questions are comprehensive, accurate, and complete. Key ideas are clearly stated, explained, and well supported.
Organization	Did not attempt	Organization and structure detract from the answer.	Inadequate organization or development. Structure of the answer is not easy to follow.	Organization is mostly clear and easy to follow.	Well organized, coherently developed, and easy to follow.
Writing Fundamentals	Did not attempt	Displays over five errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.	Displays three to five errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.	Displays one to three errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.	Displays no errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.

ASSIGNMENT: NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTION

Narrative and Description Essay

Length: 2-4 pages of typed, double-spaced text

Due date: First quarter

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

- Compose a personal narrative essay (SLO 2)
- Communicate a clear story using narrative and descriptive techniques (SLO 3)
- Apply MLA format to prose free of grammar and spelling errors (SLO 7)

Description of assignment:

Write a personal narrative essay on one of the approved topics below (SLO 2). The essay must tell a clear story about a real experience. Use narration and description in the essay (SLO 3). Your tone should be conversational; tell the story as if you were telling it to a close friend. The essay must be in MLA format with double spacing and Times New Roman 12-point font. The length of the essay should be between 2 and 4 full pages of text. Your essay should be free of grammar and spelling errors (SLO 7).

Goal of assignment:

Tell an engaging true story that has a clear purpose (thesis) and a believable narrator.

Skills we will work on with this paper:

- narration
- description
- dialogue (if needed)
- chronological organization

Suggestions for topics:

- a story from your childhood
- a significant accomplishment or overcoming a challenge
- a time when you experienced something new/for the first time
- a memory with the most influential/important person in your life
- a funny story that happened to you
- a time when you participated in an extracurricular activity/hobby
- a memorable vacation/event with family or friends
- a story about the most memorable gift you ever received
- a holiday and how you celebrate it
- a time you were greatly inspired
- a moment when you discovered one of your favorite things
- for all other topics, get instructor approval

Rubric [with percentage breakdown for different aspects of evaluation/grade (%):

Content = 30%

A: 30-27 points

- Paper is creative and original
- Student has clearly followed and met the assignment guidelines

B: 26-23 points

- Paper is somewhat creative and original
- Student has mostly followed and met the assignment guidelines

C: 22-19 points

- Paper is unoriginal and ideas are obvious or general
- Student has followed and met basic assignment guidelines

D: 18-15 points

- Paper is unoriginal and ideas are obvious or general

- Student has not followed and met the basic assignment guidelines

F: 14-0 points

- Paper contains few complete ideas
- Student has not followed and met most of the basic assignment guidelines

Development = 30%

A: 30-27 points

- Tone enhances the subject, conveys the writer's attitude, and suits the audience

B: 26-23 points

- Tone mostly fits the subject, the writer's attitude is somewhat clear, and the tone is mostly suitable for the audience

C: 22-19 points

- Tone is acceptable for the subject, the writer's attitude is not clear or consistent, and the tone may or may not be suitable for the audience

D: 18-15 points

- Tone is not consistent with the subject, the writer's attitude is indeterminate, and the tone is not appropriate for the audience

F: 14-0 points

- Tone is not clear at all or does not make sense for the subject, the writer's attitude is indeterminate, and the tone risks disengaging the audience

Structure = 20%

A: 20-18 points

- Essay has a logical order and a clear sense of flow

- Introduction is engaging, paragraphs are idea-centered, and transitions are smooth

B: 17-16 points

- Essay has a somewhat logical order and some sense of flow
- Introduction is mostly engaging, paragraphs mostly adhere to their topics, and transitions are identifiable

C: 15-14 points

- Essay does not have a logical order, though some order is obvious
- Introduction offers little insight, paragraphs stray off topic, and transitions can sometimes be evident

D: 13-11 points

- Essay structure seems random or chaotic, paragraphs lack development, and transitions are missing or misleading

F: 10-0 points

- Essay does not have any clear structure, paragraphs are not developed, and transitions are missing or misleading

Format = 10%

A: 10-9 points

- Proper MLA format is evident

B: 8-7 points

- Paper is mostly formatted correctly but may contain minor errors

C: 6-5 points

- Text contains more than 3 kinds of formatting errors

D: 4-3 points

- Formatting is problematic and has several major errors

F: 2-0 points

- Formatting does not follow assignment guidelines

Grammar = 10%

A: 10-9 points

- Paper has been carefully edited and contains only minor grammatical and/or spelling errors

B: 8-7 points

- Paper has been edited but may contain 4-7 errors

C: 6-5 points

- Careless proofreading is evident
- Text contains between 8 and 15 errors

D: 4-3 points

- Little evidence of proofreading
- Text contains between 16 and 30 errors

F: 2-0

- No evidence of proofreading
- Text has more than 30 errors

Possibilities (the best essays do this):

Personal narratives based on the author's experience are usually written in the first person using the "I" pronoun. Personal narratives based on others' experiences are usually written in the third person using "he," "she," or "they" pronouns. Personal narratives are usually written in the past tense, but they can be written in the present tense. Successful narratives are often written in chronological order with a beginning, a middle,

and an end. This helps readers develop a sense of time in the story. Many writers use dialogue to show how the narrator and other characters are feeling about the events that are unfolding.

Some stories are told by focusing on scene. This means the author will provide details as vividly and precisely as if he or she is there (imagine if the story is a movie and the reader is watching). Other stories might be told by focusing on summary. This means the author will tell the essentials of what happened rather than providing great details about people and their surroundings. Either technique can be used to write a compelling narrative.

Writers should begin by selecting a topic and answering the 5 Ws and the H about the topic: What happened? Who took part? When? Where? Why did it happen? How did it happen? The answers to these questions will provide the building blocks for the personal narrative.

Pitfalls (common mistakes students make with this assignment):

- Do not use clinical language. Be clear but be yourself.
- Avoid the second-person point of view.
- Do not switch back and forth between present and past tense.
- Make sure your narrator seems reliable.
- Make sure the tone fits the subject and aligns with the narrator's views.
- Carefully proofread your essay before turning it in. Make sure to address any errors identified by your text editors.



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STUDENT WORKSHEET: NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTION

Student Worksheet for Narrative and Description Essay

Narrative and Description Essay

Length requirement: TBD (2-4 pages recommended)

Point of view (first person or third person): First person

Due date:

Rhetorical mode and chosen topic:

Narration and description

Research requirements:

None

Thinking ahead:

Essay's main idea and thesis statement:

Tell about a factual remembered event

Basic necessary elements in paper:

- Introduction
- Several body paragraphs
- Conclusion
- Descriptive details
- MLA format

Questions to ask about the paper (list your questions):

ASSIGNMENT: DEFINITION AND EXEMPLIFICATION

Definition and Example Essay

Length: 2 pages (non-researched) OR 3 pages plus Works Cited (researched)

Due date:

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

- Compose a definition and example essay (SLO 2)
- Organize the definition and example essay using a structure appropriate to the rhetorical modes (SLO 3)
- Apply MLA format to prose free of grammar and spelling errors (SLO 6)
- If choosing the research option, students will also evaluate, represent, and respond to the ideas and research of others while documenting sources (SLO 5)

Description of assignment:

Choose one of the terms below to define in a definition/example essay. This is not an *argument* essay, so you are not arguing for or against anything. The idea is also not to write a technical article; instead, use *denotation* and *connotation* together to *define* a term in such a way that your audience can easily understand. Your definition should include a *basic definition* as well as an *extended definition*, which may use specific examples, history, etymology, compare/contrast, and more.

As you plan your essay, consider these questions: Why is it important to understand this term? Why is this term in the news right now? Why is it relevant to someone living in Louisiana? If a friend asked me what this term meant, how would I explain it?

In order to answer these questions to *define* your term, you should use specific, relevant *examples*. Each example should further your reader's understanding of your term.

The essay must be in MLA format with double spacing and Times New Roman 12-point font. The length of the essay should be between 2 and 4 full pages of text. Your essay should be free of grammar and spelling errors.

Goal of assignment:

Define a term by providing a basic definition, an extended definition, and relevant specific examples.

Skills we will work on with this paper:

- definition
- examples/illustration
- research using scholarly sources (if writing the research option)
- MLA in-text citation
- Works Cited page
- emphatic-order organization (“save the best for last”)

Suggestions for topics:

Non-researched

- Lagniappe
- Laissez les bons temps rouler

Researched

- Gerrymandering
- Gentrification
- Cultural Appropriation

Rubric [with percentage breakdown for different aspects of evaluation/grade (%):

Content = 30%

A: 30-27 points

- Paper is creative and original
- Student has clearly followed and met the assignment guidelines

B: 26-23 points

- Paper is somewhat creative and original
- Student has mostly followed and met the assignment guidelines

C: 22-19 points

- Paper is unoriginal and ideas are obvious or general
- Student has followed and met basic assignment guidelines

D: 18-15 points

- Paper is unoriginal and ideas are obvious or general
- Student has not followed and met the basic assignment guidelines

F: 14-0 points

- Paper contains few complete ideas
- Student has not followed and met most of the basic assignment guidelines

Development = 30%

A: 30-27 points

- Tone enhances the subject, conveys the writer's attitude, and suits the audience

B: 26-23 points

- Tone mostly fits the subject, the writer's attitude is somewhat clear, and the tone is mostly suitable for the audience

C: 22-19 points

- Tone is acceptable for the subject, the writer's attitude is not clear or consistent, and the tone may or may not be suitable for the audience

D: 18-15 points

- Tone is not consistent with the subject, the writer's attitude is indeterminate, and the tone is not appropriate for the audience

F: 14-0 points

- Tone is not clear at all or does not make sense for the subject, the writer's attitude is indeterminate, and the tone risks disengaging the audience.

Structure = 20%

A: 20-18 points

- Essay has a logical order and a clear sense of flow
- Introduction is engaging, paragraphs are idea-centered, and transitions are smooth

B: 17-16 points

- Essay has a somewhat logical order and some sense of flow
- Introduction is mostly engaging, paragraphs mostly adhere to their topics, and transitions are identifiable

C: 15-14 points

- Essay does not have a logical order, though some order is obvious
- Introduction offers little insight, paragraphs stray off topic, and transitions can sometimes be evident

D: 13-11 points

- Essay structure seems random or chaotic, paragraphs lack development, and transitions are missing or misleading

F: 10-0 points

- Essay does not have any clear structure, paragraphs are not developed, transitions are missing or misleading

Format = 10%

A: 10-9 points

- Proper MLA format is evident

B: 8-7 points

- Paper is mostly formatted correctly but may contain minor errors

C: 6-5 points

- Text contains more than 3 kinds of formatting errors

D: 4-3 points

- Formatting is problematic and has several major errors

F: 2-0 points

- Formatting does not follow assignment guidelines

Grammar = 10%

A: 10-9 points

- Paper has been carefully edited and contains only minor grammatical and/or spelling errors

B: 8-7 points

- Paper has been edited but may contain 4-7 errors

C: 6-5 points

- Careless proofreading is evident
- Text contains between 8 and 15 errors

D: 4-3 points

- Little evidence of proofreading
- Text contains between 16 and 30 errors

F: 2-0

- No evidence of proofreading
- Text has more than 30 errors

Possibilities (the best essays do this):

- Write an interesting essay; don't focus on technical information that no one would want to read!
- Include specific, interesting examples from your own personal experience.
- Start each body paragraph with a clear topic sentence, and keep that paragraph focused on just one main idea.

Non-research option: Choose specific, interesting examples that you read about.

Research option: Read first. Become a mini-expert on your topic before you begin drafting.

Pitfalls (common mistakes students make with this assignment):

- Do not use clinical language. Be clear but be yourself.
- Avoid the second-person point of view.
- Do not switch back and forth between present and past tense.
- Make sure the tone fits the subject.
- Carefully proofread your essay before turning it in.

Research option: Your essay will include a lot of in-text citations; if it doesn't, you're doing it wrong! Remember that everything that is not common knowledge **MUST** include an in-text citation, even if it's in your own words.



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STUDENT WORKSHEET: DEFINITION AND EXEMPLIFICATION

Student Worksheet for Definition and Example Essay

Definition and Example Essay

Length requirement: 2 pages (non-researched) OR 3 pages plus Works Cited (researched)

Point of view (first person or third person): First person (non-researched) or third person (researched)

Due date:

Rhetorical mode and chosen topic:

This essay will incorporate both definition writing and illustration/example writing. In short, your introduction paragraph will define your term, and the body paragraphs will describe specific examples. Each body paragraph should focus on one example. You should include three of the following: (a) a well-known example, (b) a hypothetical example, (c) an example from national news, (d) an example from local news, or (e) an example particular to Louisiana.

Choose from the following topics:

Non-researched

1. Lagniappe
2. Laissez les bons temps rouler

Researched

1. Gerrymandering
2. Gentrification
3. Cultural Appropriation

Research requirements:

1. For non-researched topics, draw upon personal experience or class discussions. Do not conduct a web search. No citation required.
2. For researched topics, you may use sources provided by the instructor. As you conduct your own research, you should use the library's online databases, NOT Google or the open web. No assumptions or first-hand knowledge should be included. Use signal phrases, direct quotes, paraphrasing, and in-text citations throughout the essay. Include a Works Cited page as the last page.

Thinking ahead:

Essay's main idea and thesis statement:

Make a point about your chosen term while emphasizing its meaning. Choose specific examples most relevant to your audience.

Basic necessary elements in paper:

Formatting/style, paragraph organization, presence of thesis, elements specific to rhetorical mode

- MLA format
- Introduction paragraph: 6-10 sentences to introduce topic, then thesis statement, preview supporting ideas
- Minimum three focused body paragraphs
- Short conclusion paragraph
- Signal phrases and in-text citations (researched option)
- MLA Works Cited page (researched option)

Questions to ask about the paper (list your questions):

ASSIGNMENT: COMPARE AND EVALUATE

Compare and Evaluate Essay

Length: 3-5 pages

Due date:

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

- Define judgments and criteria that are appropriate to the objects of evaluation/comparison
- Evaluate using these judgments and criteria
- Produce a compare-and-contrast essay

Description of assignment:

Compare-and-contrast essays and the objects, phenomena, and/or ideas that they describe are an important kind of paper—they offer a chance to see beyond binaries and to view things in a complex and nuanced way. So, for this assignment, we will choose two related subjects or subjects that are often grouped together and describe in detail their similarities and differences.

Goal of assignment:

The goal of this assignment is to see two subjects in a more rich and detailed way in order to uncover why these two subjects are often grouped together or why they should be. At the same time, this paper also asks you to see how these subjects are complex and should be viewed with all their nuances and differences. We are, in short, making a paper out of a Venn diagram, where similarities and differences are described, as illustrated below, where the overlap between the circles signifies the similarities between two subjects.

Skills we will work on with this paper:

- Observation and description
- Argumentation
- Thesis creation

- Organization
- Use of transitional words

Suggestions for topics:

Historical Events: The French and American Revolutions

Technology and Social Media: Twitter and Facebook

People: Beyoncé and Madonna

Ideas: Evolution and Creationism

Rubric [with percentage breakdown for different aspects of evaluation/grade (%):

Purpose & Supporting Details (30 points)

- Clear contrast and comparison/specific examples/relevant information. **30 points**
- Clear contrast and comparison/general examples/relevant information. **20 points**
- Fairly clear contrast and comparison/general examples/includes non-relevant information. **10 points**
- Incomplete contrast and comparison/missing examples/includes non-relevant information. **5 points**

Organization and Structure (30 points)

- Organization follows a consistent order, with logical connections between similarities and differences. **30 points**
- Organization doesn't always follow a consistent order, but logical connections between similarities and differences are present. **20 points**
- Organization doesn't follow a consistent order, and logical connections are missing. **10 points**
- Little sense that the comparison and contrast is organized. **5 points**

Thesis (20 points)

- Thesis explains the contrast and comparison, highlights the importance of the comparison/contrast. **20 points**
- Thesis explains the contrast and comparison, gestures to the importance of the comparison/contrast. **15 points**
- Thesis explains the contrast and comparison, and the importance of the comparison/contrast is implied. **10 points**

- Thesis doesn't explain contrast and comparison and makes passing reference to the importance of the comparison/contrast. **5 points**

Grammar and Formatting (20 points)

- No errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content. MLA formatting is correct. **20 points**
- A few errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content. MLA formatting is correct. **15 points**
- Multiple errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content. Some MLA formatting is incorrect. **10 points**
- Errors mostly distract the reader from content. MLA formatting is missing or mostly incorrect. **5 points**

Possibilities (the best essays do this):

- Present a logical and connected discussion of similarities and differences, avoiding lists of things that are similar or dissimilar.
- Choose subjects to compare and contrast that are similar enough to warrant the comparison and different enough to create a compelling argument.
- Make clear the “so what” of the essay—why does this comparison and contrast matter? The most advanced essays address the relevance of these comparisons and contrasts in explicit and implicit ways.

Pitfalls (common mistakes students make with this assignment):

- A data dump of similarities and differences that appear as lists
- Choosing things that are too different or too similar
- Not addressing why these similarities and differences are important



STUDENT WORKSHEET: COMPARE AND EVALUATE

Student Worksheet for Compare-and-Contrast Essay

Compare-and-Contrast Essay

Length requirement:

Point of view (first person or third person): Third person

Due date:

Rhetorical mode and chosen topic:

Compare/contrast/evaluation

Research requirements:

While research is not required, please cite any research that you incorporate or consult. Your primary mode of information will come from your own observation, most likely.

Thinking ahead:

Essay's main idea and thesis statement:

How do you treat people, places, and phenomena that have similarities and differences? How do you choose between these two related things or people? This is the purpose of a compare-and-contrast essay. Your thesis should frame the two to three subjects and allude to the importance of this comparison.

Basic necessary elements in paper:

- Thesis
- Logical organization
- Evidence

- Two to three similar, yet different, items to compare
- Introduction
- Conclusion

Questions to ask about the paper:

Did you choose items to compare that have appreciable differences and enough similarities?

Does your paper have a narrative, or is it a list? It should not be a list...

Does your essay have a thesis? Does it explain or gesture toward the significance of your comparison/contrast?

Does your paper organize the comparison/contrast in a logical fashion—usually by types of similarities/types of differences?

ASSIGNMENT: CAUSE-EFFECT AND ARGUMENT

Cause and Effect and Argument Essay

Length: 3-5 pages

Due date:

Description of assignment:

You will write an argumentative essay that supports a claim or assertion and identifies causes and/or effects of your supporting statements. Secondary sources are not required. If you include secondary sources for supporting evidence, you *must* document your sources in MLA format. Double-space your essay in 12-point Times New Roman font.

Goal of assignment:

Argumentative essays assert the soundness of a debatable position, belief, or conclusion. Arguments examine ideas to persuade readers to accept new ideas or to take new actions.

Skills we will work on with this paper:

- Creating a clear, debatable thesis statement
- Developing supporting paragraphs
- Organizing effective arguments
- Avoiding illogical, fallacious reasoning

Suggestions for topics:

- Do social networking sites do more harm than good?
- Should patients have the right to die via physician-assisted suicide?
- Should states establish more rigid gun control laws to buy weapons?
- *Your own.* (Must have instructor's approval)

Rubric:

Thesis/Claim = 20%

- Debatable claim/developed purpose. **20-18 points**
- Debatable claim/purpose fair. **17-16 points**
- Debatable claim/purpose vague. **15-14 points**
- Unclear/question. **13-12 points**
- Missing/not relevant. **11-0 points**

Supporting Evidence/Content = 30%

- Support links to thesis/well-developed details/rhetorical elements addressed. **27-30 points**
- Support links to thesis/developed details/two rhetorical elements addressed. **26-24 points**
- Extraneous information included/one rhetorical element included/support not explicitly linked to thesis. **23-21 points**
- Extraneous information included/support not linked to thesis/rhetorical elements not present. **20-18 points**
- Ideas are unrelated to thesis/rhetorical elements not present/extraneous information included. **17-00 points**

Organization = 30%

- Logical and coherent/effective transitions guide argument. **30-27 points**
- Logical and coherent/strong transitions. **26-24 points**
- Progression of ideas awkward/transitions missing. **23-21 points**
- Missing essay paragraphs/transitions missing. **20-18 points**
- Lacks structure/incoherent/illogical. **17-00 points**

Grammar/Mechanics = 20%

- Punctuation/mechanics appropriate. **20-18 points**
- Errors do not interfere with meaning. **17-16 points**
- Repeated errors. Meaning clear. **15-14 points**
- Errors interfere with meaning. **13-12 points**
- Unclear/multiple errors. **11-00 points**

Possibilities (the best essays do this):

Argumentation is a process of reasoning that asserts the soundness of a debatable position, idea, belief, or course of action. Arguments clearly articulate the writer's position and persuade readers to share the writer's perspective and insight.

Consider your purpose and your audience. What do you expect your argument to accomplish? Successful arguments should:

- Clearly state a debatable thesis
- Present relevant, honest evidence that supports your thesis
- Acknowledge the opposing viewpoints related to your claim
- Provide coherent organization with appropriate transitions
- Proofread, revise, and edit carefully

Pitfalls (common mistakes students make with this assignment):

To establish credibility in your argument, avoid these common errors:

- Do not create a question for your thesis statement.
- Do not create a self-evident/factual thesis statement.
- Do not over-simplify the evidence in your argument.
- Do not create illogical or fallacious evidence that is deceptive and dishonest.
- Do not ignore opposing viewpoints.
- Do not use personal attacks as evidence.



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STUDENT WORKSHEET: CAUSE-EFFECT AND ARGUMENT

Student Worksheet for Cause and Effect and Argument Essay

Cause and Effect and Argument Essay

Length requirement: 3-5 pages

Point of view (first person or third person): Third person

Due date:

Rhetorical mode and chosen topic:

Cause and effect and argumentation

Research requirements:

You are not required to include secondary resources. However, if you decide to use secondary information for supporting evidence, you must document all sources in MLA documentation.

Thinking ahead:

Essay's main idea and thesis statement:

Argumentative essays assert the soundness of a debatable position, belief, or conclusion. Arguments examine ideas to persuade readers to accept new ideas or to take new actions.

Your thesis statement is the most important sentence in your paper. It is an assertion and answers the question, "What am I trying to prove?" Your thesis statement is NOT a factual statement or an announcement of purpose. It is a claim that has to be proven throughout the paper.

Basic necessary elements in paper:

Formatting/Style

Your paper should be double-spaced and formatted using MLA heading and MLA documentation as required.

Paragraph Organization

Your paper must include the following elements in separate paragraphs:

Introduction

- Identify the topic/issue
- Describe the major controversy or debate related to your issue
- State your assertion/claim about the issue

Background Information

- Provide information to inform the audience about the issue
- Explain key concepts or terms
- Reiterate your assertion or claim

Supporting Evidence

- Supporting Evidence for **Ethos/Ethical Appeal**: Establish credibility about the issue by revealing your experience or knowledge. In other words, show why the audience should believe what you are proposing in your assertion.
- Supporting Evidence for **Logos/Logical Appeal**: Explain universal facts or widely accepted concepts relating to your issue. For example, explain how your issue relates to current laws, constitutional rights, or money.
- Supporting Evidence for **Pathos/Emotional Appeal**: Connect to audience-based beliefs or values about your claim. For example, appeal to patriotic values, human values, or moral ideas.

Counterargument and Refutation

- Counterargument: Summarize major opposing counterarguments about your claim. This shows fairness and establishes credibility.
- Refutation: Respond to opposing counterarguments by pointing out the weaknesses and emphasizing the strength of your position.

Conclusion

Restate your assertion or claim. This is the last opportunity you will have to present your case. Remind the audience of your assertion. Summarize main points. Offer a recommendation or course of action.

Questions to ask about the paper:

- Does my introduction identify my topic?
- Is my thesis debatable?
- Did I include background information about my topic?
- Did I establish ethos/credibility relating to the topic in a separate paragraph?
- Did I establish logos/logical appeal relating to the topic in a separate paragraph?
- Did I establish pathos/emotional appeal relating to the topic in a separate paragraph?
- Did I acknowledge the major counterarguments and provide rebuttals to emphasize my claim?
- Did I remind the audience of my claim/assertion in an effective conclusion?
- Did I include the appropriate MLA documentation for all secondary sources?
- Did I proofread, revise, and edit for grammar, punctuation, and mechanical errors?

CHAPTER 1: INVENTION

INVENTION

Kirk Fontenot

Student Learning Outcomes

- Define the steps in the writing process
- Recognize the process of invention and differentiate between prewriting strategies

What Is Invention?

Invention is the start of the writing process. Invention means to come up with an appropriate topic, to develop a main idea about that topic, and to gather supporting evidence for that main idea. **Prewriting** is what we call the exercises that help you through the invention process. You can then start laying the groundwork for *arrangement* by writing an *outline*, which will give your ideas focus and organization.

Have you ever been given a writing assignment and sat down at a computer, pulled up a word processing program, and just stared at the blank document, feeling overwhelmed? Most of us have at some point! A writer is not a person who just naturally has the ability to turn that blank document into an essay; instead, a writer is anyone who has learned *the writing process*. Writing is a skill, which means that anyone who is willing to learn the steps and practice them can do it successfully.

The writing process described here is not just a technique from a textbook; this is how writers write in real life. Imagine a writer working for a local newsmagazine. I'm sure you've seen those kinds of magazines. They're usually found outside of grocery stores or in a doctor's waiting room, and they highlight local news and events. Imagine that this writer receives an email from his editor: "I'd like you to write an article promoting

an upcoming party that will raise money for cancer research.” The writer accepts the job and starts the writing process, with the goal of having a clear, interesting article at the end.

The first step in this process is called ***invention***. Invention is how any writer gets started. It usually involves some kind of ***prewriting***. Prewriting is any exercise that helps the writer generate ideas and get started—and avoid staring at that blank word processor document! The goal of prewriting is to discover the point that you want to make. In this instance, the writer may start by making a list of questions they need to answer in the article: When and where is the party? How much are tickets? Is it casual or formal attire?

At this point, the writer needs to ***gather evidence***. To gather evidence means to develop support for the point you’re making. When writing about a personal experience, prewriting activities may also help generate these supporting ideas. However, *research* is also sometimes a part of the invention process. A lot of academic writing and professional writing will require research on the topic. The writer in this scenario will conduct research by contacting the person organizing the party and finding out the answers to those prewriting questions they wrote down.

Notice how at no point did the writer sit and stare at a blank word processor document! Writing is an *active* process. Following the steps laid out in these chapters will ensure success at any writing project, whether personal, academic, or professional.

Now that you’ve seen an overview of the invention process, let’s go through it in more detail.

Prewriting Techniques

Prewriting is the first stage in the writing process. When using a prewriting strategy, you jot your initial thoughts about a topic down on paper. Prewriting has no set structure or organization; it is usually just a collection of ideas that may find themselves in your paper over time. Prewriting is also a great way to get past writer’s block—that period of time when you find you have no ideas or don’t know how to put your thoughts together. Many students want to skip the prewriting stage of the writing process because they see it as unnecessarily burdensome and time-consuming. However, dismissing the prewriting stage as being completely unnecessary is a critical misstep. Prewriting is an essential part of the entire writing process because it enables you to begin documenting the process by which the eventual essay will be formed and evaluated.

Freewriting

Freewriting is the process of simply writing down any and all ideas about the topic that pop into your mind. Set a timer for yourself and write continuously for 5 or 10 minutes on your topic. If you run out of ideas, rewrite the last word or phrase on the page until another idea jumps into your thoughts; never stop writing! It’s even better to write off topic for a minute than to stop writing, even if you write about what you had for breakfast this morning! Keep writing, even if it doesn’t make sense! At this point, you are just getting your ideas down on paper without editing or judging them. Don’t worry about formatting or organization. If you

are trying to decide between topics, it is a good idea to freewrite on all of them to see which one provides you with the best ideas.

Mind-mapping

Mind-mapping is very similar to freewriting, but the outcome often looks more like a list of ideas. This strategy is quite similar to brainstorming where the listed ideas may or may not be connected with arrows or lines. You should set a time limit of 5 to 10 minutes and jot down all the ideas you have about the topic. Instead of writing sentences, you are quickly jotting down ideas, perhaps showing connections and building a map of your thoughts.

Questioning

In **questioning**, make a list of questions about your topic and try to answer them. Start with the “who, what, when, where, why, how” type of questions. One helpful trick is to imagine yourself as a journalist for your local news station covering this topic as a news story. What kinds of questions would a reporter ask? Remember that reporters are seeking out specific, detailed information, so write those kinds of questions!

Sketching

A picture is worth a thousand words. Your first thinking is done in pictures. So, if you are a visual learner and like to sketch out your thoughts, try **sketching**. Grab a pen and paper and draw what you are thinking. This strategy is especially effective if you are trying to conceptualize an idea or clarify relationships between parts of an idea. Sketching involves drawing out your ideas using a pen and paper.

One strategy that can be useful for planning compare-and-contrast-type papers is a Venn diagram. A Venn diagram is a strategy that uses two (or more) overlapping circles to show relationships between sets of ideas. The information written where two circles overlap is common to both ideas. The information written outside the overlapping area is information distinct to only one of the ideas.

Your Turn

Imagine that your writing instructor has asked you to write a review of the most recent movie or TV show you've watched. Which of the prewriting techniques we discussed would you turn to?

Key Terms

- Invention
- Gathering evidence
- Prewriting
- Freewriting
- Mind-mapping
- Questioning
- Sketching

Summary/Conclusion

Whichever strategy you choose, be sure to save your prewriting work. You may want to revisit this stage of the writing process again to make sure that you captured all your thoughts in your outline or first draft.



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Reflective Response

“The hardest part of a writing assignment is just getting started.” Students often say this; do you agree? Why do you think getting started on a writing project is such a challenge for so many?

Which of the suggestions in this chapter will you try when it's time to start your next writing assignment?

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CHAPTER 2: ARRANGEMENT

ARRANGEMENT

Wanda M. Waller

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify components of an effective introduction, body, and conclusion
- Organize essays with an effective introduction, body, and conclusion

What Is Arrangement?

Arrangement is the organization and structure of ideas in your essay. Choosing the right structure depends on the application of critical thinking for your purpose. At times, the arrangement is specified by an assignment or suggested by clues for a given topic. However, all essays, regardless of the pattern of development, should have an *introduction*, *body*, and *conclusion*.

The Introduction

The **introduction** is the first paragraph of an essay and plays an important role in writing an effective paper. The goals of the introduction are to introduce the topic, to provide background about the topic, and to establish the main idea, purpose, and direction. The introduction has three essential parts, each of which serves a particular purpose: the *hook*, *relevant background*, and *thesis statement*.

- **The Hook**—The hook engages your reader's interest. It can be in the form of a question, a quote, an anecdote or story, an interesting fact, or an original definition.
- **Relevant Background**—Background information creates context by providing a brief overview. This

information helps readers see why you are focusing on the topic and transitions them to the main point of your paper.

- **Thesis Statement**—The thesis statement expresses the overall point and main ideas that will be discussed in the body. It usually appears as the last sentence of the introduction and is usually one sentence.

What NOT to do in an introduction

- **Do not apologize.** Avoid phrases such as “*in my opinion*” or “*I may not be an expert but...*” These phrases imply that you really don’t know your topic.
- **Do not announce what you intend to do.** Never begin with phrases such as “*In this paper I will...*” or “*The purpose of this essay is to...*” Your introduction should establish the intention and purpose of the essay.
- **Do not begin with a dictionary definition.** Avoid beginning your essay with phrases such as “*According to Webster’s Dictionary...*” This method is overused and unoriginal. Create your own to show a relevant context for your essay.
- **Do not be too vague.** Avoid irrelevant comments and digressions. Stay focused.

Body

The body paragraphs are a collection of paragraphs related to your topic that provide supporting evidence for your thesis statement. Each body paragraph should be *unified*, *coherent*, and well-developed with a specific pattern of development. A paragraph is unified when each sentence relates directly to the main idea of the paragraph which is stated in the *topic sentence*. A paragraph is coherent if the sentences are logically connected. Coherence can be accomplished by repeating key words and using transitions to show logical sequence. Review the attached list of transitional words and phrases.

Body paragraphs should contain three structural components: the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence.

- **Topic Sentence**—The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in the paragraph. It indicates what the paragraph will discuss and guides the writer and reader. The writer will know what information to include or exclude, and the reader will understand what the paragraph will discuss.
- **Supporting Sentences**—Supporting sentences provide examples or facts to support the topic sentence.
- **Concluding Sentence**—The concluding sentence summarizes the information to show unity within the paragraph.

What NOT to include in the body paragraphs

- **Do not include irrelevant information.** Material that does not relate to the thesis should be deleted.
- **Do not include general or vague information.** Specific examples, clear reasons, and precise explanations communicate your ideas to readers
- **Do not under-develop supporting details.** Determining how much support is needed depends on the scope of your thesis statement, audience, and purpose.

Conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph of the essay and plays an important role in writing an effective paper. The conclusion should reinforce your thesis statement and purpose by reiterating the thesis statement and providing a sense of completeness about the essay's topic. An effective conclusion will summarize your essay and provide a final comment about your topic. There are several strategies that are helpful in writing a conclusion:

- *Review key points*
- *Link the concluding paragraph to the introduction by reiterating a word or phrase*
- *Recommend a course of action*
- *Cite a relevant quotation*
- *Predict a logical outcome*

Strategies for writing an effective conclusion

One or more of the following strategies may help you write an effective conclusion.

- **Play the “So what” game.** If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, “So what?” or “Why should anybody care?” Then ponder that question and answer it.
- **Return to the theme or themes in the introduction.** This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.
- **Synthesize, don't summarize.** Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.
- **Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.**

- **Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study.** This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.
- **Point to broader implications.**

What NOT to do in a conclusion

- **Do not repeat the exact wording of the thesis statement.** The thesis statement should be restated in a new way.
- **Do not introduce new points.** Your conclusion should reinforce points you have already discussed in your essay.
- **Do not end with an unnecessary announcement.** Avoid phrases such as "*in conclusion*," "*in summary*," or "*to sum up*." The tone of your conclusion should signal that you are drawing to a close.

Your Turn

Consider your most recent writing assignment. Determine if you engaged your reader with an engaging hook. Did you have a thesis statement that discussed the overall point of your essay? Did you create topic sentences for each paragraph? Did your conclusion provide a sense of completeness about the essay's topic?

Key Terms

- Arrangement
- Introduction

- Thesis statement
- The hook
- Topic sentences
- Supporting sentences
- Conclusion



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Reflective Response (Optional)

Review your arrangement for a writing assignment. What revisions in arrangement would you consider in your paper? Why?

CHAPTER 3: DRAFTING AND REVISING

DRAFTING AND REVISING

Will Rogers

Student Learning Outcomes

- Define drafting and revising
- Develop strategies for drafting and revising

Introduction to Drafting and Revising

Throughout this chapter, we'll discuss some of the methods we can use for drafting essays, but remember that your drafting process is yours to choose. Find a method that produces the kinds of writing that reflect both your ideas and your writing voice. Many instructors recommend a practice that is referred to as fast drafting, in which the student writes under the pressure of a time limit, much like freewriting. This allows students to create without their inner critic undermining their momentum. It empowers the “creator hand” to work with agency while silencing the “editor hand.” It is important to note that creating on one hand and editing and revising on the other are not, however, stages that exist respectively at the beginning and the end. You might, for example, revise and edit some of your drafts before deciding to add more new material. And as the section below makes clear, the editing and creating “hands” are very similar often in the stages of revision.

Drafting

To do fast drafting, students first need to set up the conditions that will help in their success and are appropriate to their abilities to focus. The following are easy steps writers follow:

- Create a block of time in which there are no interruptions. This should be a realistic length, given a writer's ability to focus, from 10 minutes at a time to 75 minutes or longer.
- Decide on the goal: Write a paragraph in 10 minutes, 2 pages in 1 hour, or a complete essay in 1 hour and 15 minutes.

For some, 75 minutes is a good length, but some students find that after 30 minutes, they can no longer concentrate. If that is the case, they should plan on several shorter sessions of distraction-free time.

During this time, students should turn off their phones and social media, let the dog outside, and ensure that it's time for children to sleep. This needs to be quiet, concentrated time.

As the section above makes clear, drafting can be messy—you might include ideas that you later cut, and it is wise to maintain a separate file for this material as you work through the writing process. But again, you should let go of your worries about good and bad ideas. There will be time to rethink, rephrase, and rework during the revision process.

Revising

The Revision Process

Revision literally means to re-see or re-envision a piece of writing. This process may involve adding, rearranging, removing, and replacing (ARRR) words, sentences, and ideas. Since writing is recursive, revising may require revisiting the prewriting stage. A **recursive** process means that you will create, edit, and revise and return at various points to all three of these stages. Writing is not a strictly linear act, with a beginning, middle, and end. In fact, revision will help you understand that the writing process is as important as the writing product!

- **Adding**

What else does the reader need to know? If the essay doesn't meet the required word or page count, what areas can be expanded? Where would further explanation help key points to be more clear? This is a good time to go back to the prewriting notes and look for ideas that weren't included in the draft.

- **Rearranging**

Even when writers carefully plan their writing, they may need to rearrange sections for their essays to flow better.

- **Removing**

Some ideas just don't work or don't contribute enough to the overall goal of the essay. Often when writers delete excess words or paragraphs, the ideas become clearer.

- **Replacing**

Vivid details help bring writing to life. Writers need to look for strong examples and quotable passages from outside sources to support their arguments. If particular paragraphs aren't working well, writers need to try rewriting them.

Other Useful Strategies

- **Reverse Outlining**

In **reverse outlining**, the student reads through the written text and notes, noting down the topic of each paragraph. This way, the student can review if each paragraph has a clear focus and if each paragraph fits the overall organization of the paper. More on reverse outlining is available at The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL), "[Reverse Outlining: An Exercise for Taking Notes and Revising Your Work.](#)"

- **Reading Aloud**

The act of reading one's essay aloud allows the student to "hear it" in the way a reader will. This act permits the writer to slow down and pay attention to all words in the essay. They get a sense of what a reader experiences, where words are clear and effective, and where they are weak. Poorly structured sentences are hard to read out loud, indicating that this would be a good place to start revising. This technique is a great precursor for receiving feedback from others. It also helps writers take responsibility for their writing.

- **Peer and Instructor Feedback**

No one becomes a good writer in a vacuum. Sometimes, writing is done for ourselves, but more often, writing is done to connect to others, to share thoughts, and to communicate something others need to know. At this stage of the process, it's important for writers to get the measure of how well their writing works for readers that they want to entertain, educate, or persuade. Showing the writing to someone else is essential. This might be done in a writers' circle or just with a friend who is good with words and can be asked for feedback. It's best to show our work to several people to get more than one opinion. Receiving feedback helps writers discover the strengths in their writing as well as areas that may be improved.

After receiving feedback—whether through track changes in Google Docs or Microsoft Word, on paper, or verbally in a peer-review session—the writer can discuss the comments with the reviewer. It's important that a writer consider these comments. Every reader comes from a different point of view, and the writer may not agree with everything that is said by various readers. Sometimes, comments will be contradictory. It is the

writer's responsibility to ask further and decide how to use comments received. A community that embraces and nurtures its members through the revision process works to communicate feedback so that everyone can grow and learn.

Successful college students utilize their resources, specifically their instructors and peers, to get feedback. Tutoring is an effective means by which students can receive knowledgeable one-on-one feedback about their writing. It can also be an effective way to help manage time.

Peer mentors provide students with additional one-on-one and group support in writing classrooms or during office hours. The peer mentor has had the previous experience of completing similar writing assignments, and students find it helpful when they revise with their expertise in mind.

Something to Remember

Handling Peer and Instructor Reviews

In many situations, you will be required to have at least one of your peers review your essay (and you will, in turn, review at least one peer's essay). Even if you're not required to exchange drafts with a peer, it's simply essential at this point to have another pair of eyes, so find a classmate or friend and ask them to look over your draft. In other cases, your instructor may be intervening at this point with ungraded but evaluative commentary on your draft. Whatever the system, before you post or trade your draft for review, reflect on your original statement of purpose to ensure you are giving a clear statement of your desired voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, and reception. Also, consider preparing a descriptive outline showing how the essay actually turned out and comparing that with your original plan, or consider writing a brief narrative describing how the essay developed from idea to execution. Finally, include any other questions or concerns you have about your draft so that your peer reader(s) or instructor can give you useful, tailored feedback. These reflective statements and documents could be attached with your draft as part of a writer's memo. Remember, the more guidance you give your readers, regardless of whether they are your peers or your instructor, the more they will be able to help you.

When you receive suggestions for content changes from your instructors, try to put aside any tendencies to react defensively so that you can consider their ideas for revisions with an open mind. If you are accustomed only to getting feedback from instructors that is accompanied by a grade, you may need to get used to the difference between **evaluation** and **judgment**. In college settings, instructors often prefer to intervene most extensively after you have completed a first draft, with evaluative commentary that tends to be suggestive, forward-looking, and free of a final quantitative judgment (like a grade). If you read your instructors' feedback in those circumstances as final, you can miss the point of the exercise. You're supposed to do something with this sort of commentary, not just read it as the justification for a (non-existent) grade.

Sometimes, peers think they're supposed to "sound like an English teacher," so they fall into the trap of "correcting" your draft, but in most cases, the prompts used in college-level peer reviewing discourage that sort

of thing. In many situations, your peers will give you ideas that will add value to your paper, and you will want to include them. In other situations, your peers' ideas will not really work into the plan you have for your paper. It is not unusual for peers to offer ideas that you may not want to implement. Remember, your peers' ideas are only suggestions, and it is your essay, and you are the person who will make the final decisions. If your peers happen to be a part of the audience to which you are writing, they can sometimes give you invaluable ideas. And if they're not, take the initiative to find outside readers who might actually be a part of your audience.

When you are reviewing a peer's essay, keep in mind that the author likely knows more about the topic than you do, so don't question content unless you are certain of your facts. Also, do not suggest changes just because you would do it differently or because you want to give the impression that you are offering ideas. Only suggest changes that you seriously think would make the essay stronger.

Your Turn

Here are some activities to work through different kinds of drafting. Remember, drafts are about not perfection but practice and process/production. In the same vein, you might need to practice several different strategies and tactics in order to find the best way to reach that draft that is ready for peer review and revision.

1. Prepare for writing a 75-minute fast draft by doing several prewriting activities, including **brainstorming**, focused writing, outlining, and perhaps reading and researching, depending on the assignment. Then, in an intense, 75-minute time span, write your entire essay as quickly as possible, including the introduction and conclusion. Don't stop to concern yourself with word choice, citations, or grammar. Just get into the flow of ideas and write your essay all the way to the end. Remember: You can go back and revise and edit all you want, but that is much easier to do once you have a draft.
2. What kind of writer are you? Look at the following list. Thinking about your past writing experiences, pick out both what kind of writer you think you are and what kind you want to be—how are the draft processes similar to and different from these two choices of writers? (Try to choose two different kinds of writers!)
 - Are you a sprinter?
Do you have lots of ideas and want to get to them quickly?
If so, you probably skip to drafting and spend a lot of time on revising. Try spending

more time on the start of the writing process. Spend more time on defining the audience and purpose and on exploring and planning. Then revising might not be a Herculean task.

- Are you a jogger?

Do you try to go through the writing process one step at a time? Maybe some parts are harder than others, like the organization or writing a thesis? Try new strategies for those parts of the writing process that are most difficult. If revision is hard, get lots of feedback and learn to critique others. If the audience and purpose make no sense, spend some time looking at how other writers bend their writing to their audiences and purpose.

- Are you a tightrope walker?

Do you want everything to be perfect before you set it down on paper?

- Are you a perfectionist?

If so, you probably spend a lot of time at the start of the writing process but have more trouble with revising. Try being willing to make changes in revision based on looking at the organization, audience, and purpose. Is everything in the paper really working together? Don't be afraid to get rid of parts and start over.

Key Terms

- Brainstorming
- Fast drafts
- Reverse outlines
- Recursive

Summary

Drafting and revising are important parts of the writing process and not optional activities. Drafting and

revising are ongoing parts of the writing process, and like most of the process, drafting and revising are activities that are often helped by assistance from peers or your instructor.



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Reflective Response (Optional)

Think back to a paper you've written: What were its weaknesses? What kind of revisionary strategy would have improved those weaknesses?

Additional Chapter Sources

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CHAPTER 4: EDITING AND PROOFREADING

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Shelly Rodrigue

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify techniques of editing and proofreading
- Modify an essay that has already been through the rough draft and revision processes

What Is Editing?

Editing is improving an essay by using various methods of revision. It can involve major and minor changes to an essay's content, structure, or language. There are multiple stages to editing: content editing, line editing, copy editing, and proofreading.

In content editing, you can expect to make major changes to your work. Take an early draft of the essay and add or delete content as needed. Perhaps your thesis statement required revision, or you needed more substantial evidence to support your claims. Adjust your introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion accordingly.

In line editing, you may need to rearrange words or phrases to make sure your meaning is clear. Some paragraphs may benefit from restructuring in order to create a sense of flow in the essay. Make sure each paragraph begins with a topic sentence, has supporting details to back up that topic sentence, and ends with a transitional sentence.

In copy editing, pay attention to each sentence's grammar. Make sure there are no obvious critical errors such as sentence fragments or run-on sentences. Make sure that your tone and tense are consistent. Double-check your formatting to make sure it is styled appropriately (usually MLA, APA, or Chicago).

In proofreading, scan each sentence for misspelled words, incorrect punctuation, or stylistic inconsistencies (such as capitalization). At this point, you are combing through the essay for minor errors that may have been missed previously. This is the final stage in editing before submitting a final draft.

The Steps of Editing and Proofreading

After drafting an essay, it is time to begin editing and proofreading. Start with **content editing** first. Double-check the overall content and organization of the essay. The writing should be easy to follow and logically ordered. At this point, you may need to change the order of sentences or even move whole paragraphs to ensure the essay has a sense of flow. Make sure that the essay reflects your conceptual intent and responds appropriately to the writing prompt. It is a good idea to recheck the assignment guidelines and make sure that your essay has all of the required components. For example, if your instructor has asked for a five-paragraph essay with an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion, then you know you will need to add a paragraph if there are only four paragraphs in your essay. Now is also a good time to check the word count and page count of your essay. If the essay is too short or too long, then you will need to add or delete sections until it is the appropriate length. Be sure to apply any required formatting to the essay to easily see its length. Any big changes you need to make to your essay should be completed in this step of the editing process.

Once the biggest changes have been made, you can move on to **line editing**. In this stage of the editing process, you want to look at each paragraph individually, line by line. Check the word choice for syntactical errors. Be careful to avoid clichés. Make sure the language you use is both clear and precise and that the tone you use is appropriate for your topic. If you are writing an essay about a serious issue such as starving children, then you want to maintain a serious tone throughout the essay. It would not be a good idea to insert humor in such a topic. On the other hand, if you are writing an essay about the necessity of attending clown school, then jokes are more likely to be received well, as clowns are associated with entertainment. Now is also a good time to review the order of sentences in each paragraph. It is a good idea to make sure the paragraph has a topic sentence that clearly identifies what the paragraph will discuss and that each subsequent sentence supports that topic sentence. If you notice any sentences that veer off topic or don't seem to make sense, then you can remove or revise them. Once the topic has been adequately discussed with supporting details, check to make sure there is a transitional sentence at the end of the paragraph. This will signal to readers that the discussion of this topic is complete while pointing readers onward to the next topic your essay will discuss.

Now that organizational issues have been addressed, it is time to begin **copy editing**. From here on out, your essay should not require any major changes, so it is a good idea to print the essay and mark additional edits with a pen or pencil. In this stage of the editing process, try to find any obvious grammatical errors such as sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and subjects and verbs that disagree. Double-check your spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. In formal essays, it is a good idea to avoid first-person pronouns, contractions, and colloquial language. Scan for these things as you read over your essay. Another issue that is easy to miss is changing verb tense. Make sure it is consistent. Some authors will accidentally switch back and forth between past and present tense. To avoid confusing your readers, pick a tense and stick with it, switching only when necessary (such as showing a shift in time). Likewise, if a sentence begins with a singular noun, then you should use a singular pronoun when referring to that noun, and if a sentence begins with a plural noun, then you should use a plural pronoun. A mistake students often make is to begin a sentence with a noun like

“person” and then use “they” as its pronoun. “Person” implies one, whereas “they” implies more than one (unless someone specifically stated they/them are their preferred pronouns). To balance a sentence, use singular and plural nouns and pronouns consistently. One more element to address in this stage of editing is factual inconsistencies. Make sure the information you provide to readers is accurate. This step can be thought of as “fact-checking.” After all of these items have been checked, spend some time reviewing your formatting. If your instructor has requested MLA, APA, or Chicago format, then it is important to check that format’s most recent style guide.

The last step in the editing process is **proofreading**. The goal of proofreading is to go through the essay one last time searching for minor errors such as incorrect or missing punctuation, misspelled words, and stylistic inconsistencies (such as capitalizing words that are not proper nouns). While your computer’s grammar checker can help point out some errors, you should not rely on it to catch every potential error in your essay. You are your own best editor. However, after looking over your paper several times, your eyes can miss things. The following strategies may help you to catch errors you would have otherwise missed:

- Read the essay aloud. Sometimes your ears will hear an error even if your eyes skip over it.
- Read the essay backward, starting with the final sentence and ending with the first sentence. This will allow you to have a fresh perspective on your sentences.
- Do an initial proofread of the essay, and then physically step away from it. Give yourself some time before you read over it again to give your eyes and your mind a break.
- Have a friend or peer read over the essay to look for mistakes.
- Visit your school’s writing center to help with finishing touches on the essay.

Your Turn

Think about your most recent writing assignment. Once the essay has been drafted and revised, begin the editing and proofreading processes. Take a break between each step in the process so you can approach each step after adequate rest. Keep a log in which you record your editing steps, along with the amount of time you spend on each step, that you can share with your instructor.

Key Terms

- Content editing
- Line editing
- Copy editing
- Proofreading

Summary

Editing and proofreading are two important steps in the writing process. Major edits should be done first, but it is still important to proofread for minor errors before submitting a final draft of an essay.



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Reflective Response (Optional)

Now that you have practiced editing and proofreading, what mistakes do you notice yourself making? Which mistakes were easiest to fix? Which mistakes were the most challenging to fix?

CHAPTER 5: NARRATIVE

NARRATIVE

Shelly Rodrigue

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify techniques of factual storytelling and descriptive writing, which will culminate in the writing of a personal narrative essay
- Use point of view, plot, transitions, characters, conflict, theme, and sensory details in an essay

What Is Narration?

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

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

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative.

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world

that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative. For more information on sensory details, see the chapter on Description.

The Structure of a Narrative

Every day, you relate stories to other people through simple exchanges. You may have had a horrible experience at a restaurant the night before, or you may have witnessed a curious interaction between other people. In each one of these experiences, there's a story, and when you begin to share a personal experience, you often communicate in a **narrative** mode.

There are two main types of narratives: narratives about a personal experience and narratives about other people's experiences.

Narratives about the writer's personal experience typically use the first-person "I" pronoun because the narrator is the person who was physically present for the events described. The writer chooses details and language that reveal the narrator's feelings about the events that are taking place.

Narratives written about other people's experiences typically use the third-person pronouns "he, she, it, they." Some writers opt to report third-person narratives objectively to relay events in a way that is both accurate and dispassionate. Examples include history books, lab reports, and news stories.

Regardless of the narrator's **point of view**, major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. Certain **transitional** words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Chronological Transitional Words

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

Other basic components of a narrative are:

- **Plot** – The events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Characters** – The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, also known as the protagonist.
- **Conflict** – The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that the protagonist must solve or overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.
- **Theme** – The ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you are writing a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite, brainstorm, or mind map about topics that are of general interest to you.

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story.

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme, or unifying idea, of the piece.

Professional Writing Example

“Fish Cheeks” by Amy Tan is an example of a well-written personal narrative. As you read the following narrative, try to determine the narrative’s point of view, plot, characters, transitions, conflict, and theme. See if you can identify areas where the author has included descriptive details.

Fish Cheeks

I fell in love with the minister’s son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister's family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns. The kitchen was littered with appalling mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A bowl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.

And then they arrived – the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor of doorbells and crumpled Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat. "Amy, your favorite," he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking. "It's a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied," explained my father to our astonished guests. Robert was looking down at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster up a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After everyone had gone, my mother said to me, "You want to be the same as American girls on the outside." She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. "But inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame."

And even though I didn't agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner. It wasn't until many years later – long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert – that I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.

Questions for Discussion

1. What point of view does Amy Tan use in “Fish Cheeks”?
2. Who are the characters in the narrative?
3. Where does Amy Tan use transitions?
4. What is the main conflict in the narrative? How is it resolved?
5. What is the theme of “Fish Cheeks”?
6. What are three examples of description from this narrative?

Student Writing Example

The following essay, “Bayou Monster,” was written by an English 101 student, who wrote this personal narrative to challenge the idea that a monk’s life is boring. As you read this story, look for places where the author has incorporated the same narrative techniques found in Amy Tan’s essay.

Bayou Monster

It was a scorcher that day. The wind and trees were no help. The shade was only being supplied so far off the bank. Baseball caps can only do so much to protect the head from the sun’s powerful rays. The mosquitoes were rampant, their feeble attempt at survival. There was a lack of warm-blooded animals for them to prey on. We were the likely targets, the only ones that would dare venture that far out into a swamp. In addition to the nagging pests, the feebleness of the body takes its toll on the mind. Doubts began to swirl in my head of when we would ever stop to rest. Thoughts of unrest, discomfort, and selfishness shot from my bones up to my brain, causing a disinterested taste on my part for this “lovely day out.”

Just as my thoughts became increasingly negative and the downward swirl of discomfort was reaching the highest degree, I heard, “Get ready; it’s our first one!” Suddenly a slight rush of energy came out of nowhere, pushing me forward onto my toes, ready for what came next. As the boat slowed for the approach, I snapped a quick glance around. I noticed the others received the same kind of rejuvenation that I had experienced. Their heads moved forward toward the

front of the boat, their bodies posturing upward to get the best look. Suddenly, I found myself hanging halfway off the front bow reaching down for a rope that had spent most of its existence submerged in nature. After I grabbed the rope, the next hardest thing to get a handle on was my fear, which manifested itself in the form of unsteady hands. As I pulled the rope further into the boat, I thought, “This stuff only happens in movies.” The partner boat was only a few feet away, readied with cameras, and smiles behind the lenses.

What I saw next was unutterable. Coming up behind the rope was a massive net. The net wasn’t the problem, though; rather, what the net contained had my mind tangled a bit. At first glance, anyone would say, “It’s a fish.” It looked like a fish, moved like a fish, and it certainly smelled like a fish. Drawing closer to this mysterious creature, I tried to get a better look at it. Suddenly there was an eerie sound. Caused by a mix of fluid and air being pushed through a small hole at a high rate of speed. I told myself, “This beast has lungs.” As the rest of its body surfaced, it became clear that the creature I had helped pull from the water was not just any old fish. It was a prehistoric monster that made its way through the waters of history until now. It had teeth the size of my fingers, eyes that had seen little sunlight, and a head the size of my torso. It suddenly became difficult to breathe normally. I was in shock.

Thanks be to God and all that is good for our fearless boat captain. He had seen this sort of thing before. This became clear when I glanced up to find a smile bigger than the sun on his face. Though a few teeth were missing, it did not seem to stifle his cheer. Oh, the laughter that came from this large man. His amusement caused my discomfort. Sheepishly, I managed to ask, “What are we going to do with that thing?” His answer was clear, striking, and firm. Looking over the specimen wrapped in the net behind me, he said, “We’re going to kill it and eat it.” Indeed, we did. Carefully and with much fear, we pulled this living hunk of marsh onto the deck of the boat. Watching its every move as he untied what was left of the mangled nets. He then calmly requested his “special tool” from behind the steering wheel. With a crooked smile and a strange sense of confidence, he said smoothly, “Just a little amnesia.” Then the inevitable happened. Thud! Thud! Thud! He raised the hatchet high in the air and delivered several deadly strikes to the uppermost part of the beast’s head. After the third swing, the beast ceased to move about on the deck of the bayou cruiser. It let out its final breath, almost a sigh of relief. We all stood there in silence for a moment, trying to process the most eventful and mysterious five minutes of our lives.

Before we knew it, we had the monster back at the camp to be cleaned and packaged. Several grown men had to grab its slimy body to fashion a hoist over its snout to get it onto the deck of the cleaning station. As we grabbed it, our eyes were fixed on its massive teeth. We wondered

if the beast would awake from its seeming lethargy seeking revenge. Once a few pictures were snapped of us with our accidental catch, we began to clean the alligator garfish with much frustration. Fish that large have skin like armor, making it difficult even for the experienced veterans. Research showed that although it is an exceptionally large fish, it wouldn't have topped the world record holders. I like to share this fishing story from time to time with friends and men who tend to boast of their "biggest catches." It is a fond memory to share with many, especially those who call my life "boring." If they only knew.

Questions for Discussion

1. What point of view does the author use in his essay? How does it differ from Amy Tan's essay?
2. Who are the characters in this narrative? Which ones are major? Which are minor?
3. Where does the author use transitions? Why do you think he placed them there?
4. What is the main conflict in the narrative? How is it resolved?
5. What is the theme of "Bayou Monster"? What is one sentence that reveals the narrative's theme?
6. What are three examples of description in this narrative?

Your Turn

What is an exciting or interesting true story you like to tell? Summarize it in one sentence.

Who are some characters that appear in your story?

What are some transition words you notice yourself using when you tell this story?

What might be a possible theme of this story?

Key Terms

- Narration
- Point of view
- Transitions
- Characters
- Plot
- Conflict
- Theme

Summary

Narration is the art of telling lively, engaging stories. Personal narratives are true stories that authors tell about either their lives or the lives of people around them. The elements common to most narratives include narration, description, point of view, transitions, characters, plot, conflict, and theme. By using these elements in your writing, you will be able to successfully complete a personal narrative essay.



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Reflective Response

Now that your personal narrative is complete, reflect on the writing process. What was the most challenging part of composing your narrative? Which part would you consider the easiest?

Additional Chapter Sources

Amy Tan's short essay "Fish Cheeks" first appeared in *Seventeen* magazine. ©1987. All rights reserved. Included under Fair Use.

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CHAPTER 6: DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION

Shelly Rodrigue

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify techniques of descriptive writing, which will culminate in the writing of a descriptive essay
- Use sensory details in a logical order in each stage of the writing process

What Is Description?

Description is a report of observations made through using the five senses. A description includes all relevant details, such as characteristics or qualities, of a person, place, thing, or event. The use of these details invites readers to imagine that they can experience your subject as if they were seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching it. Another word for these **sensory details** in writing is **imagery**.

Description can serve one of two purposes:

Provide information objectively: the details used will be functional, impartial, or public. This type of description leaves out the writer's emotions. The subject is discussed both clearly and exactly so that readers easily understand it. Academic writing usually features this kind of description. One example would be a biology report on a particular species of fish. The writer might describe sensory data that would allow readers to easily identify this species such as color patterns, number of fins, habitat, and unique behaviors.

Provide information subjectively: the details used will be impressionistic, emotional, or personal. This type of description relies on the writer's feelings. The reader's understanding of the subject is guided and influenced by the writer's personal feelings about it. One example would be if you retold the experience of trying a new restaurant and explained why you did or did not like it.

Description is often essential to narration. It makes the narration livelier and allows the subjects in the narrative to be unmistakably clear.

The Organization of Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing can be organized in various ways. The three most common are **chronological** (time) order, **spatial** (location) order, and order of importance.

When describing an occasion such as a birthday party, a writer may use chronological order to describe a series of events in the order they unfolded. For example, the writer may describe the decorating of the venue, the arriving of the first guests, the singing of “Happy Birthday,” the cutting of the cake, the opening of presents, and the departing of the last guests. The larger event of the birthday party can be broken down into mini events that occur in a specific order. If the order of the events is changed, then readers may become confused. Giving readers a timeline they can follow is one strategy you can use to keep them engaged in your writing.

Describing things in spatial order is another way to keep readers’ attention. When describing a room, a writer may describe it floor to ceiling, left to right, or even near to far. This will help readers to envision a specific space. For example, a writer may want to describe an office. The writer might state that the wall opposite the door has a large window with thick blinds; on each side of the window, there is a six-foot-tall white bookcase; along the wall on the left side of the room is a teal velvet recliner over which a gold lamp leans; along the wall on the right side of the room is a small, oak desk with a rolling chair. Details such as these are much more exciting to readers than saying the room is 100 square feet with a window on one wall.

A third way to engage readers in your descriptive writing is to place the details in the order of importance. Some writers will start with the smallest detail and leave the most important detail for last, while others start with the most striking detail and gradually shift to the least important detail. For example, in describing a vampire, a writer might start with the red eyes or the long fangs and then mention the pale face or vice versa.

Other common components of descriptive writing are:

- **Similes** – comparing one thing to another in order to make a vivid description, usually using the words *like* or *as* (for example, her lips are as red as roses).
- **Metaphors** – applying a word or phrase to an object or action to which it is not usually applied (for example, the alligator’s teeth are white daggers).
- **Analogy** – making a comparison showing how two things are alike with the goal of pointing out something about the comparison (for example, fishing is like catching Pokémon; try as you might, you can never catch them all, and the biggest ones always get away).

Writing a Description

When writing a description, consider the five senses: tasting, touching, seeing, smelling, hearing. Most descriptions consist of a noun and one or more adjectives relating to the five senses. For example, to describe popcorn, a writer may say that it is soft, warm, buttery popcorn.

Keep in mind that adjectives follow a specific order in English: opinion (lovely, wonderful), size (big, small, short, tall), physical quality (smooth, rough, scaly), shape (round, square, circle), age (young, old), color (red, green, blue), origin (American, Japanese, Egyptian), material (metal, wood, plastic), type (four-sided, all-purpose), and purpose (cleaning, painting, cooking). Readers will expect you to follow this order, so deviating from it can cause confusion.

It is important to choose the most exact and precise words to create the clearest imagery you can for your readers. For example, a big house and a mansion have slightly different meanings. You want to choose the words that most accurately reflect your ideas.

Words have both **denotations** (literal meanings) and **connotations** (positive or negative associations). A writer's word choice can inform readers about the writer's **tone**, or attitude, toward the subject. For example, to show readers that a house is in great condition, a writer might describe a sturdy, new construction. The word *sturdy* implies that the writer sees the structure in a positive light. For the opposite case, a writer might describe a dilapidated shack. The word *dilapidated* tells readers that the writer likely views the structure in a negative light.

Professional Writing Example

Below is an excerpt of “Fish Cheeks” by Amy Tan. For the full essay, see the chapter on *Narration*. Here, Tan uses vivid description to help readers visualize her family's kitchen during a holiday dinner where her American and Chinese cultures clash.

Fish Cheeks

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns. The kitchen was littered with appalling mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A bowl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.

Questions for Discussion

1. What words reveal the author's tone?
2. How many adjectives can you find?
3. Which description seems to stand out the most?

4. To which of the five senses does Tan appeal? Give 3 examples.

Student Writing Example

The following essay, “My Spectacular Visit to the Arches,” was written by an English 101 student. This essay was written to describe the author’s favorite vacation. As you read the essay, look for descriptive language. See if you can find any similes, metaphors, or analogies.

My Spectacular Visit to the Arches

Throughout my life, my family and I have always wanted to travel west. Personally, I enjoy exploring new places that are unlike southern Louisiana. One place in particular that I especially wanted to visit was Arches National Park in Moab, Utah. I remember being amazed at how a place so different from my home could possibly exist. When I was around thirteen years old, my parents, my aunt, and I were finally able to go to Arches. For most people, traveling on a plane is a simple solution to going across the country in just a few hours. However, driving is the only safe option for me because I have an extremely severe peanut allergy. Even though I knew it would be difficult to travel eighteen hours for the trip, I was determined to see this majestic place in person.

After three days of driving, we arrived at our condo in Durango, Colorado. The day we visited Arches, we left our condo at 6 a.m. in order to get there early. I was so ecstatic to go that I could barely sleep during the previous night. When we reached a certain point on our drive, I noticed an obvious change of scenery. The ground suddenly became vastly more barren, and the green hills changed to red and orange. Approximately three hours later, we finally saw the sign for Arches. First, we went to the visitor center and picked up a few souvenirs. We then grabbed our tickets and traversed the park’s roads in our car. From the roads, we could see graceful arches and enormous mountains. I could even see the white-capped Rocky Mountains behind the extensive red terrain of Utah. Since we had been driving for so long, we got out of the car to have a picnic. I was delighted to be able to eat outside without being attacked by hordes of

mosquitoes like at home. My aunt remarked that she had never experienced a place that was as peaceful as this national park.

Following our picnic, we went hiking on some of the larger arches. It would have been an optimal day for hiking if not for the blustery cold wind. The wind may have been strong, but it could not compare to my desire to explore this otherworldly location. I can still remember when I climbed one arch and gazed upon the park. I was entranced by the sight so much that I tripped and fell. Luckily, I was not hurt, so we returned to our car and continued sightseeing. Along the ride, I saw a few more interesting formations. One arch was shaped like an elephant while another looked like there was a face engraved into a large rock. My favorite structure, the Balanced Rock, was a massive circular boulder on top of a thinner pillar. I was perplexed at how this configuration could defy gravity. On our way back, we saw a platform with several binoculars that were positioned toward the Delicate Arch. There was a giant drop off between the platform and the arch, so it was impossible to get any closer to it.

As we were about to leave, I noticed a sign for a path to the Delicate Arch. Although we knew it would be difficult to walk on a three-mile trail, my dad and I agreed that we could not waste this opportunity. We saw many other geological formations as we walked along the endless path. With every second we walked, my desire to reach the arch grew with more intensity. At some point, I heard a sound from a nearby bush. I thought that I saw a snake slithering under it. Even though I am usually scared of snakes, I continued on undeterred. Shortly after, we reached the arch. My excitement grew to new heights as we patiently waited for the other tourists to take their pictures. Once it was our turn to go take pictures, I rushed to stand underneath the Delicate Arch. I became overjoyed to be in the presence of a natural structure that has survived for millions of years. After we took our pictures, we slowly returned to our car still awe-inspired from what we witnessed. One of these pictures is even on my refrigerator today.

On the way back home, all I could think about was when we were going to return. To this day, Arches is the most magnificent place that I have ever seen. Some people would think that there is nothing special about looking at nature. However, I have never gotten the same feeling of amazement and astonishment that I received from visiting Arches. Although it took several days of driving for this visit, I am entirely grateful for having the opportunity. Perhaps in a few years, I will return to Arches and experience this feeling again.

Questions for Discussion

1. What descriptions does the author use to show a change in scenery?
2. How does the author describe the “interesting formations”?

3. What order is the information in: chronological, spatial, or importance? How do you know? Provide evidence from the essay.
4. What difference does the author notice between eating outside on this trip versus eating outside back home?

Your Turn

What is an exciting or interesting event you have experienced? Choose one moment from the event. What sights, sounds, smells, feelings, or tastes did you experience?

Key Terms

- Description
- Imagery
- Chronological order
- Spatial order
- Simile
- Metaphor
- Analogy
- Tone
- Connotation
- Denotation

- Sensory details

Summary/Conclusion

Description is the process of relaying information to readers based on observations you have made with your five senses. This information can be organized in a variety of ways, but the three most common are chronological, spatial, and order of importance. Comparisons are often a great way to provide vivid details to readers. Using description is a strategy that will help you to engage your readers.



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Reflective Response

Now that you have learned about description, how do you think your writing will change? What are some descriptive techniques you would like to try?

Additional Chapter Sources

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CHAPTER 7: DEFINITION

DEFINITION

Kirk Fontenot

Student Learning Outcomes

- Compose a clear, succinct definition of a nuanced term or concept.
- Illustrate a core definition by providing examples that represent the range of possible meanings of the term or concept.
- Understand and apply the concepts of denotation and connotation to increase clarity of a term or concept's definition.

What Is Definition?

Definition is the rhetorical mode that we use when our thesis includes a term that we define for our audience. This type of essay is not just a dictionary entry or an encyclopedia article. A definition essay includes a point that we are making about the term; in other words, it has a point of view.

It is important to keep our audience in mind as we compose the definition essay. Our essay must leave the reader with a clear understanding of the term and should not be filled with technical language or jargon. When selecting evidence for the essay, we should ask ourselves, “Is this going to help my reader understand what this term means?” We’ll only include the evidence if the answer is definitely yes.

Definition

We use definition in our writing and conversations all the time! Here are some examples:

Joe is too bossy.

The word *bossy* is a subjective term, meaning that different people may have different ideas of what it means to be bossy. In order to make your point, define *bossy* and provide examples of his bossy attitude (poor listening skills, shouting at people, making decisions without asking a committee—these are what define “bossy” in our argument).

Low-carb diets are dangerous.

While most people have heard the term low-carb, many may not actually know what it means. Define what constitutes “low-carb,” and define what you mean by “dangerous.” Cite studies showing harmful effects or how substances affect the body.

Definition essays may also incorporate other *rhetorical modes*.

- In this chapter, we will connect definition with *illustration/example*, which means to use specific examples as supporting evidence for your point. For instance, when writing about the dangers of low-carb diets, you might offer examples of fad diets that are low-carb.
- Definition essays may also use *descriptive narrative* writing. What if, when making the point that low-carb diets are dangerous, you included the personal experience of a dieter who experienced negative health consequences?
- Definition essays may also incorporate *compare and contrast*. In order to clarify what diets are actually low-carb, we could compare a low-carb diet such as the Paleo Diet to a diet that is not low-carb like intermittent fasting.

Denotation and Connotation

When writing a definition essay, it’s important to know that there are two elements to any good definition: *denotation* and *connotation*.

- **Denotation:** offering a literal and explicit definition of a word (to *denote* means “to indicate”)
- **Connotation:** positive or negative associations that make up an extended definition of a word

Examples of denotation and connotation

Both denotation and connotation work together to really flesh out a word. In a definition essay, denotation is critical because our reader needs concrete information to further their understanding. However, connotation is important, too. It is one way we create a point of view in our essay and develop our thesis.

Let's discuss some examples.

For the first example, think about the feelings you experience when you hear the word “Monday.” Jot down some initial thoughts. What springs to mind?

For most of us, there is a negative *connotation* to the word Monday. The alarm clock is more irritating on a Monday morning, or we might “have a case of the Mondays.” But this negative connotation has nothing to do with the literal definition, or *denotation*, of the word “Monday.” The denotation is just “the second day of the week” or “the first day of the work week.”

Try another example:

Think of the word “prejudice” for a moment. What comes to mind? Think about how we use the word in a conversation.

Now, google this: “define prejudice.” This dictionary definition is the denotation of the word. That definition may be literally correct, but what is it missing? Does this definition provide the feeling behind the word “prejudice”?

One final example:

Here’s a definition of “[democracy](#)” written by E.B. White during World War II. (We may know White from his most famous book, “Charlotte’s Web,” but he was more than a children’s author; he was also a respected essayist. He wrote on a wide variety of topics, and people respected his opinions. This brief piece appeared in *The New Yorker*’s Notes and Comments section on July 3, 1943.) White writes:

We received a letter from the Writers’ War Board the other day asking for a statement on “The Meaning of Democracy.” It presumably is our duty to comply with such a request, and it is certainly our pleasure.

Surely the Board knows what democracy is. It is the line that forms on the right. It is the don’t in don’t shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is a letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea which hasn’t been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. It’s the mustard on the hot dog and the cream in the rationed coffee. Democracy is a request from a War Board, in the middle of a morning in the middle of a war, wanting to know what democracy is.

White’s definition of “democracy” certainly captures the feelings—patriotism, morality, decency—but where is the literal definition? Does the word “government” appear anywhere? How about “constitution”? Or “representative”? Here, White is providing all connotation but no denotation. This definition served its purpose, but it wouldn’t help a high school student pass a Civics test.

So as we can see, denotation and connotation must work together. Writing about “prejudice,” for instance, as a neutral word with no negativity attached to it would be strange. In a definition essay, you will need facts

and concrete information for denotation and also elements such as narrative, examples, and description to create the appropriate connotation.

How to Write a Definition Essay

A definition essay can be deceptively difficult to write. This type of paper requires you to write a personal yet academic definition of one specific word. The definition must be thorough and lengthy. It is essential that you choose a word that will give you plenty to write about, and there are a few standard tactics you can use to elaborate on the term. Some definition essays will require some research, while others will rely on personal experience; this chapter will provide guidance for both options. Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind when writing a definition essay.

Part 1 of 3: Choosing the Right Word

1: Choose an abstract word with a complex meaning.

A simple word that refers to a concrete word will not give you much to write about, but a complex word that refers to an abstract concept provides more material to explore.

- Typically, nouns that refer to a person, place, or thing are too simple for a definition essay. Nouns that refer to an idea work better, however, as do most adjectives.
- For example, the word “house” is fairly simple, and an essay written around it may be dull. By switching to something slightly more abstract like “home,” however, you can play around with the definition more. A “home” is a concept, and there are many elements involved in the creation of a “home.” In comparison, a “house” is merely a structure.

2: Make sure that the word is disputable.

Aside from being complex, the word should also refer to something that can mean different things to different people.

- A definition essay is somewhat subjective by nature since it requires you to analyze and define a word from your own perspective. If the answer you come up with after analyzing a word is the same answer anyone else would come up with, your essay may appear to lack depth.

3: Choose a word you have some familiarity with.

Dictionary definitions can only tell you so much. Since you need to elaborate on the word you choose to define, you will need to have your own base of knowledge or experience with the concept you choose.

- For instance, if you have never heard the term “pedantic,” your understanding of the word will be limited. You can introduce yourself to the word for your essay, but without previous understanding of the concept, you will not know if the definition you describe is truly fitting.

4: Read the dictionary definition.

While you will not be relying completely on the dictionary definition for your essay, familiarizing yourself with the official definition will allow you to compare your own understanding of the concept with the simplest, most academic explanation of it.

- As an example, one definition of “friend” is “a person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard.” Your own ideas or beliefs about what a “friend” really is likely include much more information, but this basic definition can present you with a good starting point in forming your own.

5: Research the word’s origins.

Look up your chosen word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* or in another etymology dictionary.

- These sources can tell you the history behind a word, which can provide further insight into a general definition as well as information about how a word came to mean what it means today.

Part 2 of 3: Potential Elements of an Effective Definition

1: Write an analysis.

Separate a word into various parts. Analyze and define each part in its own paragraph.

- You can separate “return” into “re-” and “turn.” The word “friendship” can be separated into “friend” and “ship.”
- In order to analyze each portion of a word, you will still need to use additional defining tactics like negation and classification.
- Note that this tactic only works for words that contain multiple parts. The word “love,” for instance, cannot be broken down any further. If defining “platonic love,” though, you could define both “platonic” and “love” separately within your essay.

2: Classify the term.

Specify what classes and parts of speech a word belongs to according to a standard dictionary definition.

- While this information is very basic and dry, it can provide helpful context about the way that a given word is used.

3: Compare an unfamiliar term to something familiar.

An unfamiliar or uncommon concept can be explained using concepts that are more accessible to the average person.

- Many people have never heard of the term “confrere,” for instance. One basic definition is “a fellow member of a profession, fraternity, etc.” As such, you could compare “confrere” with “colleague,” which is a similar yet more familiar concept.

4: Provide traditional details about the term.

Explain any physical characteristics or traditional thoughts used to describe your term of choice.

- The term “home” is often visualized physically as a house or apartment. In more abstract terms, “home” is traditionally thought to be a warm, cozy, and safe environment. You can include all of these features in a definition essay on “home.”

5: Use examples to illustrate the meaning.

People often relate to stories and vivid images, so a fitting story or image that relates to the term can be used in clarifying an abstract, formless concept.

- In a definition essay about “kindness,” for example, you could write about an act of kindness you recently witnessed. Someone who mows the lawn of an elderly neighbor is a valid example, just as someone who gave you an encouraging word when you were feeling down might be.

6: Use negation to explain what the term does not mean.

If a term is often misused or misunderstood, mentioning what it is not is an effective way to bring the concept into focus.

- A common example would be the term “courage.” The term is often associated with a lack of fear, but many will argue that “courage” is more accurately described as acting in spite of fear.

7: Provide background information.

This is when your research about the etymology of a word will come in handy. Explain where the term originated and how it came to mean what it currently means.

Part 3 of 3: Definition Essay Structure

1: Introduce the standard definition.

You need to clearly state what your word is along with its traditional or dictionary definition in your introductory paragraph.

- By opening with the dictionary definition of your term, you create context and a basic level of knowledge about the word. This will allow you to introduce and elaborate on your own definition.
- This is especially significant when the traditional definition of your term varies from your own definition in notable ways.

2: Define the term in your own words in your thesis.

Your actual thesis statement should define the term in your own words.

- Keep the definition in your thesis brief and basic. You will elaborate on it more in the body of your paper.
- Do not repeat part of the defined term in your definition.

3: Separate different parts of the definition into separate paragraphs.

Each tactic or method used to define your term should be explored in a separate paragraph.

- Note that you do not need to use all the possible methods of defining a term in your essay. You should use a variety of different methods in order to create a full, well-rounded picture of the term, but some tactics will work great with some terms but not with others.

4: Conclude with a summary of your main points.

Briefly summarize your main points around the start of your concluding paragraph.

- This summary does not need to be elaborate. Usually, looking at the topic sentence of each body paragraph is a good way to form a simple list of your main points.
- You can also draw the essay to a close by referring to phrases or images evoked in your introduction.

5: Mention how the definition has affected you, if desired.

If the term you define plays a part in your own life and experiences, your final concluding remarks are a good place to briefly mention the role it plays.

- Relate your experience with the term to the definition you created for it in your thesis. Avoid sharing experiences that relate to the term but contradict everything you wrote in your essay.

Professional Writing Example

The Downside of Cohabiting before Marriage by Meg Jay

At 32, one of my clients (I'll call her Jennifer) had a lavish wine-country wedding. By then, Jennifer and her boyfriend had lived together for more than four years. The event was attended by the couple's friends, families, and two dogs.

When Jennifer started therapy with me less than a year later, she was looking for a divorce lawyer. "I spent more time planning my wedding than I spent happily married," she sobbed. Most disheartening to Jennifer was that she'd tried to do everything right. "My parents got married young so, of course, they got divorced. We lived together! How did this happen?"

Cohabitation in the United States has increased by more than 1,500 percent in the past half century. In 1960, about 450,000 unmarried couples lived together. Now the number is more than 7.5 million. The majority of young adults in their 20s will live with a romantic partner at least once, and more than half of all marriages will be preceded by cohabitation. This shift has been attributed to the sexual revolution and the availability of birth control, and in our current economy, sharing the bills makes cohabiting appealing. But when you talk to people in their 20s, you also hear about something else: cohabitation as prophylaxis.

In a nationwide survey conducted in 2001 by the National Marriage Project, then at Rutgers and now at the University of Virginia, nearly half of 20-somethings agreed with the statement, "You would only marry someone if he or she agreed to live together with you first, so that you could find out whether you really get along." About two-thirds said they believed that moving in together before marriage was a good way to avoid divorce.

But that belief is contradicted by experience. Couples who cohabit before marriage (and especially before an engagement or an otherwise clear commitment) tend to be less satisfied with their marriages — and more likely to divorce — than couples who do not. These negative outcomes are called the cohabitation effect.

Researchers originally attributed the cohabitation effect to selection, or the idea that cohabitators were less conventional about marriage and thus more open to divorce. As cohabitation has become a norm, however, studies have shown that the effect is not entirely explained by individual characteristics like religion, education or politics. Research suggests that at least some of the risks may lie in cohabitation itself.

As Jennifer and I worked to answer her question, “How did this happen?” we talked about how she and her boyfriend went from dating to cohabiting. Her response was consistent with studies reporting that most couples say it “just happened.”

“We were sleeping over at each other’s places all the time,” she said. “We liked to be together, so it was cheaper and more convenient. It was a quick decision but if it didn’t work out there was a quick exit.”

She was talking about what researchers call “sliding, not deciding.” Moving from dating to sleeping over to sleeping over a lot to cohabitation can be a gradual slope, one not marked by rings or ceremonies or sometimes even a conversation. Couples bypass talking about why they want to live together and what it will mean.

WHEN researchers ask cohabitators these questions, partners often have different, unspoken — even unconscious — agendas. Women are more likely to view cohabitation as a step toward marriage, while men are more likely to see it as a way to test a relationship or postpone commitment, and this gender asymmetry is associated with negative interactions and lower levels of commitment even after the relationship progresses to marriage. One thing men and women do agree on, however, is that their standards for a live-in partner are lower than they are for a spouse.

Sliding into cohabitation wouldn’t be a problem if sliding out were as easy. But it isn’t. Too often, young adults enter into what they imagine will be low-cost, low-risk living situations only to find themselves unable to get out months, even years, later. It’s like signing up for a credit card with 0 percent interest. At the end of 12 months when the interest goes up to 23 percent you feel stuck because your balance is too high to pay off. In fact, cohabitation can be exactly like that. In behavioral economics, it’s called consumer lock-in.

Lock-in is the decreased likelihood to search for, or change to, another option once an investment in something has been made. The greater the setup costs, the less likely we are to move to another, even better, situation, especially when faced with switching costs, or the time, money, and effort it requires to make a change.

Cohabitation is loaded with setup and switching costs. Living together can be fun and economical, and the setup costs are subtly woven in. After years of living among roommates’ junky old stuff, couples happily split the rent on a nice one-bedroom apartment. They share wireless and pets and enjoy shopping for new furniture together. Later, these setup and switching costs have an impact on how likely they are to leave.

Jennifer said she never really felt that her boyfriend was committed to her. “I felt like I was on this multiyear, never-ending audition to be his wife,” she said. “We had all this furniture. We had our dogs and all the same friends. It just made it really, really difficult to break up. Then it was like we got married because we were living together once we got into our 30s.”

I’ve had other clients who also wish they hadn’t sunk years of their 20s into relationships that would have lasted only months had they not been living together. Others want to feel committed to their partners, yet they are confused about whether they have consciously chosen their mates. Founding relationships on convenience or ambiguity can interfere with the process of claiming the people we love. A life built on top of “maybe you’ll do” simply may not feel as dedicated as a life built on top of the “we do” of commitment or marriage.

The unfavorable connection between cohabitation and divorce does seem to be lessening, however, according to a report released last month by the Department of Health and Human Services. More good news is that a 2010 survey by the Pew Research Center found that nearly two-thirds of Americans saw cohabitation as a step toward marriage.

This shared and serious view of cohabitation may go a long way toward further attenuating the cohabitation effect because the most recent research suggests that serial cohabitators, couples with differing levels of commitment and those who use cohabitation as a test are most at risk for poor relationship quality and eventual relationship dissolution.

Cohabitation is here to stay, and there are things young adults can do to protect their relationships from the cohabitation effect. It’s important to discuss each person’s motivation and commitment level beforehand and, even better, to view cohabitation as an intentional step toward, rather than a convenient test for, marriage or partnership.

It also makes sense to anticipate and regularly evaluate constraints that may keep you from leaving.

I am not for or against living together, but I am for young adults knowing that, far from safeguarding against divorce and unhappiness, moving in with someone can increase your chances of making a mistake — or of spending too much time on a mistake. A mentor of mine used to say, “The best time to work on someone’s marriage is before he or she has one,” and in our era, that may mean before cohabitation.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the main term that is being defined in the essay?

2. The essay begins with the specific example about “Jennifer.” Does this example provide *denotation* or *connotation*? Explain.
3. Do you feel the writer is creating a positive or negative connotation to the term? To that end, how does the essay define “the cohabitation effect”?
4. According to the essay, what does “sliding, not deciding” mean? Describe an example of “sliding, not deciding” from your own life.
5. After reading the essay, do you feel that you have a clear grasp of the meaning of the term? Explain.

Student Writing Example

Chris Thurman

Cohen

English 111

12/01/10

Extended Definition Essay

When one thinks of the most important quality in a friend or a family member, trust immediately comes to mind. It can be defined as reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, and surety of a person or thing. But what does it really mean? Trust, in simple terms, is faith in another person, despite a lack of an assured outcome.

One characteristic that makes trust unique is its fragility. To gain the trust of a parent or friend, one must continuously prove one’s honesty and reliability. To gain the complete trust of someone can take years, but can be lost in a single moment. A perfect example of the delicate nature of trust can be found in marriage. Two spouses must constantly support and be honest with each other to gain real trust. However, this bond can be easily broken if one of the spouses is caught cheating with someone else. Trust in another person can make one feel secure and loved, while broken trust can lead to the feeling of anger and vulnerability.

One very important question arises when examining trust: If one knows the outcome of

something before it happens, is there any trust involved? For example, a friend asks to borrow \$10,000 so that he can invest it in a company, and receive more money in return. If one already knew that they would get the money back at the time of the loan, there is no trust involved. However, if the investment seems very risky, and the only thing that made one approve is the friend's promise of success, then genuine trust takes place. The person that is doing the trusting should have faith in the person making the promise, not in the event itself. Real trust is not tested in times of certainty; rather, genuine trust occurs when we are not certain of the outcome.

Trust can be found in simple things, like a dog relying on his master to feed him, or it can be found in more complex relationships such as two police officers looking out for each other. Most friendships are based on trust as well. Friends will not let other friends make bad decisions and will expect that others will do the same for them. Trust can be proven to others by doing the right thing even when one is not asked. If other people know that one can handle responsibility and can manage to do the right thing, even when they are not asked, they will not falter in providing friendship and support.

Trust has always been a part of everyone's life whether or not they are aware of it. From the time we are born, we know that our mother will care for us and show us love and affection. In our teenage years we hope that our friends and family alike will support our decisions and correct us if we are wrong. To our college years, we expect that our teachers will accurately grade everything we do. We even expect our spouse to support and love us throughout our adult years. We rely on others to take care of our every need when we are old. Even on the day that we die, we know that our friends and family will be at our funeral to bid us farewell into the afterlife. We hope that there is a heaven and a hell, one of which will be our final destination. But throughout our lives, trust follows us everywhere we go and these trusting relationships that we develop will help lead and guide us. But when it all comes down to it, who can we trust?

Discussion Questions

1. What is the term that is being defined in the essay?
2. Where in the essay do we find an example of denotation?
3. After reading the essay, would you say there is a positive or negative connotation to the term?
4. Is this a personal or researched definition essay? Was it the right choice for this topic? Explain.

5. After reading the essay, do you feel that you have a clear grasp of the meaning of the term? Explain.

Your Turn

When was the last time that you learned a new word? Was it a concept you learned in the classroom, an unfamiliar term you heard in the news, or a word someone used in conversation? How did you learn the meaning? Use a prewriting technique to plan an essay in which you teach a friend the definition of this new word.

Key Terms

- Definition
- Illustration/example
- Denotation
- Connotation

Summary

- Definition writing teaches the audience the meaning of an unfamiliar term.
- Definition writing is not “dictionary writing.”

- A basic definition and an extended definition are both necessary components.
- Denotation refers to the literal definition of a word.
- Connotation refers to the positive or negative perception of a word.
- Definition essays may incorporate other rhetorical modes such as compare/contrast and illustration/example.



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Reflective Response

Once you have read this chapter and written a definition essay, think about your expectations when you first saw the title of the chapter. What turned out to be different from your expectations? Which of your expectations turned out to be correct?

Additional Chapter Sources

“The Meaning of Democracy” by E.B. White appeared in the July 3, 1943, issue of *The New Yorker*. All rights reserved. Used under Fair Use.

“The Downside of Marriage” by Meg Jay appeared in the April 14, 2012, issue of *The New York Times*. All rights reserved. Used under Fair Use.

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VIDEO: THESIS EXPLAINED

This lecture covers:

- That a thesis is
- Important parts of a thesis
- Tips for writing a quality thesis



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/englishcomp1/?p=119#oembed-1>

“[How to Write a Strong Thesis Statement](#)” by Scribbr can be found online. Posted Jan 10, 2020. YouTube standard licensing terms apply.



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EFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENTS

What Is a Thesis Statement?

- A thesis statement tells a reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion. Such a statement is also called an “argument,” a “main idea,” or a “controlling idea.”
- A good thesis has two parts. It should tell what you plan to argue, and it should “telegraph” how you plan to argue—that is, what particular support for your claim is going where in your essay.
- A standard place for your thesis is at the end of the introductory paragraph.
- A thesis is an interpretation of a subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or Moby Dick; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel that others might dispute.
- A strong thesis not only grabs the interest of your reader, who now wants to see you support your unique interpretation; it also provides a focus for your argument, one to which every part of your paper refers in the development of your position.
- A thesis keeps the writer centered on the matter at hand and reduces the risk of intellectual wandering. Likewise, a thesis provides the reader with a “road map,” clearly laying out the intellectual route ahead.
- A thesis statement avoids the first person (“I believe,” “In my opinion”).

A simple equation for a thesis might look like this:

What you plan to argue + How you plan to argue it = Thesis

Specific topic + Attitude/angle/argument = Thesis

Steps to Write an Effective Thesis Statement

- Choose a prompt or, if appropriate, select a topic: *television violence and children*.
- Read the prompt carefully or, if appropriate, ask an interesting question:
 - *What are the effects of television violence on children?*
- Revise the prompt or question into a preliminary or “working” thesis:
 - *Violence on television increases aggressive behavior in children.*
- Avoid general phrasing and/or sweeping words such as “all” or “none” or “every.”
- Lead the reader toward the topic sentences (the subtopics needed to prove the thesis).
- Anticipate the counterarguments. Once you have a working thesis, you should think about what might be said against it. This will help you to refine your thesis, and it will also make you think of the

arguments that you'll need to refute later on in your essay. (Every argument has a counterargument. If yours doesn't, then it's not an argument—it may be a fact or an opinion, but it is not an argument.)

- *Violence on television increases aggressive behavior in children.*
- This statement is **on its way** to being a thesis. However, it is too easy to imagine possible counterarguments. For example, an observer of societal trends may believe that parenting or easy access to weapons are important factors in youth violence. If you *complicate* your thesis by anticipating the counterargument, you'll strengthen your argument, as shown in the sentence below.
 - *While poor parenting and easy access to weapons may act as contributory factors, in fact, when children are exposed to television violence, they become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, are more fearful of the world around them, and are more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.*

The Components of an Effective Thesis Statement

- You can't just pluck a thesis out of thin air. Even if you have a terrific insight concerning a topic, it won't be worth much unless you can logically and persuasively support it in the body of your essay. A thesis is the evolutionary result of a thinking process, not a miraculous creation. Formulating a thesis is not the first thing you do after reading an essay assignment.
- An effective thesis statement fulfills the following criteria:
 - Substantial – Your thesis should be a claim for which it is easy to answer every reader's question: "So what?"
 - Supportable – A thesis must be a claim that you can prove with the evidence at hand (e.g., evidence from your texts or from your research). Your claim should not be outlandish, nor should it be mere personal opinion or preference (e.g., "Frederick Douglass is my favorite historical figure"). It tackles a subject that could be adequately covered in the format of the project assigned.
 - Precise – It is focused and specific. A strong thesis proves a point without discussing everything. It clearly asserts your own conclusion based on evidence. Note: Be flexible. It is perfectly okay to change your thesis!
 - Arguable – It should be contestable, proposing an arguable point with which people could reasonably disagree.
 - Relevant – If you are responding to an assignment, the thesis should answer the question your teacher has posed. In order to stay focused, pay attention to the task words in the assignment: summarize, argue, compare/contrast, etc.
 - Aware of Counters – It anticipates and refutes the counterarguments.

The best thesis statement is a balance of specific details and concise language. Your goal is to articulate an argument in detail without burdening the reader with too much information.

Questions to Review Your Thesis

- “Do I answer the question?” This might seem obvious, but it’s worth asking. No matter how intriguing or dazzling, a thesis that doesn’t answer the question is not a good thesis!
- “Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?” If not, then you probably do not have a strong argument. Theses that are too vague often have this problem. If your thesis contains vague words like “good” or “successful,” see if you could be more specific: why is something “good”; what makes something “successful”?
- Would anyone possibly care about this thesis? So what? Does your thesis present a position or an interpretation worth pursuing? If a reader’s first response is, “So what?” then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
- “Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?” Just as a thesis that doesn’t answer the question ultimately fails, so does a thesis that isn’t properly supported with evidence and reasoning.
- Does my thesis statement adequately address the direction words of the prompt: summarize, argue, compare/contrast, analyze, discuss, etc.?

Myths about Thesis Statements

- Every paper requires one. Assignments that ask you to write personal responses or to explore a subject don’t want you to seem to pre-judge the issues. Essays of literary interpretation often want you to be aware of many effects rather than seeming to box yourself into one view of the text.
- A thesis statement must come at the end of the first paragraph. This is a natural position for a statement of focus, but it’s not the only one. Some theses can be stated in the opening sentences of an essay; others need a paragraph or two of introduction; others can’t be fully formulated until the end.
- A thesis statement must be one sentence in length, no matter how many clauses it contains. Clear writing is more important than rules like these. Use two or three sentences if you need them. A complex argument may require a whole tightly-knit paragraph to make its initial statement of position.
- You can’t start writing an essay until you have a perfect thesis statement. It may be advisable to draft a hypothesis or tentative thesis statement near the start of a big project, but changing and refining a thesis is a main task of thinking your way through your ideas as you write a paper. And some essay projects need to explore the question in depth without being locked in before they can provide even a tentative answer.
- A thesis statement must give three points of support. It should indicate that the essay will explain and give evidence for its assertion, but points don’t need to come in any specific number.

Progressively Complex Thesis Statements

Thesis Statement #1: The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.

Evaluation: The worst thesis imaginable (other than non-existent). You've said nothing of value.

Thesis Statement #2: While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.

Evaluation: A good pre-draft thesis. Not a bad start at all. Here's the catch and the time-consuming part of the process. As you write, your argument may become more refined or changed. When it does, so should the thesis.

Thesis Statement #3: While there were many underlying causes of the Civil War, three factors converged to make conflict inevitable: the issue of slavery, the idea of states' rights, and the fight to control the future of the West.

Evaluation: A solid preview of your argument and the main points you intend to make. This would be a strong approach for a persuasive or exemplification essay.

Thesis Statement #4: While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own rights to property and self-government.

Evaluation: Good! The thesis statement is nuanced, recognizing the existence of an opposing point of view while strongly defending your point. It is relatively specific yet concise—and doesn't make the reader want to stop reading.



CHAPTER 8: ILLUSTRATION/ EXAMPLE

ILLUSTRATION/EXAMPLE

Kirk Fontenot

Student Learning Outcomes

- Characterize the purpose of the illustration/example essay
- Determine the best structure for the illustration/example essay
- Compose an illustration/example essay

Introduction to Illustration/Example

To **illustrate** means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective **illustration essay** clearly demonstrates and supports a point using examples and **evidence**. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader “see” your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

Illustration/example writing simply means using specific examples to illustrate your point. Every essay has a point called the **thesis statement**. The thesis statement is the point you’re trying to make, stated clearly in one sentence. The rest of the essay is all about proving that point using different types of evidence.

The key to illustration/example is to use *specific* examples. General statements don’t make much of an impact on our reader; in other words, they’re boring. No one wants to read a boring essay, so why would you want to write one?

When thinking of examples, don’t try to come up with examples that can apply to everyone and every situation; these are general (i.e., boring) examples. Instead, think of specific, personal, interesting, unique examples.

Here’s an example of general writing that we should avoid:

I was raised in South Louisiana, and I just don't like the cooking up here. People here like their food too bland; I like to season the things that I eat. There are only a few local restaurants that season their food the way that I like. There are certain dishes that were my favorites back home that I won't even touch now that I live here. I guess everyone has different tastes.

There's nothing wrong with this writing grammatically, but it's *boring*.

Compare this to more specific writing:

I was raised in South Louisiana, and I just don't like the cooking since moving north. People in Shreveport like their food too bland; I like my food well-seasoned, even spicy. I like a kick! Only a few restaurants that promise Cajun cuisine, like Bistro Byronz and Shane's, season their fried catfish or their seafood gumbo the way Dad does. Boiled crawfish was always my favorite as a kid, but I won't even go to a crawfish boil in Shreveport; everyone complains that even mildly seasoned crawfish is "too hot." South Louisiana Cajuns clearly have a higher tolerance for spiciness!

The second example is specific, personal, and more interesting. The writer names specific restaurants and specific foods.

Illustration/example is an important rhetorical mode because specific examples are always a great way to make an essay more interesting, no matter what the writing prompt. In fact, if a rough draft of an essay is ever too short, don't ever add filler; instead, add specific examples to get to the right length.

To make an essay more interesting, we can add:

- Hypothetical examples that we make up
- Real-life specific examples from personal experience (when appropriate)
- Interesting examples that we read about

In this module, you will develop your skills in illustration/example writing.

The Purpose of Illustration in Writing

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay, also known as an example essay, clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence.

The controlling idea of an essay is called a thesis. A writer can use different types of evidence to support their thesis. Using scientific studies, experts in a particular field, statistics, historical events, current events, analogies, and personal anecdotes are all ways in which a writer can illustrate a thesis. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader “see” your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

Using evidence effectively can be challenging, though. The evidence you choose will usually depend on your subject and who your reader is (your audience). When writing an illustration essay, keep in mind the following:

- Use evidence that is appropriate to your topic as well as appropriate for your audience.
- Ask yourself: How much evidence do you need to adequately explain your point? Consider how complex your subject is and how much background your audience may already have.

For example, if you were writing about a new communication software and your audience was a group of English major undergrads, you might want to use an analogy or a personal story to illustrate how the software worked. You might also choose to add a few more pieces of evidence to make sure the audience understands your point.

However, if you were writing about the same subject and your audience members were information technology (IT) specialists, you would likely use more technical evidence because they would be familiar with the subject.

Keeping your audience in mind will increase your chances of effectively illustrating your point.

The Structure of an Illustration Essay

The controlling idea, or thesis, belongs at the beginning of the essay. Evidence is then presented in the essay’s body paragraphs to support the thesis. You can start supporting your main point with your strongest evidence first, or you can start with evidence of lesser importance and have the essay build to increasingly stronger evidence. This type of organization is called “order of importance.”

Transition words are also helpful in ordering the presentation of evidence. Words like *first*, *second*, *third*, *currently*, *next*, and *finally* all help orient the reader and sequence evidence clearly. Because an illustration essay uses so many examples, it is also helpful to have a list of words and phrases to present each piece of evidence. Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Phrases of Illustration

case in point for example
for instance in particular
in this case one example/another example
specifically to illustrate

Vary the phrases of illustration you use. Do not rely on just one. Variety in choice of words and phrasing is critical when trying to keep readers engaged in your writing and your ideas.

Writing an Illustration Essay

First, decide on a topic that you feel interested in writing about. Then create an interesting introduction to engage the reader. The main point, or thesis, should be stated at the end of the introduction.

Gather evidence that is appropriate to both your subject and your audience. You can order the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important. Be sure to fully explain all of your examples using strong, clear supporting details.

Professional Illustration/Example Writing

In “April & Paris,” writer David Sedaris explores the unique impact of animals on the human psyche. Click on the link to view the essay [“April & Paris” by David Sedaris](#) or read it below.

April & Paris by David Sedaris

While watching TV one recent evening, I stumbled upon a nature program devoted to the subject of making nature programs. The cameraman’s job was to catch a bird of paradise in full display, so he dug himself a hole, covered it with branches, and sat inside it for three weeks. This was in New Guinea, where the people used to wear sexy loincloths but now stand around

in T-shirts reading “I survived the 2002 IPC Corporate Challenge Weekend.” A villager might wear a pair of gym shorts and then add a fanny pack or a sun visor with the name of a riverboat casino stitched onto the brim. I suppose that these things came from a relief organization. Either that or a cruise ship went down and this was what had washed up onshore.

I’ll wager that quite a few sun visors found their way to Southeast Asia after the tsunami. One brutal news story after another, and it went on for weeks. The phone numbers of aid organizations would skitter across the bottom of the TV screen, and I recall thinking that if they wanted serious donations they ought to show a puppy. People I know, people who had never before contributed to charity, emptied their pockets when a cocker spaniel was shown standing on a rooftop after Hurricane Katrina hit, eight months later. “What choice did I have?” they asked. “That poor little thing looked into the camera and penetrated my very soul.”

The eyes of the stranded grandmother, I noted, were not half as piercing. There she was, clinging to a chimney with her bra strap showing, and all anyone did was wonder if she had a dog. “I’d hate to think there’s a Scotty in her house, maybe trapped on the first floor. What’s the number of that canine-rescue agency?”

Saying that this was everyone’s reaction is, of course, an exaggeration. There were cat people, too, and those whose hearts went out to the abandoned reptiles. The sight of an iguana sailing down the street on top of a refrigerator sent a herpetologist friend over the edge. “She seems to be saying, ‘Where’s my master?’” he speculated. “‘Here it is, time for our daily cuddle and I’m stuck on the S.S. Whirlpool!!!’”

I’ve often heard that anthropomorphizing an animal is the worst injustice you can do to it. That said, I’m as guilty of it as anyone. In childhood stories, the snail might grab her purse and dash out the door to put money in the meter. The rabbit cries when the blue jay makes fun of her buckteeth. The mouse loves his sister but not that way. They’re just like us! we think.

Certain nature shows only add to this misconception, but that, to me, is why they’re so addictive. Take “Growing Up Camel,” a program my friend Ronnie and I watched one evening. It was set in a small, privately owned zoo somewhere in Massachusetts. The camel in question was named Patsy, and the narrator reminded us several times that she had been born on Super Bowl Sunday. While still an infant (the football stadium probably not even cleared yet), she was taken from her mother. Now she was practically grown, and the narrator announced a reunion: “Today Patsy has reached what may be the biggest milestone in her life—moving back in with her mom.”

In the next segment, the two were reintroduced, and the grumpy old mother chased her daughter around the pen. When the opportunity arose, she bit Patsy on the backside, and pretty hard, it seemed to me. This was the camels not getting along and it wasn't too terribly different from the way they acted when they did get along.

When the next break approached, the narrator hooked us with "When we continue, a heartbreaking event that will change Patsy's life forever."

I'd have put my money on an amputated leg, but it turned out to be nothing that dramatic. What happened was that the mother got bone cancer and died. The veterinarian took it hard, but Patsy didn't seem to care one way or another, and why would she, really? All her mom ever did was browbeat her and steal her food, so wasn't she better off on her own?

The zookeepers worried that if Patsy were left alone she would forget how to be a camel, and so they imported some company, a male named Josh and his girlfriend, Josie, who were shipped in from Texas. The final shot was of the three of them, standing in the sunshine and serenely ignoring one another. Ronnie cleared her throat and said, "So that's what became of the little camel who was born on Super Bowl Sunday." She turned on the light and looked me in the face. "Are you crying?"

I told her I had an ash in my eye.

"Growing Up Camel" had its merits, but I think I prefer the more serious kind of nature show, the kind that follows its subject through the wild. This could be a forest, a puddle, or a human intestinal tract, it makes no difference. Show me a tiger or show me a tapeworm, and I'll watch with equal intensity. In this sort of program we see the creature's world reduced to its basic components: food, safety, and reproduction. It's a constant chain of desperation and heartache, the gist being that life is hard, and then it ends violently. I know I should watch these things with an air of detachment, but time and again I forget myself. The show will run its course, and afterward I'll lie on the sofa, shattered by the death of a doda or a guib, one of those four-letter antelope-type things which are forever turning up in my crossword puzzles.

Apart from leaving me spent and depressed, such programs remind me that I am rarely, if ever, alone. If there's not an insect killing time on the ceiling, there's surely a mite staring out from the bath towel, or a parasite resting on the banks of my bloodstream. I'm reminded, too, that, however repellent, each of these creatures is fascinating, and worthy of a miniseries.

This was a lesson I learned a few summers back, in Normandy. I was at my desk one afternoon writing a letter when I heard a faint buzzing sound, like a tiny car switching into a higher gear. Curious, I went to the window, and there, in a web, I saw what looked like an angry raisin. It

was a trapped fly, and as I bent forward to get a closer look a spider rushed forth, and carried it screaming to a little woven encampment situated between the wall and the window casing. It was like watching someone you hate getting mugged: three seconds of hardcore violence, and when it was over you just wanted it to happen again.

It's hard to recall having no working knowledge of the *Tegenaria duellica*, but that's what I was back then—a greenhorn with a third-rate field guide. All I knew was that this was a spider, a big one, the shape of an unshelled peanut. In color it ranged from russet to dark brown, the shades alternating to form a mottled pattern on the abdomen. I later learned that the *Tegenaria* can live for up to two years, and that this was an adult female. At that moment, though, as I stood at the window with my mouth hanging open, all I recognized was a profound sense of wonder.

How had I spent so much time in that house and never realized what was going on around me? If the *Tegenaria* barked or went after my food, I might have picked up on them earlier, but, as it was, they were as quiet and unobtrusive as Amish farmers. Outside mating season, they pretty much stayed put, a far cry from the Carolina wolf spiders I grew up with. Those had been hunters rather than trappers. Big shaggy things the size of a baby's hand, they roamed the basement of my parents' house, and evoked from my sisters the prolonged, spine-tingling screams called for in movies when the mummy invades the delicate lady's dressing room. "Kill it!" they'd yell, and then I'd hear a half-dozen shoes hitting the linoleum, followed by a world atlas or maybe a piano stool—whatever was heavy and close at hand.

I was put off by the wolf spiders as well, but never thought that they were out to get me. For starters, they didn't seem that organized. Then, too, I figured they had their own lives to lead. This was an attitude I picked up from my father, who squashed nothing that was not directly related to him. "You girls," he'd say, and no matter how big the thing was he'd scoot it onto a newspaper and release it outside. Come bedtime, I'd knock on my sisters' door and predict that the spider was now crawling to the top of the house, where he'd take a short breather before heading down the chimney. "I read in the encyclopedia that this particular breed is known for its tracking ability, and that once they've pegged their victims almost nothing will stop them. Anyway, good night."

My sisters would have been horrified by the house in Normandy, as would most people, probably. Even before I joined the American Arachnological Society, the place looked haunted, cobwebs sagging like campaign bunting from the rafters and curtain rods. If one was in my way, I'd knock it down. But that all changed when I discovered that first *Tegenaria*—April, I called her. After writing her name on an index card and taping it to the wall, I found my interest spreading to her neighbors. The window they lived in was like a tenement building, one

household atop another, on either side of the frame. Above April was Marty, and then Curtis and Paula. Across the way were Linda, Russell, Big Chief Tommy, and a sexless little speck of a thing I decided to call Leslie. And this was just one window.

Seeing as I'd already broken the No. 1 rule of a good nature documentary—not to give names to your subjects—I went ahead and broke the next one, which was not to get involved in their lives. “Manipulating,” my boyfriend, Hugh, would call it, but, to my mind, that was a bit too mad scientist. Manipulating is cross-breeding, or setting up death matches with centipedes. What I was doing was simply called feeding.

No *Tegenaria*, or at least none that I've observed, wants anything to do with a dead insect, even a freshly dead one. A spider's food needs to be alive and struggling, and because our house was overrun, and I had some time on my hands, I decided to help out. In my opinion, the best place to catch flies is against a windowpane. Something about the glass seems to confuse them, and they get even dopier when you come at them with an open jar. Once one was in, I'd screw on the lid and act like I was shaking a cocktail. The little body would slam against the sides, and, as Hugh went progressively Gandhi on me, I'd remind him that these were pests, disease carriers who feasted upon the dead, and then came indoors to dance on our silverware. “I mean, come on,” I said. “You can't feel sorry for everything.”

The *Tegenaria* build what I soon learned to call “horizontal sheet webs”—dense trampoline-like structures that are most often triangular, and range in size from that of a folded handkerchief to that of a placemat. Once my prey was good and woozy, I'd unscrew the lid, and tip the jar toward the waiting spider. The fly would drop, and, after lying still for a moment or two, it would begin to twitch and rouse itself, a cartoon drunk coming to after a long night. “What the fuck...?” I imagined it saying. Then it would notice the wings and foreheads of earlier victims. “I've got to get out of here.” A whisper of footsteps off in the distance, and just as the fly tasted futility, the monster was upon it.

“And cut!” I would yell.

Watching this spectacle became addictive, and so, in turn, did catching flies. There were days when I'd throw a good three dozen of them to their deaths—this at the expense of everything else I was supposed to be doing. As the spiders moved from healthy to obese, their feet tore holes in their webs. Running became a chore, and I think their legs started chafing. By this point, there was no denying my emotional attachment. There were nights that first summer when I'd get out of bed at 3 A.M. and wander into my office with a flashlight. Everyone would be wide-awake, but it was always April that I singled out. If I thought about her a hundred times a day, it seemed only fair that she thought about me as well. My name, my face: I didn't

expect these things to register, but, in the way that a body feels the warmth of the sun, I fully imagined that she sensed my presence, and missed it when I was away.

“That’s all right,” I’d tell her. “It’s only me.” Often, I’d take out my magnifying glass and stare into the chaos that was her face.

Most people would have found it grotesque, but when you’re in love nothing is so abstract or horrible that it can’t be thought of as cute. It slayed me that she had eight eyes, and that none of them seemed to do her any good. They were more like decoration, really, a splay of beads crowded above her chelicerae. These were what she used to grip her prey, and if you looked at her the right way you could see them as a pair of enormous buckteeth. This made her appear goofy rather than scary, though I’d never have said so in her presence. For a *Tegenaria*, she was quite attractive, and I was glad to see that Principal Hodges shared my view. He was a freshly molted adult male who travelled from the other side of the room and spent six days inside her inner sanctum. Why Marty or Curtis or Big Chief Tommy didn’t mate with April is a mystery, and I put it on a list beside other nagging questions, such as “What was Jesus like as a teenager?” and “Why is it you never see a baby squirrel?”

As the summer progressed, so did the mysteries. Spiders relocated, both male and female, and I started noticing a lot of spare parts—a forsaken leg or palp lying in a web that used to belong to Paula or Philip or the Right Reverend Karen. Someone new would move in, and, as soon as I tacked up a fresh name card, he or she would vacate without notice. What had once seemed like a fine neighborhood quickly became a dangerous one, the tenants all thuggish and transitory. Maybe April was more respected than anyone else in her window unit. Maybe her enemies knew that she was being watched, but, for whatever reason, she was one of the few *Tegenaria* that managed to stay put and survive. In mid-September, Hugh and I returned to the city and, at the last minute, I decided to buy a plastic terrarium and to take her with me. The “April in Paris” business didn’t occur to me until we were on the train, and I held her container against the window, saying, “Look, the Eiffel Tower!”

Funny the details that slip your notice until it’s too late. The fact, for instance, that we don’t really have flies in Paris, at least not in our apartment. Back in Normandy, catching prey had been a breeze. I could do it barefoot and in my pajamas, but now I was forced to go outside and lurk around the trash cans in the Luxembourg Gardens. Someone would toss in a disposable diaper and I’d stand a few feet from the bin, and wait for the scent to be picked up. Then there’d be the sneak attack, the clattering jar, the little spell of cursing and foot stomping. Had the flies been gathered on a windowpane, I would have enjoyed the last laugh, but out in the open, and with an audience of French people noting my every failure, my beautiful hobby became a chore.

I'd been telling myself for months that April needed me, though of course she didn't. An adequate amount of prey stumbled into her web and she caught it quite capably on her own—in Normandy, anyway. Now, though, trapped inside a terrarium in a fourth-floor apartment, she honestly did need me, and the responsibility weighed a ton. *Tegenaria* can go without eating for three months, but whenever I returned home empty-handed I could feel her little spider judgement seeping from the plastic box. The face that had once seemed goofy was now haughty and expectant. "Hmm," I imagined her saying. "I guess I had you figured all wrong."

In early October, the weather turned cool. Then the rains came and, overnight, every fly in Paris packed up and left town. April hadn't eaten in more than a week when, just by chance, I happened upon a pet store and learned that it sold live crickets, blunt little black ones that looked like bolts with legs. I bought a chirping boxful and felt very proud of myself until the next morning, when I learned something that no nature show ever told me: crickets stink. They reek. Rather than dirty diapers or spoiled meat—something definite you can put your finger on—they smell like an inclination: cruelty, maybe, or hatred.

No amount of incense or air freshener could diminish the stench. Any attempt only made it worse, and it was this more than anything that led me back to Normandy. April and I took the train in late October, and I released her into her old home. I guess I thought that she would move back in, but in our absence her web had fallen to ruin. One corner had come unmoored and its ragged, fly-speckled edge drooped like a filthy petticoat onto the window ledge. "I'm pretty sure it can be fixed," I told her, but before I could elaborate, or even say goodbye, she took off running. And I never saw her again.

There have been other *Tegenaria* since then, a new population every summer, and though I still feed them and monitor their comings and goings, it's with a growing but not unpleasant distance, an understanding that spiders, unlike mammals, do only what they're supposed to do. Whatever drives the likes of April is private and severe, and my attempts to humanize it only moved me further from its majesty. I still can't resist the fly catching, but in terms of naming and relocating I've backed off considerably, though Hugh would say not enough.

I suppose there's a place in everyone's heart that's reserved for another species. My own is covered in cobwebs rather than dog or cat hair, and, because of this, people assume it doesn't exist. It does, though, and I felt it ache when Katrina hit. The TV was on, the grandmother signalled from her rooftop, and I found myself wondering, with something akin to panic, if there were any spiders in her house.

Discussion Questions (Part I & Part II)

Part I

1. What is the author's primary thesis or theme? In other words, what is the point Sedaris is making?
2. List some specific examples provided by the author to illustrate the point.
3. Does the essay use "multiple" examples (a series of brief examples to illustrate or assert the thesis) or "extended" examples (longer examples explained through multiple sentences or paragraphs)?

Part II

This essay also connects back to the previous chapter on *definition*. Remember, definition is a rhetorical mode that explains or defines an unfamiliar term in such a way that your audience can gain a clearer understanding.

Go back to the essay and look for the term "anthropomorphizing."

1. Based on context clues, what does the term mean?
2. How does the writer's use of specific examples contribute to the definition?
3. List examples of **denotation** (the literal meaning) and **connotation** (the feeling or attitude) of the term.

Student Illustration/Example Writing

Letter to the City

To: Lakeview Department of Transportation

From: A Concerned Citizen

The intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street is dangerous and demands immediate

consideration for the installation of a controlling mechanism. I have lived in Lakeview my entire life, and during that time I have witnessed too many accidents and close calls at that intersection. I would like the Department of Transportation to answer this question: how many lives have to be lost on the corner of Central Avenue and Lake Street before a street light or stop sign is placed there?

Over the past twenty years, the population of Lakeview has increased dramatically. This population growth has put tremendous pressure on the city's roadways, especially Central Avenue and its intersecting streets. At the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street it is easy to see how serious this problem is. For example, when I try to cross Central Avenue as a pedestrian, I frequently wait over ten minutes for the cars to clear, and even then I must rush to the median. I will then have to continue to wait until I can finally run to the other side of the street. On one hand, even as a physically fit adult, I can run only with significant effort and care. Expecting a senior citizen or a child to cross this street, on the other hand, is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. Does the city have any plans to do anything about this?

Recent data show that the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street has been especially dangerous. According to the city's own statistics, three fatalities occurred at that intersection in the past year alone. Over the past five years, the intersection witnessed fourteen car accidents, five of which were fatal. These numbers officially qualify the intersection as the most fatal and dangerous in the entire state. It should go without saying that fatalities and accidents are not the clearest way of measuring the severity of this situation because for each accident that happens, countless other close calls never contribute to city data. I hope you will agree that these numbers alone are sufficient evidence that the intersection at Central Avenue and Lake Street is hazardous and demands immediate attention.

Nearly all accidents mentioned are caused by vehicles trying to cross Central Avenue while driving on Lake Street. I think the City of Lakeview should consider placing a traffic light there to control the traffic going both ways. While I do not have access to any resources or data that can show precisely how much a traffic light can improve the intersection, I think you will agree that a controlled busy intersection is much safer than an uncontrolled one. Therefore, at a minimum, the city must consider making the intersection a four-way stop.

Each day that goes by without attention to this issue is a lost opportunity to save lives and make the community a safer, more enjoyable place to live. Because the safety of citizens is the priority of every government, I can only expect that the Department of Transportation and the City of Lakeview will act on this matter immediately. For the safety and well-being of Lakeview citizens, please do not let bureaucracy or money impede this urgent project.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen

Discussion Questions

1. What is the thesis of the essay? Where is it found?
2. List one specific example that the writer cites to illustrate their point.
3. Do the examples used in the essay successfully illustrate the point the writer is making?
4. Point out (a) a personal example and (b) an example found through research in this essay.
5. Describe a hypothetical example that you could add to the writer's letter that would further illustrate the point.

Your Turn

Think back to a time when you won an argument by providing a specific example to prove your point. Use freewriting to describe that argument and the example you cited, then write a brief outline of an illustration/example essay.

Key Terms

- Illustration

- Evidence
- Thesis statement
- Transition words

Summary

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



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Reflective Response

Now that you have read the chapter and written an illustration/example essay, describe ways in which using specific examples can be valuable in personal, academic, and professional writing.

Additional Chapter Sources

“April and Paris” by David Sedaris appeared in the March 24, 2008, issue of *The New Yorker*. All rights reserved. Used under Fair Use.



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CHAPTER 9: COMPARE/ CONTRAST

COMPARE/CONTRAST

Will Rogers

Student Learning Outcomes

- Define the purpose and structure of the compare-and-contrast essay
- Produce a compare-and-contrast essay

Introduction to Compare/Contrast

To compare two subjects is to point out their similarities.

Mardi Gras celebrations in both New Orleans and Mamou involve a sense of revelry. There are elaborate costumes and festive parades. The partying represents a last burst of irreverence before the more solemn Ash Wednesday.

To contrast two subjects is to point out their differences.

Mardi Gras in New Orleans features parades with huge, elaborate floats put on by “royalty” of Krewes; in Mamou, on the other hand, Mardi Gras revelers travel on horseback from house to house begging for ingredients for a communal gumbo.

In this module, you will develop your skills in compare-and-contrast writing.

The Purpose of a Compare/Contrast Essay

Comparison in writing discusses elements that are similar, while **contrast** in writing discusses elements that are different. A compare-and-contrast essay, then, analyzes two subjects by comparing them, contrasting them, or both.

The key to a good compare-and-contrast essay is to choose two or more subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle **differences** or unexpected **similarities**. For example, if you wanted to focus on contrasting two subjects you would not pick apples and oranges; rather, you might choose to compare and contrast two types of oranges or two types of apples to highlight subtle differences. For example, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.

Similarly, to focus on comparison, choose two subjects that seem at first to be unrelated. For a comparison essay, you likely would not choose two apples or two oranges because they share so many of the same properties already. Rather, you might try to compare how apples and oranges are quite similar. For example, both apples and oranges are sweet and similar in size, weight, and shape. They are both grown in orchards, and both may be eaten or juiced. The more divergent the two subjects initially seem, the more interesting a comparison essay will be.

The Structure of a Compare/Contrast Essay

The Thesis Statement

The compare-and-contrast essay starts with a **thesis** that clearly states the two subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both and the reason for doing so. The thesis could lean more toward comparing, contrasting, or both. Remember, the point of comparing and contrasting is to provide useful knowledge to the reader. Take the following thesis as an example that leans more toward contrasting:

Thesis Statement: Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.

Here the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), and it makes a claim about the results that might prove useful to the reader.

The thesis may answer questions like:

- Why am I comparing these two things?
- What did I learn from the comparison?
- Is one of the two subjects better than the other?

Your thesis should make the reason for your comparison very obvious.

You might try this formula for writing your thesis statement:

Subject 1 + Subject 2 + Indication of similarity or difference + Claim = Thesis statement

Example: “The Voice” and “American Idol” are both singing competition shows, but “American Idol” is the original and still the best.

The thesis statement is generally found at the end of the introduction paragraph, after the two topics have been introduced.

Organization

One way in which a compare/contrast essay is different from other rhetorical modes we’ve discussed is that you have two options for how you structure your essay.

You can structure your essay in:

- Subject-by-subject (also called “one side at a time”)
- Point-by-point

To better understand each structure, let’s take an example of each. Imagine that we are going to write an essay that compares two popular stores, Wal-Mart and Target. In the essay, we’ll discuss the prices, the customer service, and the quality of goods at each store.

First, let’s see an example of **subject-by-subject**: Essentially, write a separate body about each subject, but you discuss the same supporting points for both subjects.

I. Introduction: Wal-Mart vs. Target

II. Wal-Mart

1. Prices
2. Customer Service
3. Quality of Goods

III. Target

1. Prices
2. Customer Service
3. Quality of Goods

IV. Conclusion

Notice that the body of the essay is essentially divided in half. Also notice that the same three

supporting points are discussed in each half and in the same order. This gives the essay a really clear organization.

Next, let's see an example of **point-by-point**: Instead of organizing the essay by the two subjects, we will organize the essay by the three supporting points. In each section, first make a point about one subject, then follow it with a comparable point about the other.

I. Introduction: Wal-Mart vs. Target

II. Prices

1. Wal-Mart
2. Target

III. Customer Service

1. Wal-Mart
2. Target

IV. Quality of Goods

1. Wal-Mart
2. Target

V. Conclusion

Notice that in this method, there is more interaction between the two subjects. Each point that you make about Wal-Mart is directly followed by the same point about Target.

The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience. Generally, subject-by-subject structure may be best for essays that emphasize comparison, while point-by-point structure may suit essays that focus on contrast. However, this is a guideline, not a rule.

Signal Phrases

Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis.

Phrases of Comparison:

one similarity another similarity both
like likewise similarly in a similar fashion

Phrases of Contrast:

one difference another difference conversely
in contrast unlike while whereas

Using these phrases throughout your essay will serve as reminders to the reader that you are comparing and contrasting your two subjects. They will keep the essay focused on the task at hand.

Writing a Compare/Contrast Essay

First, choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects. Spend some time freewriting or listing to develop some ideas you can explore in an essay. (Refer back to the chapter on invention for more strategies to get started.)

Once you have decided on an idea, introduce it with an engaging opening paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of the introduction, and it should establish the subjects you will compare, contrast, or both. It should also state what can be learned from doing so.

Next, write an outline of your essay. Choose between subject-by-subject or point-by-point structure. You might try writing two outlines, one using each structure option, to see which one you like better.

The organizing strategy that you choose will depend on, as always, your audience and your purpose. You may also consider your particular approach to the subjects as well as the nature of the subjects themselves; some subjects might better lend themselves to one structure or the other.

Now, following the structure you've established in your outline, write the body paragraphs. Start each body paragraph with a clear topic sentence. Make sure to use comparison and contrast phrases to cue the reader to the ways in which you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

Wrap up your essay with a short conclusion paragraph. Summarize the main points. Restate the point of the comparison that you are making.

As you read through the sample essays in this chapter, watch out for signal phrases that indicate comparison and contrasting. Also notice the organization; are the essays using subject-by-subject or point-by-point organization?

Professional Example

By Allison Howard – Peace Corps Volunteer: South Africa (2003–2005)

It's a Saturday afternoon in January in South Africa. When I begin the 45-minute walk to the shops for groceries, I can hear thunder cracking in the distance up the mountain in Mageobaskloof. But at 4 p.m. the sky is still light and bright and I am sure—famous last words—I will be fine without an umbrella.

Just the basics: eggs, bread, Diet Coke in a bag slung into the crook of my elbow. Halfway from town, two black South African women—domestic workers in the homes of white Afrikaner families—stop me with wide smiles. They know me; I'm the only white person in town who walks everywhere, as they do. They chatter quickly in northern Sotho: "Missus, you must go fast. *Pula e tla na!* The rain, it comes!" They like me, and it feels very important to me that they do. "*Yebo, yebo, mma,*" I say—Yes, it's true—and I hurry along in flip-flops, quickening my pace, feeling good about our brief but neighborly conversation. These are Venda women.

My black South African friends tell me it's easy to tell a Venda from a Shangaan from a Xhosa from a Pedi. "These ones from Venda, they have wide across the nose and high in the cheekbones," they say. But I don't see it; I'm years away from being able to distinguish the nuances of ethnicity. Today, I know these women are Vendas simply because of their clothing: bright stripes of green and yellow and black fabric tied at one shoulder and hanging quite like a sack around their bodies. They've already extended a kindness to me by speaking in northern Sotho. It's not their language but they know I don't speak a word of Afrikaans (though they don't understand why; Afrikaans is the language of white people). They know I struggle with Sotho and they're trying to help me learn. So they speak Sotho to me and they're delighted and amused by my fumbling responses. And I am, quite simply, delighted by their delight.

The Venda ladies are right: the rain, it comes. Lightly at first, and by habit I begin trotting to hurry my way home. Just a little rain at first and there are plenty of us out in it. I can see others

up ahead on the street and others still just leaving the shops to get back before the real rain begins.

The people who are walking along this swath of tar road are black. Black people don't live in this neighborhood—or in my town at all, for the most part. They work and board here as domestic workers, nannies, gardeners. Their families live in black townships and rural villages—some just outside of my town; others far away, in places like Venda.

Today, we're walking together in the rain, and I'm quickening my pace because—after all, *it's raining*. That's what you do in the rain. And even though it's coming down noticeably harder, it's 80 degrees and I'm not cold, I'm just wet. My hair is stuck to my forehead and my T-shirt is soaked...and I'm the only one running for cover. And I think: So what? It's just water and in the middle of the January summer, it's warm, refreshing water. Why run? Why do we run from the rain?

In my life back in the United States, I might run because I was carrying a leather handbag, or because I wore an outfit that shouldn't get wet. I would run because rain dishevels and messes things up. Mostly though, we run because we just do; it's a habit. I've done it a hundred times: running to my car or the subway station with a newspaper sheltering my head. I have never not quickened my pace in the rain until today.

It took all of my 27 years and a move to Africa, where I don't have a leather handbag to shelter or a pretty outfit to protect. I'm wearing an old cotton skirt and a T-shirt, and I'm drenched, and I love it. I learn things here in the most ordinary circumstances. And I feel like a smarter, better woman today because I got groceries in the rain.

But on the long walk home, positively soaked and smiling like a fool, I notice a car pulling over and a man yelling in Afrikaans to get in, get in. I look in the direction I've come from and several meters behind me is a woman with a baby tied to her back and an elderly man carrying bags, leading a young boy by the hand. On the road ahead, a woman about my age carries a parcel wrapped in plastic, balanced precariously on her head. There are maybe 20 people walking with me in my reverie of rain and they are black. And the man in the car is white and he's gesturing frantically for me to get in. Why me? Why not the others? Because I'm white and it's about race. Everything is about race here.

This man in the car is trying to do something kind and neighborly. He wants to help me and his gesture is right, but his instincts are so wrong. How do you resent someone who is, for no benefit of his own, trying to help? But I do. I resent him and I resent the world he lives in that taught him such selective kindness. This whole event unravels in a few seconds' time. He's

leaned over and opened the car door, urging me in...and I get in. And we speed past my fellow walkers and he drops me at my doorstep before I have time to think of anything besides giving him directions.

It feels like a mistake because I'm ashamed to think what the Venda women would have felt if he'd ignored them and they had watched me climb into that car. In some ways, the whole episode seems absurd. I'm not going to atone for 400 years of South African history by walking with black people in the rain. If I'd refused his ride, he wouldn't have thought anything besides the fact that I was certifiably crazy. That's the thing about being here: I'm not going to *change* anything. But I believe it matters in some infinitesimal way that people like the Venda women, and the dozens of people who may walk alongside me on any given day, know that I'm there. In black South African culture it is polite to greet every person you pass. That's what they do, so I do it, too. On the occasional morning, someone might greet me as "*sesi*," sister. I have to believe that matters; I know it matters to me.

I was disappointed in myself for getting into the car because I acted according to the same habit that makes us think rain an inconvenience. Just as we run from the rain, I hopped into that car because I'm *supposed* to. Conventionally, it makes sense. But convention compels us to do so many things that don't make any sense at all. Convention *misinforms* our instincts. And in a larger sense, it is convention that propels Afrikaner culture anachronistically into the future. Ten years after the supposed end of apartheid, I'm living in a world of institutionalized racism. Convention becomes institution—and it's oppressive and it's unjust. I know that if I'm going to make it here for two more years, I need to walk in the rain. It's a small, wasted gesture, but it's an uncorrupted instinct that makes me feel human.

So much about living here feels like that fraction of a second when the Afrikaner man was appealing to my conventional sensibilities and the people on the street were appealing to my human instincts. It may feel unnatural to reject those sensibilities just as, at first, it feels unnatural to walk in the rain. But if I lose a hold on my instincts here, I'll fail myself and I'll fail to achieve those tiny things that matter so much. It's simple and it's small; and it's everything. Gandhi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Indeed. Let it rain.

Discussion Questions

1. Locate the author's thesis—what is it?
2. How is the essay structured? Is it using subject-by-subject or point-by-point structure? How can you tell?

3. What “points for comparison” does the author use?
4. How does the author go beyond the obvious similarities and differences to interesting ideas and insights?

Student Example

Comparing and Contrasting London and Washington, DC

By Scott McLean in *Writing for Success*

Both Washington, DC, and London are capital cities of English-speaking countries, and yet they offer vastly different experiences to their residents and visitors. Comparing and contrasting the two cities based on their history, their culture, and their residents show how different and similar the two are.

Both cities are rich in world and national history, though they developed on very different time lines. London, for example, has a history that dates back over two thousand years. It was part of the Roman Empire and known by the similar name, Londinium. It was not only one of the northernmost points of the Roman Empire but also the epicenter of the British Empire where it held significant global influence from the early sixteenth century on through the early twentieth century. Washington, DC, on the other hand, has only formally existed since the late eighteenth century. Though Native Americans inhabited the land several thousand years earlier, and settlers inhabited the land as early as the sixteenth century, the city did not become the capital of the United States until the 1790s. From that point onward to today, however, Washington, DC, has increasingly maintained significant global influence. Even though both cities have different histories, they have both held, and continue to hold, significant social influence in the economic and cultural global spheres.

Both Washington, DC, and London offer a wide array of museums that harbor many of the world's most prized treasures. While Washington, DC, has the National Gallery of Art and several other Smithsonian galleries, London's art scene and galleries have a definite edge in this category. From the Tate Modern to the British National Gallery, London's art ranks among the

world's best. This difference and advantage has much to do with London and Britain's historical depth compared to that of the United States. London has a much richer past than Washington, DC, and consequently has a lot more material to pull from when arranging its collections. Both cities have thriving theater districts, but again, London wins this comparison, too, both in quantity and quality of theater choices. With regard to other cultural places like restaurants, pubs, and bars, both cities are very comparable. Both have a wide selection of expensive, elegant restaurants as well as a similar amount of global and national chains. While London may be better known for its pubs and taste in beer, DC offers a different bar-going experience. With clubs and pubs that tend to stay open later than their British counterparts, the DC night life tends to be less reserved overall.

Both cities also share and differ in cultural diversity and cost of living. Both cities share a very expensive cost of living—both in terms of housing and shopping. A downtown one-bedroom apartment in DC can easily cost \$1,800 per month, and a similar “flat” in London may double that amount. These high costs create socioeconomic disparity among the residents. Although both cities' residents are predominantly wealthy, both have a significantly large population of poor and homeless. Perhaps the most significant difference between the resident demographics is the racial makeup. Washington, DC, is a “minority majority” city, which means the majority of its citizens are races other than white. In 2009, according to the US Census, 55 percent of DC residents were classified as “Black or African American” and 35 percent of its residents were classified as “white.” London, by contrast, has very few minorities—in 2006, 70 percent of its population was “white,” while only 10 percent was “black.” The racial demographic differences between the cities is drastic.

Even though Washington, DC, and London are major capital cities of English-speaking countries in the Western world, they have many differences along with their similarities. They have vastly different histories, art cultures, and racial demographics, but they remain similar in their cost of living and socioeconomic disparity.

Discussion Questions

1. How is the essay organized? Subject-by-subject? Point-by-point? How can you tell?
2. Find the thesis. How is it phrased to introduce comparison and contrast?
3. How are the two cities similar?
4. How are the two cities different?
5. Overall, is this essay emphasizing the similarities or the differences between the two cities?

Your Turn

Choose one of the following options:

Option 1

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward contrast. Choose one of the following three categories. Pick two examples from each. Then come up with one similarity and three differences between the examples.

1. Romantic comedies
2. Internet search engines
3. Cell phones

Option 2

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward comparison. Choose one of the following three items. Then come up with one difference and three similarities.

1. Department stores and discount retail stores
2. Fast-food chains and fine dining restaurants
3. Dogs and cats

Key Terms

- Comparison

- Contrast
- Thesis
- Similarities
- Differences

Summary

- A compare-and-contrast essay analyzes two subjects by either comparing them, contrasting them, or both.
The purpose of writing a comparison or contrast essay is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities between two subjects.
- The thesis should clearly state the subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both, and it should state what is to be learned from doing so.
- There are two main organizing strategies for compare-and-contrast essays.
- Organize by the subjects themselves, one then the other (subject-by-subject).
- Organize by individual points, in which you discuss each subject in relation to each point (point-by-point).
- Use phrases of comparison or phrases of contrast to signal to readers how exactly the two subjects are being analyzed.



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Reflective Response

After you've completed this chapter, activity, and paper, do a bit of comparison and contrast with this activity and assignment compared to the other rhetorical modes: how was this one different? how was it similar?

Additional Chapter Sources

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CHAPTER 10: EVALUATION

EVALUATION

Will Rogers

Student Learning Outcomes

- Define judgments and criteria that are appropriate to the object of evaluation
- Evaluate using these judgments and criteria

Evaluation, Every Day

While some of us might struggle to define **evaluation**, we nevertheless use evaluation every day. Deciding on what to buy, what to eat, what classes to take: all of these activities involve a process of evaluation. Our opinion of these things takes into account all kinds of evidence, attitudes, and likes and dislikes.

So, in many ways, we will be familiar with the kind of paper that centers evaluation. The activities and assignments we will cover in this chapter differ somewhat from those everyday evaluations. We probably don't have to make our judgments clear when we decide to eat cereal for dinner. Our thought processes and rationales don't have to be written down, and we don't need to appear unbiased. Our dinner, our opinions.

If you've ever read an article about the latest iPhone that told you whether or not it was worth the money, then you've read an evaluation essay. Other examples of evaluation essays are movie reviews, book reviews, restaurant reviews, or car reviews. The point of all these examples is to make a judgment about the subject; is it good or is it bad?

In this paper, and for this unit, we will see how these everyday evaluations become formal, as these papers require explicitly stated judgments, clear criteria, and statements about counterarguments.

These characteristics and the skills necessary to produce them will also prove useful in the chapter focused on Compare and Contrast.

The Purpose of Evaluative Writing

Writers evaluate arguments in order to present an informed and well-reasoned judgment about a subject. While the evaluation will be based on their **opinion**, it should not seem opinionated. Instead, it should aim to be reasonable and unbiased. This is achieved through developing a solid judgment, selecting appropriate **criteria** to evaluate the subject, and providing clear **evidence** to support the criteria.

Evaluation is a type of writing that has many real-world applications. Anything can be evaluated. For example, evaluations of movies, restaurants, books, and technology ourselves are all real-world evaluations. At your job, your manager may write a year-end evaluation of your performance, or you may be the one writing an evaluation of an employee, and these evaluations often impact your pay!

Evaluation is important because it is a bedrock and foundation for Compare-and-Contrast essays, which require evaluations of two or more different objects, events, or people, to judge them together and against each other.

The Structure of an Evaluation Essay

How do you structure an evaluation essay?

Subject

First, in an introduction, the essay will present the **subject**. What is being evaluated? Why? The essay begins with the writer giving any details needed about the subject. For example, a restaurant review must at least include the name and location of the restaurant. In an evaluation of a vehicle, you'd include the make, model, and year of the vehicle. If the essay were a movie review, this is where you'd tell us the name of the movie and give a little bit of background.

Even at this early stage, your evaluation of the subject can come into focus for your reader. Your word choice—the adjectives and adverbs you use—can make your judgment clear even before you state your thesis.

Judgment

Next, the essay needs to provide a **judgment** about a subject. This is the thesis of the essay, and it states whether the subject is good or bad based on how it meets the stated criteria. This is most often the very last sentence of the introduction. Again, if this were a movie review, this might be where you state that you liked (or disliked) the movie, and maybe a brief indication of why.

Don't be afraid to take a strong stand! Don't straddle the fence or water down your judgment. That means

your thesis statement should not be a question. Your thesis should not offer up several different perspectives. Instead, make a bold, direct statement. Be clear, concise, and direct. Tell us what you really think!

Criteria

An important first step in writing an evaluation is to consider the appropriate **criteria** for evaluating the subject. Criteria are standards that we use when making a judgment.

If you were to evaluate a car, for example, you might consider the expected criteria: fuel economy, price, and crash ratings. However, you could also consider more personal criteria: style, color, sound systems, or whether it has Apple CarPlay. Even though not everyone will base their choice of a car on these secondary criteria, they are still okay to use in your essay; in fact, they can make the essay more personalized and interesting.

Job applications and interviews are more examples of evaluations. Based on certain criteria, management and hiring committees determine which applicants will be considered for an interview and which applicant will be hired.

How do you decide what criteria to use? Start by making a list of commonly used standards for judging your subject. If you do not know the standards usually used to evaluate your subject, you should start with some research. For example, if you are reviewing a film, you could read a few recent film reviews on *Rotten Tomatoes*, noting the standards that reviewers typically use and the reasons they give for liking or disliking a film. If you are evaluating a football team, you could read reviews of football teams on ESPN, find a book on coaching football, or talk to a football coach to learn about what makes a great (or not-so-great) football team.

You might mention your criteria in your introduction, or you might use the topic sentences of your body paragraphs to clearly identify your criteria. Sticking with the movie review example, you might explain that your criteria are the plot of the movie, the quality of the acting, and how well-made the movie is.

Evidence

The **evidence** of an evaluation essay consists of the supporting details authors provide based on their judgment of the criteria.

For example, if the subject of an evaluation is a restaurant, a judgment could be “Kay’s Bistro provides an unrivaled experience in fine dining.” Some authors evaluate fine dining restaurants by identifying appropriate criteria in order to rate the establishment’s food quality, service, and atmosphere. For example, if the bread served at the start of the meal was fresh out of the oven, then describing that fresh bread would be evidence in evaluation of the restaurant; it would fall under the criterion of “food quality.”

Another example of evaluation is literary analysis; judgments may be made about a character in the story based on the character’s actions, characteristics, and past history within the story. The scenes in the story are evidence for why readers have a certain opinion of the character, so you might include text from the story

as evidence in your essay. You might also quote the published opinions of other writers who have already evaluated this story.

In a movie review, for each of the criteria that you stated, you'd provide specific evidence from the movie. Describe pivotal scenes that led to your judgment. For example, if a movie included a really emotional scene that stuck with you long after you saw the movie, you could cite that as evidence of the quality of the acting.

Counterargument

Counterarguing means responding to readers' objections and questions. To effectively counterargue, you need to understand your **audience**. What does the audience already know? What do you think their opinions are? Do you expect your audience to agree or disagree with you?

Why bother with counterargument? Effective counterarguing builds credibility in the mind of the reader because it seems like you're listening to their questions and concerns.

Typically, the best place for counterarguments is the end of the essay, after you've already made your points. Think about what objections you expect your reader to have. You can respond to those objections in two ways. The first option is to acknowledge an objection and immediately provide a counterargument, explaining why the objection is not valid. Second, you can concede the point, basically admitting there is room for other opinions. In either case, it is important to be respectful of opinions that are different from your own, while still standing behind your thesis.

Below is an example of a movie review. Now that you understand that a movie review is an evaluation essay that uses criteria and specific evidence to make a judgment on the subject, look for those criteria and evidence as you read. Does this critic use the same criteria that you do when deciding whether you like a movie?

Professional Writing Example

'The Batman' Is the Batman Movie We Deserve

By Adam Nayman

The Batman is not the Batman movie we need. That's because we didn't need another Batman movie. Not yet, anyway. Maybe if Christian Bale's climactic self-sacrifice at the end of *The Dark Knight Rises* had hit a little bit harder, without the winking, now-you-see-him-now-you-don't resurrection engineered by Christopher Nolan (still prestige-ing after all these years); maybe if

we hadn't had Ben Affleck glowering through various Snyder cuts like the human embodiment of a contractual obligation.

The Batman is the Batman movie we deserve, though: overwrought and overlong, but also carefully crafted and exhilarating. It's just good enough to wish it were better—a lavish piece of intellectual property that ultimately prices itself out of providing cheap thrills.

Directed by Matt Reeves, *The Batman* begins like an exploitation movie, with a voyeuristic, quasi-Hitchcockian point-of-view shot seen through high-powered telescopic goggles—heavy breathing on the soundtrack and a family in the crosshairs. Shades, definitely, of *Dirty Harry* and its all-seeing sociopathic sniper, or maybe *The Silence of the Lambs'* Buffalo Bill. As the sequence goes on, stitching us in complicity into an act of surveillance and then cutting stealthily into the home of Gotham's embattled mayor (Rupert Penry-Jones), there's a sense of dread that feels new and strangely alien compared to other iterations of the franchise. Nolan's Dark Knight movies were grim and melodramatic and full of brutal, sadistic acts of violence, but they were never scary. The actors were having too much fun, and the over-cranked psychological intensity was subordinate to spectacle. Reeves, though, uses the visual vocabulary of a slasher movie for all it's worth. When the owner of the original POV shot suddenly materializes in the shadows behind the mayor and dispatches him with a blunt instrument to the head, the effect is genuinely unsettling. We don't feel safe.

Paranoia is in Reeves's wheelhouse; at his best, he's a fluid, moody virtuoso. Think of the excellent first half of *Cloverfield*, with its anxious first-person perspective on an impending apocalypse. Or the terrifying car-crash scene in his remake of *Let Me In*, which unfolds with the camera as a hapless backseat passenger, looking on unblinkingly as the world turns upside down. Reeves isn't above show-offy camerawork, but it's less to impart his own sense of control than to keep the audience off balance.

The tension, then, is between a filmmaker who specializes in disequilibrium tackling material that's almost ritualistically familiar. For the first 45 minutes, *The Batman* does a beautiful job of giving us the beats that we expect, tricked up just enough to seem fresh. There's a crime-riddled Gotham crisscrossed by low-level mobsters; the title character smacking down street-level hoods during his nightly rounds; and a police force resentful of the vigilante in their midst. We've seen it all before, but not usually with such a patient, arresting sense of confidence. When Robert Pattinson's Batman stalks through the bloody crime scene at the mayor's apartment, staring down the cops lining his path, the effect is pure pulp friction—a kind of vivid, scummy immediacy. And when Batman emerges from the shadows to pummel some face-painted gangbangers, the bleak imagery evokes vintage Frank Miller.

Miller's 1987 DC comics arc *Batman: Year One* is an obvious inspiration for Reeves and Peter Craig's screenplay, which makes it clear that Pattinson's incarnation is still just experimenting with his nocturnal alter ego. In this version, Batman is less authentically world-weary than prematurely burned out—a nice Gen Z spin on the archetype. “Two years of nights,” he grumbles in voice-over sounding (purposefully) like *Taxi Driver*'s Travis Bickle or the Rorschach of Alan Moore's 1986 graphic novel *Watchmen*. Miller's vision of a Gotham City buckling under Reagan-era anxieties—nuclear proliferation, inner-city crime, encroaching spiritual malaise—remains deeply influential, even after Tim Burton's gothic, expressionist *Gotham*. While Reeves's style and color palette are different from Nolan's, he's equally interested in the Miller-derived idea of the city as psychic protagonist, with lots of earnest monologuing about whether such a corroded urban landscape is worth saving, or if a self-styled crime fighter is just wasting his time.

Once it's clear that we're going to be spared yet another version of Batman's origin story—no flashbacks to his parents getting shot outside the opera or close-ups of a moony, grieving little Bruce Wayne—the novelty of watching a relatively fledgling superhero earning his wings kicks in. There's probably less of Bruce Wayne in *The Batman* than any other movie version, and so the usual trick of having the star play up the differences between the two personas doesn't apply. Pattinson's skill at playing awkward, antisocial characters works well for a vigilante who cloaks himself in solitude and isn't interested in making friends (except for Jeffrey Wright's nicely soulful James Gordon, imagined here as a principled wingman rather than a head honcho). That said, it's not like there are any galas or fundraisers for Bruce to attend anyway. The only time he's called on to appear in public is at the mayor's funeral, which ends up turning into a murder scene as well at the whim of the masked killer whose sporadic appearances drive the story and punctuate it with a series of question marks.

It's telling that Reeves went with the Riddler as the main bad guy for his first crack at the Batman universe. For one thing, it's not like Paul Dano has to compete with a universally acclaimed movie take on the role. (Almost 30 years later, we still cannot sanction Jim Carrey's buffoonery in *Batman Forever*.) For another, the character's enigmatic shtick is easily torqued into the kind of taunting, Zodiac-style cryptography that Reeves is using as a visual motif. (The Fincher comparisons also extend to *Se7en*, right down to the Riddler collecting his scribbles in a series of unmarked notebooks; the line between theft and homage remains razor-thin.) Dano, who's usually cast as a punching bag, is impressively creepy in small doses, and disappears for long stretches that leave us wanting more.

The complexity of *The Batman*'s narrative is both a bug and a feature. Reeves is going for

something sprawling, and there are subplots for Zoë Kravitz as a subtly feline, cat-burglarizing Selina Kyle and Colin Farrell as a mobbed-up, battle-scarred, humorously ineffectual Penguin. (As usual, Farrell is at his best when playing against his leading-man looks; his middle-aged transformation into a master character actor is something to behold.) They both work for suave crime boss Carmine Falcone (John Turturro), who's got the cops in his pocket and a nebulous connection to the late Thomas Wayne, imagined here as a good-hearted but hardly flawless father and magnate with skeletons in his walk-in closet. The big through line is the idea that the Riddler's victims are all connected to some dark, heartbreaking civic secret, one that also implicates the Wayne family, and the clues are parceled out judiciously, with enough mystery and flourish to suggest that the revelation will be worth the wait.

Sadly, it isn't—not quite, and definitely not after more than two hours of portentous buildup involving loaded references to rats, moles, and other nocturnal animals. It's bizarre how closely Reeves and Craig bump up against a potentially audacious twist without pulling the trigger; the way the story is shaped, it seems like Dano's and Pattinson's characters are supposed to be secret siblings as opposed to two different case studies in forlorn orphan psychology. The theme of duality between Batman and his foes—already stomped into the ground by Nolan, Burton, and pretty much everyone else who's had a crack at the character—rears its head here, but not as disturbingly as the filmmakers seem to think. A big, late confrontation between Pattinson and Dano strives for the sociopathic chill of *Se7en* but feels lukewarm, as does the revelation that one of the film's characters has been gradually amassing an army of similarly aggrieved, incel-style acolytes—the same idea that Todd Phillips already (and more effectively) evoked in *Joker*.

The bigger problem is that having finally unraveled every tightly wound strand of its narrative, *The Batman* takes an exhausting swing at apocalyptic grandeur. For all the expectations that Reeves is trying to subvert or at least play with, he's as susceptible to the lure of blockbuster-sized spectacle as Burton or Nolan. The carnage is well-staged on a technical level, but it's weirdly desultory, even as it pushes topical hot buttons around the idea of armed, civic insurrection. Based on shooting dates, *The Batman*'s striking evocations of January 6 must be coincidental, but either way, it feels like Reeves and his collaborators are trying to capitalize on a melancholy, disenfranchised zeitgeist more than actually saying anything about it.

As for what they're saying about Batman—that it's a lousy, lonely job, but somebody's gotta do it—suffice it to say that it's all been said before. One reason that Michael Keaton's interpretation of Bruce Wayne holds up is that he was able to retain a sense of ridiculousness; Pattinson's a terrific actor and his gaunt jaw line and bruised, battered body language are striking, but he's

acting in such a narrow emotional range that, for the first time after a killer run of performances, he grows monotonous (especially when no-selling Kravitz's come-ons). A Batman who listens to MTV Unplugged in New York on repeat is a perfectly OK idea in theory, but there's *Something in the Way* that Reeves piles on signifiers of tragic alienation that just feels pretentious. It's the same mock gravitas as when he used "The Weight" to score a moment of lyrical down time during *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, as if trying to channel the ghost of Easy Rider into a story about mutated chimpanzees firing guns on horseback.

"Vengeance won't change the past," Bruce Wayne observes late in *The Batman*. "People need hope." There are worse thesis statements to base a movie around. But there's also something disingenuous about a movie that drenches itself in unpleasantness before trying in the end to peddle uplift and recast the title character as a kind of humanitarian activist. Ultimately, this Batman accepts the thankless, death-defying role he's stepped into, and the sacrifices that go with it. But that choice would be more compelling if it weren't framed as a tacit acknowledgement of all the inevitable sequels to come—whether we need them or not.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the essay serve as an evaluation essay? In other words, what judgment is it making?
2. What are the criteria Nayman uses to judge Batman as a franchise? What criteria does he use to judge the newest Batman movie?
3. How does Nayman address counterarguments?
4. What kinds of evidence does he use and from what sources?
5. Whether or not you've seen *The Batman*, do you agree with Nayman's judgment about the movie? Explain your answer.

Student Writing Example

Sample Essay

Gender differences and biases have been a part of the normal lives of humans ever since anyone can remember. Anthropological evidence has revealed that even the humans and the hominids of ancient times had separate roles for men and women in their societies, and this relates to the concepts of epistemology. There were certain things that women were forbidden to do and similarly men could not partake in some of the activities that were traditionally reserved for women. This has given birth to the gender role stereotypes that we find today. These differences have been passed on to our current times; although many differences occur now that have caused a lot of debate amongst the people as to their appropriateness and have made it possible for us to have a stereotyping threat by which we sometimes assign certain qualities to certain people without thinking. For example, many men are blamed for undermining women and stereotyping them for traditional roles, and this could be said to be the same for men; men are also stereotyped in many of their roles. This leads to social constructionism since the reality is not always depicted by what we see by our eyes. These ideas have also carried on in the world of advertising and the differences shown between the males and the females are apparent in many advertisements we see today. This can have some serious impacts on the society as people begin to stereotype the gender roles in reality.

There has been a lot of attention given to the portrayal of gender in advertising by both practitioners as well as academics and much of this has been done regarding the portrayal of women in advertising (Ferguson, Kreshel, & Tinkham 40-51; Bellizzi & Milner 71-79). This has led many to believe that most of the advertisements and their contents are sexist in nature. It has been noted by viewing various ads that women are shown as being more concerned about their beauty and figure rather than being shown as authority figures in the ads; they are usually shown as the product users. Also, there is a tendency in many countries, including the United States, to portray women as being subordinate to men, as alluring sex objects, or as decorative objects. This is not right as it portrays women as the weaker sex, being only good as objects.

At the same time, many of the ads do not show gender biases in the pictures or the graphics, but some bias does turn up in the language of the ad. "Within language, bias is more evident in songs and dialogue than in formal speech or when popular culture is involved. For example, bias sneaks in through the use of idiomatic expressions (man's best friend) and when the language

refer to characters that depict traditional sex roles. One's normative interpretation of these results depends on one's ideological perspective and tolerance for the pace of change. It is encouraging that the limited study of language in advertising indicates that the use of gender-neutrality is commonplace. Advertisers can still reduce the stereotyping in ad pictures, and increase the amount of female speech relative to male speech, even though progress is evidenced. To the extent that advertisers prefer to speak to people in their own language, the bias present in popular culture will likely continue to be reflected in advertisements" (Artz et al 20).

Advertisements are greatly responsible for eliciting such views for the people of our society. The children also see these pictures and they are also the ones who create stereotypes in their minds about the different roles of men and women. All these facts combine to give result to the different public opinion that becomes fact for many of the members of the society. Their opinion and views are based more on the interpretation they conclude from the images that are projected in the media than by their observations of the males and females in real life. This continues in a vicious circle as the media tries to pick up and project what the society thinks and the people in the society make their opinions based upon the images shown by the media. People, therefore, should not base too much importance about how the media is trying to portray the members of the society; rather they should base their opinions on their own observation of how people interact together in the real world.

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Discussion Questions

1. What is the topic or phenomenon being evaluated in the example essay above?
2. What are the criteria for evaluating it?

3. Look for examples of opinion or bias—where are they?
4. What kinds of evidence does this essay use?
5. Do you find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with the writer's judgment? Explain.

Your Turn

1. Evaluate a restaurant. What do you expect in a good restaurant? What criteria determine whether a restaurant is good?
2. List three criteria that you will use to evaluate a restaurant. Then dine there. Afterward, explain whether or not the restaurant meets each criterion, and include evidence (qualities from the restaurant) that backs your evaluation.
3. Give the restaurant a star rating (5 Stars: Excellent, 4 Stars: Very Good, 3 Stars: Good, 2 Stars: Fair, 1 Star: Poor). Explain why the restaurant earned this star rating.

Key Terms

- Judgment
- Opinion
- Bias
- Evidence
- Criteria
- Counterarguing

Summary

While we surely evaluate things and activities every day, now we can see how our judgment of something based on criteria and supported by evidence can create an essay that does more than simply review but analyzes and evaluates in a way that avoids bias and unsupported opinion.



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Reflective Response

How would you evaluate your own progress in completing these readings and assignments that focus on evaluation—what could you have done differently?

Sources

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CHAPTER 11: CAUSE AND EFFECT

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Wanda M. Waller

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify causes and effects (cause-and-effect relationships of various events, decisions, or conditions)
- Apply an effective arrangement of introduction, body, and conclusion for a cause-and-effect essay
- Create a cause-and-effect essay

Introduction to Cause and Effect

What is Cause and Effect?

The cause-and-effect essay is a form of argumentation that details the *reasons for* **(causes)** and the *outcomes of* **(effects)** an event, condition, or decision. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate. This essay is an attempt to discover either the origins of something, such as an event or a decision, the effects or results that can be properly attributed to it, or both. Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often, determining the exact relationship between the two is challenging. For example, a single cause can produce many different effects, or a single effect may have several causes. A cause-effect essay can do one of two things:

- It can analyze the ways in which one or more effects result from a particular cause.
- It can analyze the ways in which one or more causes lead to a particular effect.

In other words, your essay may focus more on the effects of a cause or more on the causes of one effect. Either

approach provides a useful means of discussing the possible relationship between the two events. However, in cause-effect essays, it is easy to suggest that because one event preceded another event, the former event caused the latter. Simply because one event follows another one sequentially does not mean that the two actions are related. Similar to argumentation (see the chapter on Argument), the cause-and-effect essay attempts to advance knowledge and ideas with reason and support.

What Is Cause and Effect?

Watch the following video on “Homelessness in America” to share your thoughts on possible causes and effects. (You can also [watch it directly on YouTube](#).) Closed captioning is available and can be enabled using the player controls.



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Self-Assessment

What causes are discussed in the video link? What effects?

Identify other causes and effects of homelessness in America.

Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

Organization

The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of the following two primary ways:

- Start with the cause and then talk about the effects.
- Start with the effect and then talk about the causes.

Introduction

The cause-and-effect essay opens with an introduction that provides appropriate background to inform the

reader about the topic and establish a clear purpose for exploring the causes and effects. Include information on why your topic is significant, who or what it involves, and where, when, or how often the situation occurs. The introduction includes the thesis statement that states the **main cause**, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement explains the main idea of the essay, whether the essay will focus on causes, effects, or both. Your thesis statement can highlight a single cause-and-effect relationship, or it can also show how one event causes multiple effects. You can also explore how a phenomenon has multiple causes.

Body Paragraphs and Supporting Details

Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence that indicates which cause or effect the paragraph will discuss. Every paragraph explores a different facet of the relationship between the topic and its causes or effects. Link the causes and effects by providing evidence and explaining why the cause or effect has a relationship to the main topic. Include examples, experiences, or personal knowledge to convince your reader that certain causes or effects are creditable. The following words and phrases will assist in linking ideas, moving your essay forward, and improving readability:

Words That Link and Advance Ideas

Because	Since	Affects
As a result	Therefore	Results in
Due to	Hence	Leads to
Consequently	Thus	Accordingly

Conclusion

The conclusion reinforces the thesis by summarizing the most significant causes or effects from the body paragraphs. It reminds the reader why the topic is important by emphasizing the connections discussed in the cause-effect relationship. Avoid introducing new causes or effects in your conclusion.

Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay

Choose an event or condition that you think has an interesting cause-and-effect relationship. Introduce your topic in an engaging way. End your introduction with a thesis that states the main cause, the main effect, or both.

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause-then-effect structure or the effect-then-cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence. **Contributory causes**, for example, are secondary circumstances that produce actions, events, or conditions. However, contributory causes alone cannot cause the action, event, or condition to occur. If you are writing about multiple causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in terms of order of importance. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least important to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis.

Professional Writing Example: “Misinformation and Biases Infect Social Media, Both Intentionally and Accidentally”

Giovanni Luca Ciampaglia and Filippo Menczer

[Giovanni Luca Ciampaglia](#) is an Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, University of South Florida. [Filippo Menczer](#) is a Professor of Computer Science and Informatics and the Director of the Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research at Indiana University. This article originally appeared in [The Conversation](#).

Misinformation and Biases Infect Social Media, Both Intentionally and Accidentally

Social media are among the [primary sources of news in the U.S.](#) and across the world. Yet users are exposed to content of questionable accuracy, including [conspiracy theories](#), [clickbait](#), [hyperpartisan content](#), [pseudoscience](#), and even [fabricated “fake news” reports](#).

It’s not surprising that there’s so much disinformation published: Spam and online fraud are lucrative for criminals, and government and political propaganda yield [both partisan and](#)

[financial benefits](#). But the fact that [low-credibility content spreads so quickly and easily](#) suggests that people and the algorithms behind social media platforms are vulnerable to manipulation.

Explaining the tools developed at the Observatory on Social Media.

Our research has identified three types of bias that make the social media ecosystem vulnerable to both intentional and accidental misinformation. That is why our [Observatory on Social Media](#) at Indiana University is building [tools](#) to help people become aware of these biases and protect themselves from outside influences designed to exploit them.

Bias in the brain

Cognitive biases originate in the way the brain processes the information that every person encounters every day. The brain can deal with only a finite amount of information, and too many incoming stimuli can cause [information overload](#). That in itself has serious implications for the quality of information on social media. We have found that steep competition for users' limited attention means that [some ideas go viral despite their low quality—even when people prefer to share high-quality content](#).

To avoid getting overwhelmed, the brain uses a [number of tricks](#). These methods are usually effective, but may also [become biases](#) when applied in the wrong contexts.

One cognitive shortcut happens when a person is deciding whether to share a story that appears on their social media feed. People are [very affected by the emotional connotations of a headline](#), even though that's not a good indicator of an article's accuracy. Much more important is who wrote the piece.

To counter this bias, and help people pay more attention to the source of a claim before sharing it, we developed [Fakey](#), a mobile news literacy game simulating a typical social media news feed, with a mix of news articles from mainstream and low-credibility sources. Players get more points for sharing news from reliable sources and flagging suspicious content for fact-checking. In the process, they learn to recognize signals of source credibility, such as hyperpartisan claims and emotionally charged headlines.

Bias in society

Another source of bias comes from society. When people connect directly with their peers, the social biases that guide their selection of friends come to influence the information they see.

In fact, in our research we have found that it is possible to [determine the political leanings of a Twitter user](#) by simply looking at the partisan preferences of their friends. Our analysis of the structure of these [partisan communication networks](#) found social networks are particularly efficient at disseminating information—accurate or not—when [they are closely tied together and disconnected from other parts of society](#).

The tendency to evaluate information more favorably if it comes from within their own social circles creates “[echo chambers](#)” that are ripe for manipulation, either consciously or unintentionally. This helps explain why so many online conversations devolve into “[us versus them](#)” confrontations.

To study how the structure of online social networks makes users vulnerable to disinformation, we built [Hoaxy](#), a system that tracks and visualizes the spread of content from low-credibility sources, and how it competes with fact-checking content. Our analysis of the data collected by Hoaxy during the 2016 U.S. presidential elections shows that Twitter accounts that shared misinformation were [almost completely cut off](#) from the corrections made by the fact-checkers.

When we drilled down on the misinformation-spreading accounts, we found a very dense core group of accounts retweeting each other almost exclusively—including several bots. The only times that fact-checking organizations were ever quoted or mentioned by the users in the misinformed group were when questioning their legitimacy or claiming the opposite of what they wrote.

Bias in the machine

The third group of biases arises directly from the algorithms used to determine what people see online. Both social media platforms and search engines employ them. These personalization technologies are designed to select only the most engaging and relevant content for each individual user. But in doing so, it may end up reinforcing the cognitive and social biases of users, thus making them even more vulnerable to manipulation.

For instance, the detailed [advertising tools built into many social media platforms](#) let disinformation campaigners exploit [confirmation bias](#) by [tailoring messages](#) to people who are already inclined to believe them.

Also, if a user often clicks on Facebook links from a particular news source, Facebook will [tend to show that person more of that site's content](#). This so-called “[filter bubble](#)” effect may isolate people from diverse perspectives, strengthening confirmation bias.

Our own research shows that social media platforms expose users to a less diverse set of

sources than do non-social media sites like Wikipedia. Because this is at the level of a whole platform, not of a single user, we call this the [homogeneity bias](#).

Another important ingredient of social media is information that is trending on the platform, according to what is getting the most clicks. We call this [popularity bias](#), because we have found that an algorithm designed to promote popular content may negatively affect the overall quality of information on the platform. This also feeds into existing cognitive bias, reinforcing what appears to be popular irrespective of its quality.

All these algorithmic biases can be manipulated by [social bots](#), computer programs that interact with humans through social media accounts. Most social bots, like Twitter's [Big Ben](#), are harmless. However, some conceal their real nature and are used for malicious intents, such as [boosting disinformation](#) or falsely [creating the appearance of a grassroots movement](#), also called "astroturfing." We found [evidence of this type of manipulation](#) in the run-up to the 2010 U.S. midterm election.

To study these manipulation strategies, we developed a tool to detect social bots called [Botometer](#). Botometer uses machine learning to detect bot accounts, by inspecting thousands of different features of Twitter accounts, like the times of its posts, how often it tweets, and the accounts it follows and retweets. It is not perfect, but it has revealed that as many as [15 percent of Twitter accounts show signs of being bots](#).

Using Botometer in conjunction with Hoaxy, we analyzed the core of the misinformation network during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. We found many bots exploiting both the cognitive, confirmation and popularity biases of their victims and Twitter's algorithmic biases.

These bots are able to construct filter bubbles around vulnerable users, feeding them false claims and misinformation. First, they can attract the attention of human users who support a particular candidate by tweeting that candidate's hashtags or by mentioning and retweeting the person. Then the bots can amplify false claims smearing opponents by retweeting articles from low-credibility sources that match certain keywords. This activity also makes the algorithm highlight for other users false stories that are being shared widely.

Understanding complex vulnerabilities

Even as our research, and others', shows how individuals, institutions and even entire societies can be manipulated on social media, there are [many questions](#) left to answer. It's especially important to discover how these different biases interact with each other, potentially creating more complex vulnerabilities.

Tools like ours offer internet users more information about disinformation, and therefore some degree of protection from its harms. The solutions will [not likely be only technological](#), though there will probably be some technical aspects to them. But they must take into account [the cognitive and social aspects](#) of the problem.

Editor's note: This article was updated on Jan. 10, 2019, to replace a link to a study that had been retracted. The text of the article is still accurate, and remains unchanged.

Misinformation and Biases Infect Social Media, Both Intentionally and Accidentally by [Giovanni Luca Ciampaglia and Filippo Menczer](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What are the major causes that make social media vulnerable to misinformation?
2. What are the major effects?
3. Do the examples used in the essay show a causal relationship to the topic? Explain your answers using specific details from the essay.
4. Are the examples used in the essay convincing or persuasive? Explain.
5. Do the authors expose new ideas or knowledge on this topic? Explain why or why not.

Student Writing Example

Effects of Video Game Addiction

Video game addiction is a serious problem in many parts of the world today and deserves more attention. It is no secret that children and adults in many countries throughout the world, including Japan, China, and the United States, play video games every day. Most players are able to limit their usage in ways that do not interfere with their daily lives, but many others have developed an addiction to playing video games and suffer detrimental effects.

An addiction can be described in several ways, but generally speaking, addictions involve

unhealthy attractions to substances or activities that ultimately disrupt the ability of a person to keep up with regular daily responsibilities. Video game addiction typically involves playing games uncontrollably for many hours at a time—some people will play only four hours at a time while others cannot stop for over twenty-four hours.

Regardless of the severity of the addiction, many of the same effects will be experienced by all.

One common effect of video game addiction is isolation and withdrawal from social experiences. Video game players often hide in their homes or in Internet cafés for days at a time—only reemerging for the most pressing tasks and necessities. The effect of this isolation can lead to a breakdown of communication skills and often a loss in socialization. While it is true that many games, especially massive multiplayer online games, involve a very real form of e-based communication and coordination with others, and these virtual interactions often result in real communities that can be healthy for the players, these communities and forms of communication rarely translate to the types of valuable social interaction that humans need to maintain typical social functioning. As a result, the social networking in these online games often gives the users the impression that they are interacting socially, while their true social lives and personal relations may suffer.

Another unfortunate product of the isolation that often accompanies video game addiction is the disruption of the user's career. While many players manage to enjoy video games and still hold their jobs without problems, others experience challenges at their workplace. Some may only experience warnings or demerits as a result of poorer performance, or others may end up losing their jobs altogether. Playing video games for extended periods of time often involves sleep deprivation, and this tends to carry over to the workplace, reducing production and causing habitual tardiness.

Video game addiction may result in a decline in overall health and hygiene. Players who interact with video games for such significant amounts of time can go an entire day without eating and even longer without basic hygiene tasks, such as using the restroom or bathing. The effects of this behavior pose significant danger to their overall health.

The causes of video game addiction are complex and can vary greatly, but the effects have the potential to be severe. Playing video games can and should be a fun activity for all to enjoy. But just like everything else, the amount of time one spends playing video games needs to be balanced with personal and social responsibilities.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the major causes discussed in this essay?
2. What are the major effects?
3. Do the examples used in the essay show a causal relationship to the topic? Explain your answer using specific details from the essay.
4. Are the examples used in the essay convincing or persuasive? Explain.
5. Does the writer expose new ideas or knowledge on this topic? Why or why not?

Your Turn

What societal or personal issues/experiences have you observed and considered possible causes or effects?

What organizational structure would be best for the topic you are considering?

What is the relationship between your causes and effects?

Key Terms

- Cause
- Contributory causes
- Effect

- Main cause

Summary

- The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena are related.
- The thesis states what the writer sees as the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.
- The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of these two primary ways:
- Start with the cause and then talk about the effect.
- Start with the effect and then talk about the cause.
- Strong evidence is particularly important in the cause-and-effect essay due to the complexity of determining connections between phenomena.
- Phrases of causation are helpful in signaling links between various elements in the essay.



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Reflective Response

Reflect on your writing process for the cause-and-effect essay. What was the most challenging? What was the easiest?

Additional Chapter Sources

“The 10 Most Homeless Cities in America” by Nicholas Johnson was posted on YouTube on March 20, 2020. Licensed under a YouTube [standard license](#).

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CHAPTER 12: ARGUMENT

ARGUMENT

Wanda M. Waller

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify the elements of an argumentative essay
- Create the structure of an argumentative essay
- Develop an argumentative essay

What Is Argumentation?

Arguments are everywhere, and practically everything is or has been debated at some time. Your ability to develop a point of view on a topic and provide evidence is the process known as Argumentation. Argumentation asserts the reasonableness of a debatable position, belief, or conclusion. This process teaches us how to evaluate conflicting claims and judge evidence and methods of investigation while helping us to clarify our thoughts and articulate them accurately. Arguments also consider the ideas of others in a respectful and critical manner. In argumentative writing, you are typically asked to take a position on an issue or topic and explain and support your position. The purpose of the argument essay is to establish the writer's opinion or position on a topic and persuade others to share or at least acknowledge the validity of your opinion.

Structure of the Argumentative Essay

An effective argumentative essay introduces a compelling, debatable topic to engage the reader. In an effort to persuade others to share your opinion, the writer should explain and consider all sides of an issue fairly and address counterarguments or opposing perspectives. The following five features make up the structure of an argumentative essay:

Introduction

The argumentative essay begins with an introduction that provides appropriate background to inform the reader about the topic. Your introduction may start with a quote, a personal story, a surprising statistic, or an interesting question. This strategy engages the reader's attention while introducing the topic of the essay. The background information is a short description of your topic. In this section, you should include any information that your reader needs to understand your topic.

Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is one sentence in your introductory paragraph that concisely summarizes your main point(s) and claim(s) and presents your position on the topic. The thesis statement or main claim must be debatable. In other words, the thesis must be something that people could reasonably have differing opinions on.

Body Paragraphs and Supporting Details

Your argument must use an organizational structure that is logical and persuasive. There are three types of argumentative essays, each with differing organizational structures: Classical, Toulmin, and Rogerian.

Organization of the Classical Argument

The **Classical Argument** was developed by a Greek philosopher, Aristotle. It is the most common. The goal of this model is to convince the reader about a particular point of view. The Classical Argument relies on **appeals** to persuade an audience specifically: *ethos* (ethical appeal) is an appeal to the writer's creditability, *logos* (logical appeal) is an appeal based on logic, and *pathos* (pathetic appeal) is an appeal based on emotions. The structure of the classical model is as follows:

- Introductory paragraph includes the thesis statement
- Background on the topic provides information to the reader about the topic
- Supporting evidence integrates appeals
- **Counterargument** and rebuttal address major opposition
- Conclusion restates the thesis statement

Organization of the Toulmin Argument

The **Toulmin Argument** was developed by Stephen Toulmin. The Toulmin method works well when there

are no clear truths or solutions to a problem. It considers the complex nature of most situations. There are six basic components:

- Introduction—thesis statement or the main claim (statement of opinion)
- **Grounds**—the facts, data, or reasoning on which the claim is based
- **Warrant**—logic and reasoning that connect the ground to the claim
- Backing—additional support for the claim that addresses different questions related to the claim
- **Qualifier**—expressed limits to the claim stating the claim may not be true in all situations
- Rebuttal—counterargument against the claim

Organization of the Rogerian Argument

The **Rogorian Argument** was developed by Carl Rogers. *Rogorian argument* is a negotiating strategy in which common goals are identified and opposing views are described as objectively as possible in an effort to establish common ground and reach an agreement. Whereas the traditional argument focuses on *winning*, the Rogerian model seeks a mutually satisfactory solution. This argument considers different standpoints and works on collaboration and cooperation. Following is the structure of the Rogerian model:

- Introduction and Thesis Statement—presents the topic as a problem to solve together, rather than an issue
- Opposing Position—expressed acknowledgment of counterargument that is fair and accurate
- Statement of Claim—writer's perspective
- **Middle Ground**—discussion of a compromised solution
- Conclusion—remarks stating the benefits of a compromised solution

The Following Words and Phrases: Writing an Argument

Using transition words or phrases at the beginning of new paragraphs or within paragraphs helps a reader to follow your writing. Transitions show the reader when you are moving on to a different idea or further developing the same idea. Transitions create a flow, or connection, among all sentences, and that leads to coherence in your writing. The following words and phrases will assist in linking ideas, moving your essay forward, and improving readability:

- Also, in the same way, just as, likewise, similarly
- But, however, in spite of, on the one hand, on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still yet
- First, second, third..., next, then, finally

- After, afterward, at last, before, currently, during, earlier, immediately, later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then
- For example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate
- Even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly, without question, clearly
- Above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there
- Accordingly, consequently, hence, so, therefore, thus
- Additionally, again, also, and, as well, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, then
- Finally, in a word, in brief, briefly, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in sum, to sum up, in summary

Professional Writing Example

The following essay, “Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States,” by Scott McLean is an argumentative essay. As you read the essay, determine the author’s major claim and major supporting examples that support his claim.

Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States

By Scott McLean

The United States is the only modernized Western nation that does not offer publicly funded health care to all its citizens; the costs of health care for the uninsured in the United States are prohibitive, and the practices of insurance companies are often more interested in profit margins than providing health care. These conditions are incompatible with US ideals and standards, and it is time for the US government to provide universal health care coverage for all its citizens. Like education, health care should be considered a fundamental right of all US citizens, not simply a privilege for the upper and middle classes.

One of the most common arguments against providing universal health care coverage (UHC) is that it will cost too much money. In other words, UHC would raise taxes too much. While providing health care for all US citizens would cost a lot of money for every tax-paying citizen, citizens need to examine exactly how much money it would cost, and more important, how much money is “too much” when it comes to opening up health care for all. Those who have health insurance already pay too much money, and those without coverage are charged

unfathomable amounts. The cost of publicly funded health care versus the cost of current insurance premiums is unclear. In fact, some Americans, especially those in lower income brackets, could stand to pay less than their current premiums.

However, even if UHC would cost Americans a bit more money each year, we ought to reflect on what type of country we would like to live in, and what types of morals we represent if we are more willing to deny health care to others on the basis of saving a couple hundred dollars per year. In a system that privileges capitalism and rugged individualism, little room remains for compassion and love. It is time that Americans realize the amorality of US hospitals forced to turn away the sick and poor. UHC is a health care system that aligns more closely with the core values that so many Americans espouse and respect, and it is time to realize its potential.

Another common argument against UHC in the United States is that other comparable national health care systems, like that of England, France, or Canada, are bankrupt or rife with problems. UHC opponents claim that sick patients in these countries often wait in long lines or long wait lists for basic health care. Opponents also commonly accuse these systems of being unable to pay for themselves, racking up huge deficits year after year. A fair amount of truth lies in these claims, but Americans must remember to put those problems in context with the problems of the current US system as well. It is true that people often wait to see a doctor in countries with UHC, but we in the United States wait as well, and we often schedule appointments weeks in advance, only to have onerous waits in the doctor's "waiting rooms."

Critical and urgent care abroad is always treated urgently, much the same as it is treated in the United States. The main difference there, however, is cost. Even health insurance policy holders are not safe from the costs of health care in the United States. Each day an American acquires a form of cancer, and the only effective treatment might be considered "experimental" by an insurance company and thus is not covered. Without medical coverage, the patient must pay for the treatment out of pocket. But these costs may be so prohibitive that the patient will either opt for a less effective, but covered, treatment; opt for no treatment at all; or attempt to pay the costs of treatment and experience unimaginable financial consequences. Medical bills in these cases can easily rise into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is enough to force even wealthy families out of their homes and into perpetual debt. Even though each American could someday face this unfortunate situation, many still choose to take the financial risk. Instead of gambling with health and financial welfare, US citizens should press their representatives to set up UHC, where their coverage will be guaranteed and affordable.

Despite the opponents' claims against UHC, a universal system will save lives and encourage the health of all Americans. Why has public education been so easily accepted, but not public

health care? It is time for Americans to start thinking socially about health in the same ways they think about education and police services: as rights of US citizens.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the author's main claim in this essay?
2. Does the author fairly and accurately present counterarguments to this claim? Explain your answer using evidence from the essay.
3. Does the author provide sufficient background information for his reader about this topic? Point out at least one example in the text where the author provides background on the topic. Is it enough?
4. Does the author provide a course of action in his argument? Explain your response using specific details from the essay.

Student Writing Example

Salvaging Our Old-Growth Forests

It's been so long since I've been there I can't clearly remember what it's like. I can only look at the pictures in my family photo album. I found the pictures of me when I was a little girl standing in front of a towering tree with what seems like endless miles and miles of forest in the background. My mom is standing on one side of me holding my hand, and my older brother is standing on the other side of me, making a strange face. The faded pictures don't do justice to the real-life magnificence of the forest in which they were taken—the Olympic National Forest—but they capture the awe my parents felt when they took their children to the ancient forest.

Today these forests are threatened by the timber companies that want state and federal governments to open protected old-growth forests to commercial logging. The timber industry's lobbying attempts must be rejected because the logging of old-growth forests is

unnecessary, because it will destroy a delicate and valuable ecosystem, and because these rare forests are a sacred trust.

Those who promote logging of old-growth forests offer several reasons, but when closely examined, none is substantial. First, forest industry spokesmen tell us the forest will regenerate after logging is finished. This argument is flawed. In reality, the logging industry clear-cuts forests on a 50-80 year cycle, so that the ecosystem being destroyed—one built up over more than 250 years—will never be replaced. At most, the replanted trees will reach only one-third the age of the original trees. Because the same ecosystem cannot rebuild if the trees do not develop full maturity, the plants and animals that depend on the complex ecosystem—with its incredibly tall canopies and trees of all sizes and ages—cannot survive. The forest industry brags about replaceable trees but doesn't mention a thing about the irreplaceable ecosystems.

Another argument used by the timber industry, as forestry engineer D. Alan Rockwood has said in a personal correspondence, is that “an old-growth forest is basically a forest in decline....The biomass is decomposing at a higher rate than tree growth.” According to Rockwood, preserving old-growth forests is “wasting a resource” since the land should be used to grow trees rather than let the old ones slowly rot away, especially when harvesting the trees before they rot would provide valuable lumber. But the timber industry looks only at the trees, not at the incredibly diverse bio-system which the ancient trees create and nourish. The mixture of young and old-growth trees creates a unique habitat that logging would destroy.

Perhaps the main argument used by the logging industry is economic. Using the plight of loggers to their own advantage, the industry claims that logging old-growth forests will provide jobs. They make all of us feel sorry for the loggers by giving us an image of a hardworking man put out of work and unable to support his family. They make us imagine the sad eyes of the logger's children. We think, “How's he going to pay the electricity bill? How's he going to pay the mortgage? Will his family become homeless?” We all see these images in our minds and want to give the logger his job so his family won't suffer. But in reality giving him his job back is only a temporary solution to a long-term problem. Logging in the old-growth forest couldn't possibly give the logger his job for long. For example, according to Peter Morrison of the Wilderness Society, all the old-growth forests in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest would be gone in three years if it were opened to logging (vi). What will the loggers do then? Loggers need to worry about finding new jobs now and not wait until there are no old-growth trees left.

Having looked at the views of those who favor logging of old-growth forests, let's turn to the arguments for preserving all old growth. Three main reasons can be cited.

First, it is simply unnecessary to log these forests to supply the world's lumber. According to environmentalist Mark Sagoff, we have plenty of new-growth forests from which timber can be taken (89-90). Recently, there have been major reforestation efforts all over the United States, and it is common practice now for loggers to replant every tree that is harvested. These new-growth forests, combined with extensive planting of tree farms, provide more than enough wood for the world's needs. According to forestry expert Robert Sedjo (qtd. in Sagoff 90), tree farms alone can supply the world's demand for industrial lumber. Although tree farms are ugly and possess little diversity in their ecology, expanding tree farms is far preferable to destroying old-growth forests.

Moreover, we can reduce the demand for lumber. Recycling, for example, can cut down on the use of trees for paper products. Another way to reduce the amount of trees used for paper is with a promising new innovation, kenaf, a fast-growing, 15-foot-tall, annual herb that is native to Africa. According to Jack Page in *Plant Earth, Forest*, kenaf has long been used to make rope, and it has been found to work just as well for paper pulp (158).

Another reason to protect old-growth forests is the value of their complex and very delicate ecosystem. The threat of logging to the northern spotted owl is well known. Although loggers say "people before owls," ecologists consider the owls to be warnings, like canaries in mine shafts that signal the health of the whole ecosystem. Evidence provided by the World Resource Institute shows that continuing logging will endanger other species. Also, Dr. David Brubaker, an environmentalist biologist at Seattle University, has said in a personal interview that the long-term effects of logging will be severe. Loss of the spotted owl, for example, may affect the small rodent population, which at the moment is kept in check by the predator owl. Dr. Brubaker also explained that the old-growth forests also connect to salmon runs. When dead timber falls into the streams, it creates a habitat conducive to spawning. If the dead logs are removed, the habitat is destroyed. These are only two examples in a long list of animals that would be harmed by logging of old-growth forests.

Finally, it is wrong to log in old-growth forests because of their sacred beauty. When you walk in an old-growth forest, you are touched by a feeling that ordinary forests can't evoke. As you look up to the sky, all you see is branch after branch in a canopy of towering trees. Each of these amazingly tall trees feels inhabited by a spirit; it has its own personality. "For spiritual bliss take a few moments and sit quietly in the Grove of the patriarchs near Mount Rainier or the redwood forests of Northern California," said Richard Linder, environmental activist and member of the National Wildlife Federation. "Sit silently," he said, "and look at the giant living organisms you're surrounded by; you can feel the history of your own species." Although Linder

is obviously biased in favor of preserving the forests, the spiritual awe he feels for ancient trees is shared by millions of other people who recognize that we destroy something of the world's spirit when we destroy ancient trees, or great whales, or native runs of salmon. According to Al Gore, "We have become so successful at controlling nature that we have lost our connection to it" (qtd. in Sagoff 96). We need to find that connection again, and one place we can find it is in the old-growth forests.

The old-growth forests are part of the web of life. If we cut this delicate strand of the web, we may end up destroying the whole. Once the old trees are gone, they are gone forever. Even if foresters replanted every tree and waited 250 years for the trees to grow to ancient size, the genetic pool would be lost. We'd have a 250-year-old tree farm, not an old-growth forest. If we want to maintain a healthy earth, we must respect the beauty and sacredness of the old-growth forests.

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- Page, Jack. *Planet Earth, Forest*. Alexandria: Time-Life, 1983.
- Rockwood, D. Alan. Email to the author. 24 Sept. 1998.
- Sagoff, Mark. "Do We Consume Too Much?" *Atlantic Monthly* June 1997: 80-96.
- World Resource Institute. "Old Growth Forests in the United States Pacific Northwest." 13 Sept. 1998 <http://www.wri.org/biodiv>.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the author's main claim in this essay?
2. Does the author fairly and accurately present counterarguments to this claim? Explain your answer and describe an example of counterargument in the essay.
3. Does the author provide sufficient background information for his reader about this topic? Point out at least one example in the text where the author provides background on the topic. Is it enough?
4. Does the author provide a course of action in his argument? Explain your response using

specific details from the essay.

Your Turn

What societal or personal experiences have you observed and considered to be argumentative?

What organizational structure would be best for the topic you consider: Classical, Toulmin, or Rogerian?

Key Terms

- Appeals
- Ethos
- Pathos
- Logos
- Warrant
- Qualifier
- Counterargument
- Grounds
- Classical method
- Toulmin method
- Rogerian method

- Middle Ground
- Argumentation

Summary

In argumentative writing, you are typically asked to take a position on an issue or topic and explain and support your position with research from reliable and credible sources. Argumentation can be used to convince readers to accept or acknowledge the validity of your position or to question or refute a position you consider to be untrue or misguided.

- The purpose of argument in writing is to convince or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion.
- An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue, in writing, is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way.
- A thesis that expresses the opinion of the writer in more specific terms is better than one that is vague.
- It is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.
- It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish through a concession statement.
- To persuade a skeptical audience, you will need to use a wide range of evidence. Scientific studies, opinions from experts, historical precedent, statistics, personal anecdotes, and current events are all types of evidence that you might use in explaining your point.
- Make sure that your word choice and writing style are appropriate for both your subject and your audience.
- You should let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and respectfully and reasonably addressing opposing ideas.
- You should be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound more biased than it needs to.
- Facts are statements that can be proven using objective data.
- Opinions are personal views, or judgments, that cannot be proven.
- In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions.
- Quantitative visuals present data graphically. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience.
- Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions



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<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/englishcomp1/?p=217#h5p-31>

Reflective Response

Reflect on your writing process for the argumentative essay. What was the most challenging? What was the easiest? Did your position on the topic change as a result of reviewing and evaluating new knowledge or ideas about the topic?



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CHAPTER 13: MLA RESEARCH AND CITATION

MLA RESEARCH AND CITATION

Kirk Fontenot

Student Learning Outcomes

- Define the purpose of citation
- Correctly use in-text citations
- Write a properly formatted Works Cited page

Introduction to Citation

There are two main reasons why we research:

1. To learn new information.
2. To give credibility to our writing.

Of course, if no one knows that we have conducted the research, then it does nothing for our credibility. This is why we **cite** our sources, both in the text of the essay and at the end in a **Works Cited page** or bibliography.

MLA stands for Modern Language Association. This professional organization publishes a handbook of rules and standards that you should use when formatting your papers and citing your sources. MLA is generally used when writing about the liberal arts and the humanities; other disciplines may use other formatting guides, such as APA (American Psychological Association).

In this module, you will develop your skills in citing your research in an essay, using both **in-text citation** (also called parenthetical citation) and a Works Cited page. Specifically, this chapter will focus on **MLA citation**.

Integrating sources into your essay

When you mention information in your essay that came from an outside source, it's a good idea to use a signal phrase to introduce that information. You want it to be extra clear that the information came from a source, not from your own experience.

Some common and easy-to-use signal phrases include:

According to (author's name), ...

In (author name)'s view, ...

In (title of article or book), (author's name) states that...

The author points out that.... She [or he] also stresses that...

You can vary the signal phrases by using one of the following verbs instead of *state*, *point out*, or *stress*:

admit	disagreed	note
advise	discuss	observe
argue	emphasize	propose
believe	explain	reject
claim	find	reply
concede	imply	report
conclude	indicate	suggest
deny	insist	think

What is the difference between a direct quote and a paraphrase?

Direct quote

Direct quotes are placed in quotation marks and are taken word-for-word from the source. Direct quotations draw attention to key passages. Include a direct quotation in a paper only if:

- you want to retain the beauty or clarity of someone's words
- you need to reveal how the reasoning in a specific passage is flawed or insightful
- you plan to discuss the implications of the quoted material

Can you make changes to a direct quote? Yes!

If you need to clarify a quotation by changing it in any way, **place square brackets** around the added or changed words.

“In this role, he successfully conveys a wide range of emotion.”

“In this role, he [Robin Williams] successfully conveys a wide range of emotion.”

The brackets clearly indicate to your reader that this is added information that did not appear in the original, but it does not change the intended meaning.

If you want to omit part of a quotation, replace the deleted words with **ellipsis points**.

“Overseas markets such as China, India, and Korea, which have rapidly growing middle classes, are critical to the financial success of Hollywood films.”

“Overseas markets...are critical to the financial success of Hollywood films.”

The second example has deleted information from the original quote that was not necessary for that writer’s thesis. The basic meaning is still there.

When modifying a quotation, be sure not to alter its essential meaning.

Why are you quoting this?

Readers will also want to know how a quotation is related to the point you are making.

When the connection is not readily apparent, provide an explanation in a sentence or two following the quotation.

Don’t assume your quote is self-explanatory!

What is a paraphrase?

A **paraphrase** is a restatement of someone else’s ideas in approximately the same number of words.

Paraphrasing allows you to demonstrate that you have understood what you have read. It also enables your audience to understand it.

Paraphrase when you want to:

- clarify difficult material by using simpler language
- use someone else's ideas but not their exact words
- create a consistent tone for your paper as a whole
- interact with a point that a source has made

Any paraphrase must accurately maintain the sense of the original.

Caution: If you unintentionally misrepresent the original because you did not understand it, you are being *inaccurate*.

If you deliberately change the gist of what a source says, you are being *unethical*.

What about summarizing?

Summarizing is different from paraphrasing in that a summary is much shorter than the source material.

A paraphrase of a paragraph should also be approximately a paragraph long; a summary of a paragraph may be just one sentence.

The reason that all of the distinctions are important is that we want to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism.

The Basics of In-Text Citation (Also Known as Parenthetical Citation)

When we're writing an essay using research, it's important to always be clear when information is coming from a source. A source is any place where we get information—a website, book, journal article, video, news report—really, anything that is not first-hand experience.

We place an in-text citation immediately after whatever information we've just written. Whether it's a direct quote (word-for-word from the source, in quotation marks) or a paraphrase (information rewritten in our own words), we must IMMEDIATELY write an in-text citation, every single time.

In MLA format, generally, you want your in-text citation to include the author's last name and the page number where you found the information. You put both in parenthesis, and that's it; you don't add a comma or "pg" or anything else. Save the period until after the in-text citation, like this:

According to the article “Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property” from *CQ Researcher*, “Some worry that generative AI’s output will become so much like human-generated works that it will be next to impossible to detect—and so pervasive that tracking it down becomes too onerous. It could make college essays obsolete, for example, or at least an endeavor that would have to be completed in class under close scrutiny” (Day 5).

- The **signal phrase** tells the reader that the information came from an article from the database CQ Researcher.
- The **quotation marks** tell the reader that this is a direct quote, word-for-word from the article.
- The **in-text citation** at the end tells the reader that the author of this article is named Day, and the quote came from page 5 of the article. Notice that the period that you might expect to find at the end of the quote is instead found after the in-text citation.

Of course, there will be exceptions to the formatting of your in-text citations. For example, web articles don’t have page numbers, and some articles don’t have a credited author. Below are some examples of what in-text citations will look like in those circumstances.

Examples of In-Text Citations

In-text citation, one author, direct quote:

“Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (Maynard 4).

Two authors, direct quote:

“Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (Maynard and Smith 4).

Three authors, direct quote:

“Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (Maynard et al 4).

No author, direct quote:

“Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (“Fast-Food Shakeout” 4).

Two articles by the exact same author:

“Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (Maynard, “Fast-Food Shakeout” 4).

Or

According to Maynard, “Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (“Fast-Food Shakeout” 4).

Direct quote with a signal phrase:

According to Maynard, “Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (4).

Or

According to the article “Fast-Food Shakeout,” “Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging” (Maynard 4).

Paraphrase:

One change that fast-food restaurants are making is to switch to packaging that is better for the environment, so that the environmental advocates are happy (Maynard 4).

Watch the following video for even more explanation of how in-text citations work:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/englishcomp1/?p=1179#oembed-1>

In-Text Citation in Action!

Some of you may be wondering what this all will actually look like in your essay. Let’s look at a sample body paragraph that incorporates research using direct quotes, paraphrasing, signal phrases, and in-text citations.

When writing the research essay, you will need to read all that you can about your topic and pick out

selections you'll want to mention in your essay—BEFORE you begin writing. It's a terrible idea to try to skim through articles while you are also drafting your essay. Instead, make an outline, write out quotes that might go in each body paragraph, and add the in-text citations before you begin.

For this example, I've already picked out quotes from my sources and copied and pasted them into a blank document. Now I'll start writing a body paragraph using this formula:

- Topic sentence (never start with a direct quote)
- First supporting point (1-2 sentences)
- Evidence: Direct quote or paraphrase from your source (1-2 sentences)
- Explanation of the direct quote or paraphrase. How does that prove anything about your topic sentence? (1-2 sentences)
- Repeat until you have made all your points about that topic

Now I will write my thesis statement. This will be the point I'm making in the whole essay. It will also preview my three supporting points. Each supporting point will then become its own body paragraph!

Thesis statement: The fast-food industry is under pressure to make changes to its packaging, its menus, and its advertising.

And here is my sample body paragraph. Notice how it starts with a topic sentence. It uses only information from my sources, both as direct quotes and as paraphrasing. Each piece of info is immediately followed by an in-text citation.

The first major change the fast-food industry is under pressure to make is to its packaging. One fast-food place that is making this change right now is Starbucks. According to *NPR*, "Starbucks announced a goal in 2020 to reduce waste by 50% by 2030" (Shivaram). Starbucks also says that by 2025 they want customers to either use their own cup or a reusable cup they buy from Starbucks (Shivaram). Environmental groups are flexing their muscles and pressuring restaurants like McDonald's to change packaging. *CQ Researcher* points out, "Environmentalists are demanding that fast-food chains adopt eco-friendly packaging" (Maynard 4). This pressure is not new. McDonald's faced this same pressure back in the '80s. "McDonald's felt [activists'] early wrath when [they] hatched the 'McToxics' campaign in 1987 to persuade the fast-food chain to stop using wasteful Styrofoam clamshell containers, which carry suspected carcinogens" (Raeburn). They are still feeling this pressure. An article from *PBS Newshour* explains, "[In September 2021], the company announced they will drastically cut its use of plastic by the end of 2025. One way they'll do that is by replacing the 1 billion children's toys it sells

each year with cardboard or recycled or plant-based plastics” (“McDonald’s Pledges”). Cutting out plastic from Happy Meals will obviously greatly reduce the amount of plastic McDonald’s uses, which is a good thing for the environment. These are all examples of activists putting pressure on fast-food places to change their packaging to be more eco-friendly.

The Works Cited Page

Here is a sample Works Cited page. It is created from the sources used in the sample paragraph above. Notice that you can use the in-text citations to easily find the corresponding article in the Works Cited page.

Works Cited

Maynard, Micheline. “Fast-Food Shakeout.” *CQ Researcher*, 15 Feb. 2019, pp. 1-28,
library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrr2019021500.

“McDonald’s Pledges to Phase out Plastic in Happy Meal Toys, a New App Treats Spider
Phobias and Other Stories You Missed.” *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 24
Sept. 2021, [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/mcdonalds-pledges-to-phase-
out-plastic-in-happy-meal-toys-a-new-app-treats-spider-phobias-and-other-
stories-you-missed](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/mcdonalds-pledges-to-phase-out-plastic-in-happy-meal-toys-a-new-app-treats-spider-phobias-and-other-stories-you-missed).

Raeburn, Paul. “‘Okay, You Want to Fight Back?’” *Audubon*, vol. 110, no. 6, Nov. 2008,
pp. 32–33. EBSCOhost, [https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?
direct=true&AuthType=cookie.ip.custuid&custid=s8993093&db=a9h&AN=34986162&site=ehost-
live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie.ip.custuid&custid=s8993093&db=a9h&AN=34986162&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Shivaram, Deepa. “Starbucks Plans to Phase out Paper Cups in the U.S. and Canada.”
NPR, NPR, 16 Mar. 2022,
[https://www.npr.org/2022/03/16/1086862986/starbucks-plans-to-phase-out-paper-
cups-in-the-u-s-and-canada](https://www.npr.org/2022/03/16/1086862986/starbucks-plans-to-phase-out-paper-cups-in-the-u-s-and-canada).

As you can see, a Works Cited page is essentially just a list of the sources that you use in your paper. However, the list has to be written in a very specific format.

Online databases from your college’s library usually provide MLA citations for you. When reading an article from a database, look for a button or link that says “Cite” or “Cite Now.”

Articles from other web sources or print sources will not provide citations for you. However, you can easily write them yourself! Follow the citations in the sample Works Cited page above like a model. You can also find worksheets online that will walk you through writing a Works Cited citation, like this one: [MLA 8th Edition Worksheet: Web Page on a Website \(noodletools.com\)](https://noodletools.com/worksheets/mla-8th-edition-worksheets/web-page-on-a-website/)

You can also use shortcut tools that generate a citation for you when you copy and paste the link. However, use these shortcuts with caution. Like with any shortcut, you run the risk of making mistakes. If you use a shortcut tool that you find online, double-check the output to make sure your citation is free of errors. Remember, it is up to you, not the shortcut tool, to be accurate.

Here are eight quick rules for this Works Cited page:

1. Start a new page for your Works Cited list (e.g., if your paper is 4 pages long, start your Works Cited list on page 5).
2. Center the title, Works Cited, at the top of the page and do not bold or underline it. Look for the alignment option in Word.
3. Double-space the list.
4. Start the first line of each citation at the left margin; each subsequent line should be indented (also known as a “hanging indent”).
5. Put your list in alphabetical order. Alphabetize the list by the first word in the citation. In most cases, the first word will be the author’s last name. Where the author is unknown, alphabetize by the first word in the title, ignoring the words *a*, *an*, *the*.
6. For each author, give the last name followed by a comma and the first name followed by a period.
7. Italicize the titles of full works: books, audiovisual material, and websites.
8. Do not italicize titles of parts of works, such as articles from newspapers, magazines, or journals/essays; poems; short stories; or chapter titles from a book / chapters or sections of an Internet document. Instead, use quotation marks.

With the Works Cited page, formatting matters. Before you submit your Works Cited page, go to Google, type in “Sample MLA Works Cited,” and click “Images.” You’ll see many examples of how a Works Cited page should look. Compare your Works Cited to the images you see. Yours should look *exactly* like the ones in the search results. If something about yours is different, make it match the examples.

Your Turn

Choose one of the following options:

Option 1

Read an article on a topic you find interesting. Write a one-paragraph summary of the article. In your summary, include at least one example of each of the following:

1. A signal phrase that integrates a source into your writing
2. A direct quote with an in-text citation
3. A paraphrase with an in-text citation

Option 2

Pick a topic that you find interesting. Find at least three articles on that topic, whether from the web or your library's databases. Write a Works Cited page using those three articles.

Key Terms

- Cite
- Works Cited
- In-text citation
- Direct quote
- Paraphrase
- Summarize
- Signal phrase

Summary

- When writing papers in the liberal arts or humanities, use MLA guidelines for formatting and citation.
- Citing your sources gives appropriate credit and provides authority to your writing.
- In-text citation credits the source within the text of the paper itself.
- A Works Cited page is a carefully formatted list of sources used in the paper.
- A direct quote is word-for-word from the source, while a paraphrase has been reworded.
- Signal phrases add further clarity to your writing and ensure that proper credit is given to your sources.

Reflective Response

Why do you think it is important to give credit to the sources we use when writing research papers? Put yourself on the other side of the equation: If you published a paper, would you want other writers to give you appropriate credit when they mention your ideas? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 14: GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS MINI-LESSONS

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS MINI-LESSONS

Use these mini-lessons on grammar and writing mechanics to develop your writing skills based on feedback from the instructor and Writing Community Reviews. They include:

- Subjects and Verbs, Irregular Verbs, and Subject-Verb Agreement
- Sentence Types
- Fragments I
- Run-ons and Comma Splices I
- Comma Usage
- Parallelism
- The Apostrophe
- Capital Letters

Each lesson contains brief videos to teach you or refresh your understanding of proper grammar, punctuation, and usage.



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MINI-LESSON: SUBJECTS AND VERBS, IRREGULAR VERBS, SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

To refresh your understanding of subjects, verbs, irregular verbs, and subject-verb agreement, review the videos below:

Subjects and Verbs



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Irregular Verbs in the Past Tense



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Subject-Verb Agreement



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MINI-LESSON: SENTENCE TYPES

To refresh your understanding of different types of sentences, their grammar, and their structure, review the videos below:

Simple Sentences and Compound Sentences



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Complex Sentences



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Compound Complex Sentences



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MINI-LESSON: FRAGMENTS I

To refresh your understanding of sentence fragments, review the videos below:

Sentence Fragments



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Sentence Fragments, How to Identify and Correct Them in Writing



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Sentences and Sentence Fragments



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MINI-LESSON: RUN-ONS AND COMMA SPLICES I

To refresh your understanding of run-on sentences and comma splice sentences, review the videos below:

Run-on Sentences



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Comma Splices and How to Fix Them



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How to Avoid Run-on Sentences



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Identify and Fix Comma Splices



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MINI-LESSON: COMMA USAGE

To refresh your understanding of how to correctly use commas, review the videos below:

How to Use Commas – Overview



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[Using Commas Correctly](#)



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MINI-LESSON: PARALLELISM

To strengthen your understanding of parallelism in sentence structure, review the videos below:

Parallelism in Writing – What it is and how to avoid problems



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Parallelism in Grammar (English closed captioning is not available for this video.)



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MINI-LESSON: THE APOSTROPHE

To strengthen your understanding of how to use apostrophes correctly, review the video below:

Using Apostrophes in Written English



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MINI-LESSON: CAPITAL LETTERS

To strengthen your understanding of the proper use of capitalization in written English, review the video below:

Capitalization in Grammar



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If you want a more in-depth review, you can watch this video as well:



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GRAMMAR PRACTICE: INTERACTIVE QUIZZES

For additional grammar practice, choose the topic(s) you want to develop by taking interactive quizzes from the [Guide to Grammar and Writing](#).



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DE COPIA: DEMONSTRATION OF THE VARIETY OF LANGUAGE

In De Copia, Erasmus re-writes the same sentence over and over to demonstrate the variety of language.

You will be assigned a sentence to re-write 25–30 times.

Here is one example:

30 variations of “A loud sound awakes me in the night”

1. In the bewitching hour, a resonant buzz raises me out of my crib.
2. A noisy growl returns me to my consciousness in the dead of night.
3. After dark, I am wide-awake because of a powerful bang.
4. I can no longer sleep due to the harsh noise in the darkness of the day.
5. I rise out of bed because of a deafening noise in the nighttime.
6. At the time when the moon is out high and bright, I become conscious due to a resonant sound.
7. A crazy roaring awakes me in the darkness of the day.
8. In the night, a blaring sound wakes me up.
9. The god of sleep has abandoned me when a loud noise strikes out in the night.
10. In the dark hours, a big wave of sound had me awakened.
11. I am awakened by the vociferous noise after dark.
12. I am forced to end my body resting process at bedtime due to a powerful boom after dark.
13. An extremely harsh buzz forces me out of my dream at the bewitching hour.
14. I am left alone by the god of dreams and nightmares when a noisy sound bothers my ears.
15. In the night, a loud sound wakes me up.
16. After dark, I rise out of my crib because of an annoying wailing.
17. I wake up because of a heavy bang in the dark hours.
18. I become conscious due to a resonant sound in the dark time of the day.
19. After dark, an intense buzz forces me out of my body's resting process.
20. I am awakened by the thundering sound when the sun had rested a long time ago.
21. A powerful boom makes me rise out of my sleepiness in the pitch black.
22. A heavy cry awakes me in the dead of night.
23. A deafening noise in the nighttime has me rise out of bed.
24. An unpleasant sound has awakened me after dark.

25. At a bewitching hour, a blaring noise wakes me up.
26. My dream ends abruptly because of a noisy growl in the pitch-black time of the day.
27. In the night, I come to my conscious due to the blaring noise.
28. When the moon shines bright and high, I am forced out of my dream because of a thundering sound.
29. My sleep is ended when I hear a loud noise after dark.
30. In the night, a resonant howl awakes me.



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STYLE EXERCISE: VOICE

The [de copia exercise](#) is useful in showing how style—the third canon of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery)—has a major impact on one’s writing. Paragraphs and essays that feature combined and varied sentences often shine the most.

For this exercise, I would like for you to try to transform your own writing to mimic another’s voice. This type of exercise is designed to help make you think about the choices a writer makes in designing his or her writing style.

You’ll complete four steps:

- Write a *brief* one-paragraph story that describes a key quality of yours to someone not in our class.
- Read some sample passages and note their distinct writing styles. These are in very different genres, of course, but that’s part of the fun.
- Mimic one of those writing styles to re-tell your story. You can choose a different “audience” for your description if you’d like.
- **Answer the questions:** What choices did you make in re-designing your story? What obstacles did you face? How would you characterize your voice vs. the one you mimicked?



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APPENDIX A: CHECKLIST FOR ACCESSIBILITY

This title has been reviewed to meet these accessibility practices:

Organizing Content

- Content is organized under headings and subheadings.
- Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2).

Images

- Images that convey information include alternative text (alt text) descriptions of the image's content or function.
- Graphs, charts, and maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image.
- Images do not rely on color to convey information.
- Images that are purely decorative do not have alt text descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information).

Links

- The link text describes the destination of the link and does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more."
- If a link will open or download a file (like a PDF or Excel file), a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g., [PDF]).
- Links do not open in new windows or tabs.
- If a link must open in a new window or tab, a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g., [NewTab]).
- For citations and references, the title of the resource is hyperlinked, and the full URL is not hyperlinked.

Tables

- Tables are used to structure information and not for layout.
- Tables include row and column headers.
- Row and column headers have the correct scope assigned.
- Tables include a caption.
- Tables avoid merged or split cells.
- Tables have adequate cell padding.

Multimedia

- All audio content includes a transcript. The transcript includes all speech content and relevant descriptions of non-speech audio and speaker names/headings where necessary.
- Videos have captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content that has been edited by a human for accuracy.
- All videos with contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) are described audibly in the video.

Formulas

- Equations written in plain text use proper symbols (i.e., $-$, \times , \div).¹
- For complex equations, one of the following is true:
 - They were written using LaTeX and are rendered with MathJax (Pressbooks).
 - They were written using Microsoft Word's equation editor.
 - They are presented as images with alternative text descriptions.
- Written equations are properly interpreted by text-to-speech tools.²

Font Size

- Font size is 12 point or higher for body text in Word and PDF documents.
- Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes in Word and PDF documents.

1. For example, a hyphen (-) may look like a minus sign ($-$), but it will not be read out correctly by text-to-speech tools.

2. Written equations should prioritize semantic markup over visual markup so text-to-speech tools will read out an equation in a way that makes sense to auditory learners. This applies to both equations written in LaTeX and equations written in Microsoft Word's equation editor.

- Font size can be enlarged by 200 percent in webbook or ebook formats without needing to scroll side to side.

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GLOSSARY

Analogy

A comparison between two unrelated items based on their shared qualities

Appeals

In writing, an appeal is a strategy that a writer uses to support an argument.

Argumentation

Argumentation is a process of reasoning that asserts the reasonableness of a debatable position, belief, or conclusion. In argumentative writing, you are typically asked to take a position on an issue or topic and explain and support your position.

Arrangement

Arrangement is the organization and structure of ideas in your essay.

audience

An audience is a group of readers who reads a particular piece of writing. As a writer, you should anticipate the needs or expectations of your audience in order to convey information or argue for a particular claim.

Bias

Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair

Brainstorming

Generating ideas without interruption

Cause

A cause is something that produces an action, event, or condition.

Characters

People who appear in a story

Chronological

Organizing actions or events as they occurred in time

Classical Argument

The Classical Argument was developed by a Greek philosopher, Aristotle. The goal of this model is to convince the reader about a particular point of view using appeals to persuade an audience.

Comparison

The act of finding similarities between two or more things.

Concluding Sentence

The Concluding Sentence summarizes the information to show unity within the paragraph.

Conflict

The problem, challenge, or obstacle a character must face in a story; types of conflict include human vs. human, human vs. nature, and human vs. self

connotation

The feelings or attitudes that make up the extended definition of a word

Connotations

Positive or negative association a word suggests in addition to its literal meaning; for example, blue is a color, but it also implies sadness

Content Editing

(Or substantive editing) A type of editing in which writers or editors make heavy changes to a text for better comprehensibility; this type of editing addresses conceptual intent, content, and organization.

Contrast

The act of finding differences between two or more things

Contributory Cause

Contributory Causes are secondary circumstances that produce actions, events, or conditions. However, contributory causes alone cannot cause the action, event, or condition to occur.

Copy Editing

Concerns the mechanics and grammar of an essay; this kind of editing focuses on grammar, spelling, style, and punctuation errors; in this step, writers and editors can address needless repetition and factual inconsistencies

Counterargument

A counterargument is an expressed acknowledgement of opposing views that are fair and accurate coupled with a response to the shortcoming in reasoning in the opposing views.

Criteria

Principles or standards by which things are evaluated

Definition

The rhetorical mode that we use when our thesis includes a term that we define for our audience

denotation

The literal and explicit definition of a word

Denotations

The literal, or dictionary, meaning of a word

Description

Details an author uses to help readers relate to a story; these details are based on the five senses

Differences

Characteristics that are not shared or are dissimilar

Direct quote

A direct quote is text taken directly from a source, word-for-word. Use quotation marks (") to indicate where a direct quote appears.

Effect

An effect is what results from an action, event, or condition.

Ethos

Ethos is an appeal based on the writer's credibility

evaluation

Rhetorical mode that examines criteria in order to make a judgment about a subject or subjects.

Evidence

Available facts or information

Fast Drafting

Writing a draft as quickly as possible

Freewriting

the process of simply writing down any and all ideas about the topic that pop into your mind, without worrying about format or organization

gather evidence

To gather evidence means to develop support for the point you're making

Grounds

The facts, data, or reasoning on which a claim is based

Hook

The Hook engages your reader's interest. It can be in the form of a question, a quote, an anecdote or story, an interesting fact, or an original definition

illustrate

To show or demonstrate something clearly

illustration essay

An essay which clearly demonstrates and supports a point using examples and evidence

illustration/example

Rhetorical mode in which the writer uses specific examples as supporting evidence for their point

Imagery

Language that appeals to the physical senses

Introduction

The Introduction is the first paragraph of an essay and plays an important role in writing an effective paper

Invention

The start of the writing process. Invention means to come up with an appropriate topic, to develop a main idea about that topic, and to gather supporting evidence for that main idea.

Judgment

A conclusion based on evidence

Line Editing

(Or stylistic editing) A type of editing in which writers or editors look closely at each line in the text to correct syntax errors in order to ensure a consistent tone that is expressed in clear language; this kind of editing evaluates a writer's style and focuses on clarity of meaning and word choice

Logos

Logical appeal is the strategic use of logic, claims, and evidence to convince an audience of a certain point. The writer uses logical connections between ideas, facts, and statistics.

Main Cause

The primary cause that produces an action, event, or condition. The main clause requires critical evaluation as it may or may not be immediately obvious.

Metaphors

A comparison between two things that are not usually related

Middle Ground

Middle Ground is part of the structure of the Rogerian argument. It is a discussion of compromised solutions

Mind-mapping

Prewriting technique in which the writer takes 5 to 10 minutes to jot down all the ideas about the topic, making connections with lines or arrows

Narrative

Storytelling; the written or spoken account of related events

Opinion

A view or judgment, often not based on evidence and often biased

paraphrase

Restating someone else's ideas in your own words. It is approximately the same length as the original text.

Pathos

Pathos, or the appeal to emotion, is an appeal to the reader's emotion. The writer evokes the reader's emotion with vivid language and powerful language to establish the writer's belief.

Plot

The sequence of events in a story

Point of View

The perspective through which a story is told; stories can be told in first person (I), second person (you), or third person (he, she, they)

Prewriting

The exercises that help you through the invention process

prewriting

Proofreading

The final step in editing in which writers or editors review a polished essay for minor errors and make final edits before submission or publication of a text

Qualifier

The Qualifier is a component of the Toulmin argument that expresses limits to the claim.

questioning

In questioning, make a list of questions about your topic and try and answer them. Start with the “who, what, when, why, how” type of questions.

Recursive

Characterized by repetition or reoccurrence

Reverse Outlining

A process by which an outline is created from a draft, which is then evaluated

Rogerian Argument

The Rogerian Argument was developed by Carl Rogers. Rogerian argument is a negotiating strategy in which common goals are identified and opposing views are described as objectively as possible in an effort to establish common ground and reach an agreement.

Sensory Details

Details an author includes that appeal to the five senses: taste, smell, touch, hearing, sight

Similarities

Characteristics in common or that resemble one another

Similes

A comparison of two different things using the words like or as

sketching

Sketching involves drawing out your ideas using a pen and paper. Writers often use techniques like the Venn diagram to visualize ideas.

Spatial

Organizing items by their physical location

Summarizing

A process of taking information from a comparatively longer chapter, theory, or write-up and creating a smaller version of it that covers all the facts and main points of the original version.

Supporting Sentences

Supporting Sentences provide examples or facts to support the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Theme

The underlying idea, message, or lesson in a story

Thesis

A proposition to be proved

Thesis Statement

The Thesis Statement expresses the overall point and main ideas that will be discussed in the body. It usually appears as the last sentence of the introduction and is usually one sentence.

Tone

The author's feelings or opinions on a topic that are revealed through the author's word choice

Topic Sentence

The Topic Sentence is usually the first sentence in the paragraph. It indicates what the paragraph will discuss and guides the writer and reader

Toulmin Argument

The Toulmin Argument was developed by Stephen Toulmin. The method works best when there are no clear truths or solutions to a problem

Transition

A change from one subject, place, state, or time to another

Transition words

Transition words and phrases are used to link together different ideas in your text.

Warrant

A Warrant is a component of the Toulmin argument that connects the ground to the claim.