

MODULE 1

THE WRITING PROCESS

Introduction

Many students feel about as comfortable groping their way through the fog as they do writing an essay. They may not be positive what a thesis is, and they may not know where to break their paragraphs. They never know for sure if they have a good paper, and the grade is often a big surprise.

A common misconception among beginning writers is that some people are naturally good writers, while others are not. This myth is frequently accompanied by a chronic case of the “I can’t’s”: “I can’t write, I never could write, and I’ll never be able to write! What’s more, I don’t like to write!” Another misconception, sometimes held by writers whose first language is not English, is that all people who grew up speaking English are naturally good at writing. This is not true; even people who have been speaking English all their lives often struggle with writing.

Writing does not have to be akin to a walk in the fog. When equipped with a precise set of guidelines and an understanding of the writing process, anyone can learn to write well. No matter how much you have struggled with writing in the past, you can learn to become a successful writer, both in and out of college, by grasping a few fundamentals. You *can* be confident that you have written a good essay and should receive a pleasing grade. And once the fog dissipates, you might even discover that you *enjoy* writing.

Lesson 1.1: Stages of the Writing Process

Introduction

It may interest you to know that good grades in composition classes tend to be directly tied to time spent on a paper. If you will allow yourself several days to work on an essay—with plenty of time to prewrite, organize and outline, write, revise, edit, and proofread—you are likely to see your grades rise, often dramatically. Writing is a process; very few people can write an A paper the day before it is due. Most students who have not received good grades in composition courses tend to have a negative view of writing; however, that can change. No matter how frustrated you have been with writing in the past, you *can* become a skilled writer. You just need to learn a few “tricks of the trade” and invest a little time. Try practicing with some of the tricks and tools provided in this course, and see just how skilled you can become as a writer.

The Writing Process

Writing is complex because it requires a variety of different mental skills. Fortunately, though, these different kinds of thinking tasks do not have to be performed at the same time. Instead, you can separate them into different steps or stages of a larger process. As a matter of fact, writing can be viewed as a series of five main steps, or stages: prewriting, organizing and outlining, writing, revising, and editing and proofreading.

Each step focuses on a particular kind of thinking:

Step 1: Prewriting. Discover your topic and generate ideas about it.

Step 2: Organizing and Outlining. Use logic to determine the order in which you should present ideas, and create a plan for your paper.

Step 3: Writing. Using your outline as a guide, write the sentences and paragraphs that clearly state and develop your ideas. The first step in writing an essay is understanding the essay's three main parts: the **introduction**, the **body**, and the **conclusion**.

After you have written an essay, the only things left to do are to revise, edit, and proofread.

Step 4: Revising. Reevaluate your paper's organization and development of ideas and make the necessary improvements. **Revising** involves evaluating your argument and evidence. It leads directly into editing.

Step 5: Editing and Proofreading. **Editing** is the act of making changes to your work, such as improving coherence or expanding paragraphs by adding more concrete detail. **Proofreading** is the act of going back over your paper to look for errors in punctuation and sentence structure and for places where content can be improved.

Chances are good that as you write, you are already completing all or most of these steps to some extent. However, you may not be devoting enough time and effort to each one, or you may be trying to complete two or more of the steps at the same time. For example, you might be attempting to think of and to organize your thoughts as you are actually writing a draft, or you may be trying to write, revise, and edit simultaneously.

If you are neglecting or combining the steps, though, you are probably making the writing process more difficult, more time-consuming, and less rewarding for yourself. Because each of the steps requires a different kind of thinking, eliminating a step (such as organizing and outlining) or trying to complete it along with another step makes the whole process more difficult. When you are completing the various mental challenges simultaneously, you also slow yourself down, so the whole process takes more time. What is more, you reduce the overall quality of your writing when you do not give adequate attention to each separate stage.

Therefore, to make the writing process easier, faster, and more rewarding, always complete all of the five stages and complete each one of them separately. While you work, return to previous stages as necessary. For example, if you realize during the revision stage that you have not fully developed one of your points, return to the prewriting stage to generate more ideas. If during the revision stage you think of another great point that you left out, go back to the organization stage to decide where to insert it. Then go back to the writing stage to actually compose the additional paragraphs.

Lesson 1.2: Prewriting

Introduction

Everyone has important ideas, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the world we live in. In other words, everyone has something significant to say. You may not agree, of course, if you tend to experience "writer's block." Writer's block is the state of being unable to think of ideas whenever you sit down to write. It is indeed frustrating to be faced with a blank sheet of paper or a blank computer screen and be unable to think of anything to say. You can use certain techniques to help yourself get started and to begin coaxing those ideas out from where they are hiding. These techniques are known as **prewriting**, and this section will introduce you to several of them.

Prewriting and Its Uses

First, consider all of the benefits of prewriting. Prewriting is an important tool for writers because it has four uses:

1. **Prewriting can help you find a topic to write about.** On those occasions when you can write your paper about a topic of your own choice, prewriting can help you think of one.

2. Prewriting can help you narrow a topic or find some interesting aspect of it. When your topic is assigned, as it often is in academic courses, you may need to narrow it down. Even in a longer research paper, you could not do justice to a broad subject like The Civil War or abnormal psychology. You need to find a more specific aspect on which to focus, and prewriting can help you narrow, or limit, your topic to one that is more manageable for the assignment. In addition, prewriting can help you discover an aspect of the topic that is interesting to you. When you write about a topic that interests you, you will be more enthusiastic about the paper. As a result, you are more likely to write a better paper.

3. Prewriting can help you remember or discover what you already know about a topic. Not only can you prewrite to discover a topic, but you can also prewrite to find out what you know about a topic. You probably have some knowledge or beliefs about most topics, and prewriting can help you unlock this information from where it is stored in your mind. At the same time, prewriting allows you to get a better understanding of what you *do not* know about a topic. Then you can determine what you will need to find out—through reading and research—before you begin to write.

4. Prewriting can help you decide what you want to say about your topic. Once you have decided on a topic and explored what you know about it, you can use prewriting techniques to help you formulate the idea or opinion that you want to express about that topic. In addition, you can use prewriting as a tool to help you begin to sort through your thoughts about the topic so that you can determine which of those thoughts you want to include in your paper.

As you can see, prewriting is a valuable step in the writing process. It breaks through writer's block, getting the ideas flowing and helping you find a starting point. As a result, it reduces the anxiety and frustration that you might have felt in the past as you began writing.

The remaining parts of this section cover five effective prewriting techniques that you can use to help yourself get started.

Talking and Freewriting

Have you ever noticed that after you have talked about a subject with someone for the first time, you understand more clearly what you yourself think about that topic? Even if you have given a considerable amount of thought to a subject, your ideas about it can tend to remain vague and half-formed until you try to find the words to express them. The act of putting your ideas and feelings into language helps to make them clearer. Remember, when you discuss a subject with someone else (which requires using language), you understand it better.

The next time you need to generate ideas for a paper, try having an oral or written conversation (in person, via e-mail, or in an Internet chat room) with a fellow student, friend, relative, or coworker. Tell the other person what you know or what you think about the topic, and use the discussion as an opportunity to learn more. Afterward, you might want to jot your ideas down on paper using one of the other prewriting techniques discussed in this section.

A second effective prewriting technique is **freewriting**. The goal of freewriting is to generate ideas by recording, as quickly as you can, the flow of thoughts going through your mind. You simply consider the topic and then write down what you are thinking about that topic. At this stage, though, you do not censor or reject any thoughts, nor do you try to organize them. You do not bother to cross out or correct anything—that comes later. You also do not pause to think about where to place a comma or to determine what is exactly the right word. In fact, you do not pause at all; instead, you write nonstop, and if you run out of ideas, you continue writing something like “my mind is blank my mind is blank my mind is blank . . .” until another thought comes to mind. Then you record that thought. Do not worry about neatness because freewriting is for your eyes only; it is a tool for the writer to get some ideas flowing, and readers do not see it.

When one student considered the topic *obesity*, she generated the following freewriting:

Obesity

News reports say that more and more people are getting overweight or obese. Can't remember definition of obese, but I remember reading that about a third of Americans need to slim down. Its hard to do though. I weigh 10 pounds more than I should. A few of my friends are at least a little chubby. Food is everywhere, portion sizes in restaurants are huge, fast food is delicious but loaded with fat and calories. People are busy and have a hard time finding time for exercise or make nutritious meals. So we end up eating a lot of junk food on the run. Junk food tastes better than healthy food. Staying at your ideal weight takes a lot of willpower. Then there's the psychological problems that factor in to being overweight. Its an uphill battle for a lot of people.

You probably noticed as you read this freewriting that it contains errors like misspellings and missing punctuation. That is fine, however, because the point of freewriting is to explore thoughts without worrying about the mechanics of writing. By completing this freewriting about obesity, this student touched on several different causes of the problem, and she is well on her way to creating an essay that will examine the reasons why obesity is becoming so prevalent.

When you freewrite you may want to time yourself. In other words, set a timer for 10 minutes, and do not stop writing until the timer goes off. Doing this will encourage you to write longer than you might ordinarily write, helping you generate more ideas.

Brainstorming and Clustering

While freewriting involves recording ideas in the form of sentences, brainstorming involves writing down just the words and phrases that spring to mind when you think about a subject. You can write these words and phrases in rows and columns, or you can just write them all over the page. For example, when one student was asked to brainstorm about the topic *taking tests*, here is what he wrote:

study
groups anxiety

 final **TAKING**
exam **TESTS**

 essay reading multiple-choice
tests directions questions

 grades cheating

Like freewriting, brainstorming is most effective when you decide to spend a certain minimum amount of time—such as 10 minutes—generating all the ideas you can. Do not pause to evaluate the worth of an idea, and do not censor any ideas. Later, you will go back and reconsider the value of each idea, but while you brainstorm, you simply write them all down. Just focus on the topic and record everything that pops into your head as quickly as possible. Because brainstorming is a tool for only you, the writer, do not worry about spelling, organization, or neat penmanship; no one else needs to see it.

Clustering is like brainstorming in that you write down words or phrases that occur to you when you think about a topic. However, when you cluster, you loosely group ideas as chains of thought, recording them on the page in the order in which they occur to you. Clustering is based upon the idea that one thought leads to another. If you were to create a cluster of ideas about the Fourth of July holiday, you might begin by jotting down one particular train of thought:

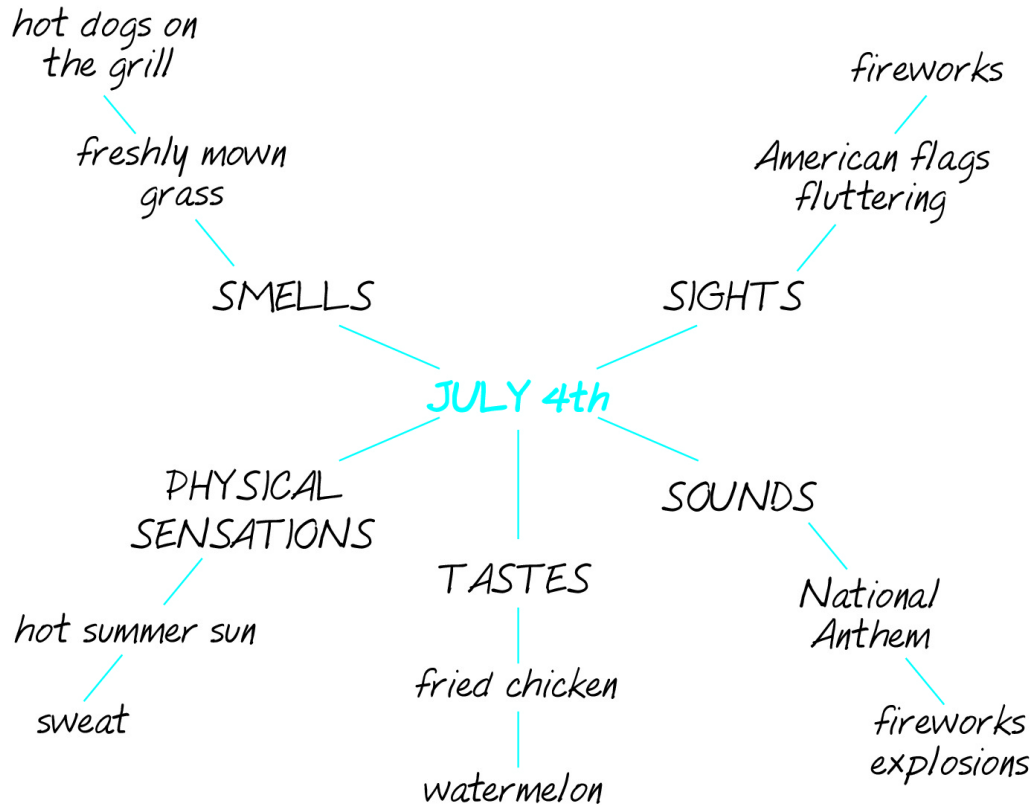


Then you would add another thought chain:



You exhaust one train of thought before beginning another one, continuing to add new clusters branching out from the main topic until you cannot think of any more ideas.

Clustering can be especially useful for generating descriptive details about a subject. You can guide yourself toward coming up with information related to each of the five different senses by focusing each train of thought on a particular kind of detail:



You would complete this cluster by continuing to add more details in the chain for each sense.

Asking Questions

Another way to generate ideas is by asking—and then finding answers to—questions about your topic. The best place to start is by posing the six questions that journalists ask when they are collecting information for a news story (*who, what, where, when, why, and how*). As you will learn in the next section, these questions will help you narrow a broad topic. For example, a student who was assigned to write a paper about the presidency in the United States wrote the following questions:

The Presidency

- Who** have been our best and worst presidents?
- Who** has been our greatest president?
- What** is a president's typical day like?
- What** are the president's responsibilities?
- When** has a president made a serious mistake?
- When** has a president saved the nation from disaster?
- Where** does the president live and work?
- Why** is the president's role an important one?
- How** has the presidency changed over time?
- How** does presidential security work?

These questions allowed the student to see many different aspects of the topic on which she could focus, and they helped her discover that she was most interested in concentrating on how the presidency has changed over time. Therefore, she created a new round of questions about that more specific topic:

Changes in the Presidency

- Who** are people who have affected the president's roles and responsibilities?

What are some of these specific changes?
When did these changes begin to occur?
Why did these changes occur?
How do today's presidents differ from earlier presidents?

The student can now choose the questions that interest her most and then use one of the other prewriting techniques—such as freewriting or brainstorming—to generate more ideas and to discover areas that she will need to research for more information.

More Prewriting Techniques

Talking, freewriting, clustering, brainstorming, and asking questions are common, tried-and-true prewriting techniques. But there are others. In fact, you yourself might already use a technique that was not covered in this course. If that is true, consider sharing information about your technique with your instructor and classmates.

The following list briefly describes some other techniques that you might want to try:

- **Draw.** If you are going to describe something, draw a picture of it to retrieve details from your memory.
- **Meditate.** Clear your mind and focus all of your attention on your topic.
- **Create a dialogue.** Pretend that you are having a conversation with someone about your topic. Have your imaginary partner ask you questions about the topic and then give the answers.
- **Use the cubing technique.** Cubing prompts you to explore your topic from different angles. Imagine six different activities as though they were each on one side of a cube, like the die used in board games. Here are six typical activities for a cubing exercise:
 1. **Describe your topic.** What do you see?
 2. **Compare and/or contrast your topic with something else.** What is similar to it? What is different from it?
 3. **Associate your topic.** What associations or thoughts come to mind when you think about it?
 4. **Analyze your topic.** What are its parts or ingredients?
 5. **Apply your topic.** What can you do with it?
 6. **Argue for or against your topic.** Take a stand and give reasons to support your position.

You should feel free to come up with the idea-generation method that works best for you. Experiment, explore, and feel free to alter existing techniques to make them more productive for you. If you prefer to visualize ideas, for example, you could spend time drawing and clustering. If you feel like you're overflowing with ideas, you could go back to freewriting or brainstorming. But remember that there isn't a single right way to use these strategies. Whether you talk, freewrite, brainstorm, cluster, or ask questions, you're doing so to help yourself as a writer. Your prewriting can and should be as unique as the ideas you create *during* prewriting.

Lesson 1.3: Topic Selection

Lesson 1.3 Introduction

Many times throughout your college career your topic for writing will be given to you. Perhaps you will be given an essay question or a writing prompt related to something you have read, such as the following: *In "Letter from Birmingham Jail," how does Martin Luther King, Jr. prove that his actions in Birmingham were both wise and timely?* Or, *In "The Black Cat," how does Edgar Allan Poe use the symbols of the first and second cats to demonstrate the degenerating state of mind of the narrator?*

But what about a situation in which your instructor doesn't give you a topic or asks you to develop a specific topic based on a more general subject? Before you can write about your topic, you have to determine what it is. You can use prewriting strategies—such as freewriting, brainstorming, and asking questions—to find a new topic that both interests you and is appropriate for the assignment's audience and purpose.

And now that you have practiced five different prewriting techniques, you may have found that one of the methods seems particularly effective for you. You should definitely use that method to generate ideas for your papers. However, be aware that different techniques can be suited to different kinds of topics. For example, if your paper will be in the form of a personal story from your experience, freewriting might be the best way to begin to remember the details, whereas the question method might yield more ideas for a paper about a World War I battle. Therefore, you might want to consider using at least two different prewriting techniques each time you need to generate ideas. Using a combination of methods may yield the best, most comprehensive results.

Deciding on a Topic

Let's assume that you are given free rein over your writing topic. A good place to start, to look for ideas to write about, is to prewrite.

Freewriting, for example, is useful for finding a topic to write about and for narrowing a topic. If you are in search of a topic to write about, you can freewrite about "things that anger me" or "topics that interest me." Once you have generated several topic possibilities, pick one or two of the most promising and freewrite about each of them. Similarly, if you need to narrow a broad topic, freewrite about different aspects of it in order to find one that interests you.

Here is an example of a student's freewriting that addresses the general question *What do you feel strongly about?*:

I guess one of the things I feel strongly about is family because I know what it is like not to have a family, or at least not to have a family you can count on. I never knew my dad, and my mother was so into whatever her drug of choice currently was that she was never there for me. I got myself up for school when I went to school, which wasn't often; a lot of times she would be so stoned she wouldn't even know I left or that I was ever there for that matter. She died when I was eleven, and the McDuffs, or the people I consider my real parents, adopted me. They could have gotten a baby, but they chose me instead. I guess I feel pretty strongly about adoption as well as family because think of all those kids out there who grow up in the system and, for whatever reason, never get a family. During my time in foster care I saw so many older kids who just needed somebody to love them. Why are so many people afraid to adopt an older kid? Maybe it is because of the baggage that comes with an older kid. And there is baggage, even with me. But there are blessings too. Or do they just want a baby so they get to raise the child from the get-go? Do they think an older child is already "formed"?

Notice that the student just wrote, not worrying about how connected her writing was or whether her punctuation was correct. And, although the student started with the often-used topic *family*, she ended up with a more interesting topic: why people are reluctant to adopt an older child.

Narrowing Down a Topic

Look at another student's brainstorming as he responds to this general question:

What do you feel strongly about? Faith; family; education; respect

After freewriting or brainstorming, take the answers to each question and narrow them down to get workable topics. For example, suppose after this student's initial brainstorming, he decided to write about the topic *education*. However, because this topic is so broad, it needs to be refined—narrowed down into

something that can be adequately dealt with in an essay, which by definition is a relatively short piece of writing. It is likely that you will need to narrow most of the topics you initially come up with for an essay.

There are several ways you can go about narrowing down a general topic.

- Look for categories within a broad topic.
- Add a specific time.
- Add a specific place.
- Do a combination of these things.

In other words, you could spend some time brainstorming. In the example that follows, look at how a little brainstorming turns the broad topic *education* into something interesting to write about.

Education High School Little Rock Central

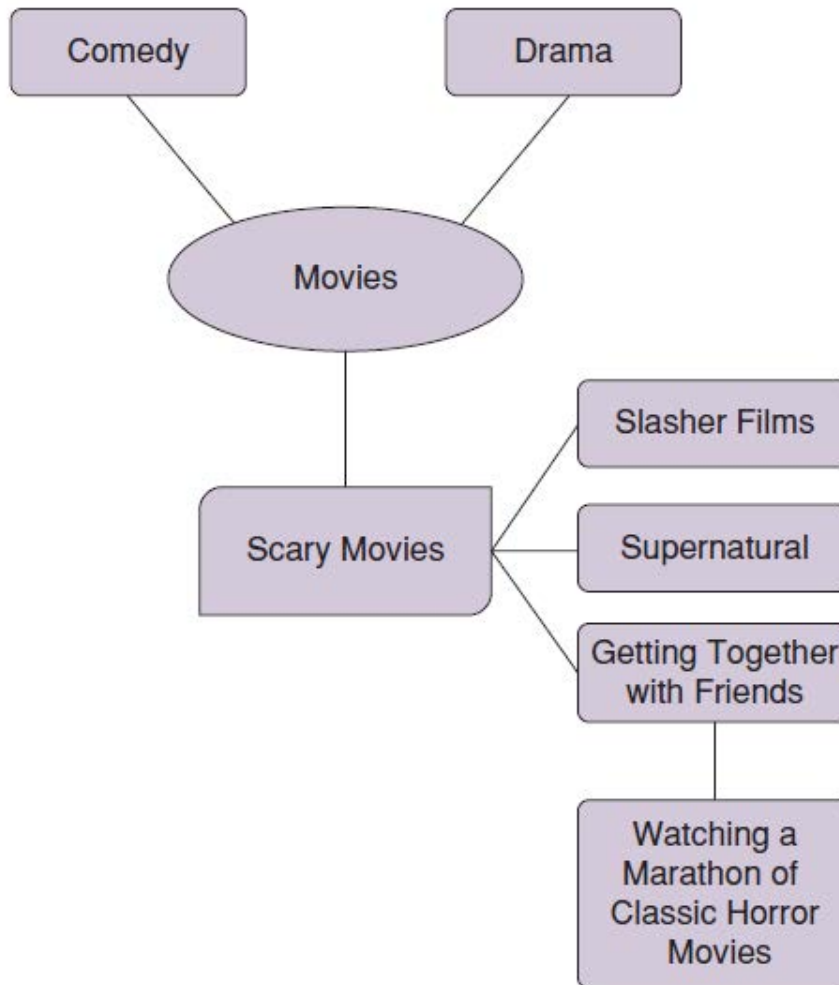
Integration of Little Rock Central in 1957 **The Little Rock Nine**

Here is the same broad topic going in a different direction:

Education College Expenses Financial Aid

Financial Aid Options for Today's College Students

Here is another example of brainstorming using a visual technique known as **clustering**. The student placed the broad topic *movies* in the middle of his page and then clustered ideas as they came to him.



Through clustering, he narrowed down the broad topic *movies* to “Watching a marathon of classic Boris Karloff movies with friends on Halloween night.”

As you learned earlier, one other method that could help you narrow down a good writing topic is to ask the typical reporter’s questions (*who, what, where, when, why, and how*). This is particularly effective when you are given a broad topic, such as the Great Depression or phobias. You might need to do some light research to answer the questions, but answering the questions could help you develop an interesting and workable topic. For instance, you might end up focusing on how average families survived the hard times of the Great Depression, exploring some of the many innovative ways people improvised or made do with what they had. Or you might explore why so many people are afraid of heights.

Shaping Your Topic for an Audience and Purpose

One use for prewriting is to narrow down a topic and then discover what you want to say about that topic. After you decide on a topic and explore your ideas about that topic, the next step in the process is

determining your **working thesis**, the main idea or point that you want to make at this stage of the writing process.

A working thesis has two main components. First, it includes your topic. Usually your working thesis will begin with this topic. Then, the working thesis goes on to state the point that you want to make about the topic. Remember that a topic alone cannot be a working thesis. The working thesis includes both the topic and what you want to say about that topic:

Topic: A happy marriage

Working Thesis: A happy marriage has three main ingredients: good communication, trust, and mutual respect.

As you are determining your working thesis, you need to consider not only *what* you want to say but also *why* and *to whom* you want to say it. Therefore, there are two other factors—audience and purpose—that will affect the development of your topic in your working thesis.

First of all, who is going to read your paper? The readers you have in mind affect what you say and how you say it. To illustrate, let us say that you are planning to write about yoga, an exercise you enjoy. That is a big topic, and there is a lot to say about it. Considering one specific audience will help you narrow your topic down to a more manageable size. Possible readers include current yoga students, fitness buffs who have never tried yoga, and people who do not exercise at all. Each of these three groups has different needs and desires, and you would want to consider them as you decide what point to make about the subject.

Notice in the following examples how the working thesis might change, and narrow down the topic *yoga*, for each of these different groups:

| Audience | Working Thesis |
|----------------------------|--|
| Current yoga students | If you are doing only Hatha yoga, you ought to try some of the other styles. |
| Fitness buffs | Adding yoga to an exercise routine enhances and speeds up the results of a regular workout. |
| People who do not exercise | You should try yoga if you need to relieve stress, reduce your blood pressure, or lose weight. |

The second factor to take into consideration is your purpose. Why do you want to write about your topic for the audience you have chosen? For academic papers, your purpose will always be either to inform or to persuade. An **informative thesis** states something that you want readers to know about the topic. The working thesis for fitness buffs, for example, indicates that the purpose of the paper will be to help readers learn more about the topic. A **persuasive thesis**, on the other hand, indicates that you want to convince your readers to change a particular opinion, a belief, or a behavior related to the topic. Words like *should*, *must*, or *ought to* usually indicate their persuasive purpose. Note that the working thesis for current yoga students and the thesis for people who do not exercise are both persuasive.

As another example, consider how the informative and persuasive purposes affect the general topic of volunteer work. In the working thesis “Volunteer work offers many health benefits for the volunteer,” the writer intends to explain to people who do not know much about volunteering how volunteers are physically affected by their work. This working thesis is informative. But notice how the purpose of this next statement differs: “Retired people should do volunteer work.” This working thesis is persuasive because the writer wants to convince the reader to do something. To achieve that purpose, the writer may include some of the same information that he or she would have included in a paper with the informative thesis. However, other kinds of information may also be appropriate.

MODULE 2

GRAMMAR I: PARTS OF SPEECH AND PUNCTUATION

Introduction

Understanding the parts of speech and the types of punctuation is the foundation of good writing. To build strong sentences and paragraphs on top of this foundation requires distinguishing between the multiple parts of speech: not just nouns, pronouns, and verbs, but adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections. Plus, a writer needs to know the main punctuation marks, from commas to colons, and how they can be used to link, separate, or unite the parts of speech in clauses and sentences. Writing well, then, requires understanding how to combine the parts of speech: for example, in order to link a noun and a pronoun, or a noun and a verb, these parts of speech have to *agree* with one another. And to finalize these combinations in clauses and sentences, a writer must support them with the correct corresponding punctuation marks.

Just as it takes time to pour the foundation of a home correctly, it takes time to learn the foundation of grammar. Do not allow yourself to become impatient as you fill in your foundation.

Lesson 2.1: The Parts of Speech

Introduction

Every word in every sentence you write functions as a particular part of speech. A word can be different parts of speech depending on its *context*, that is, the other words around it. For example, the word *left* can be a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb:

Turn **left** at the stop sign. (**adverb**)

She writes with her **left** hand. (**adjective**)

I **left** her a message. (**verb**)

I live in the first house on the **left**. (**noun**)

In each sentence, the context determines the part of speech of this particular word. During this section, you will learn about these four parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) as well as several others: pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, and even interjections.

Functions of Nouns

You are probably familiar with the basic definition of a **noun**: A noun names a person, place, thing, or idea.

- **Person:** *Eli, girl*
- **Place:** *New York, playground*
- **Thing:** *rain, iPod*
- **Idea:** *peace, brilliance*

Nouns perform a variety of functions: they can be the subject of a sentence, a direct or indirect object, a predicate nominative, or the object of a preposition. They can be concrete, abstract, plural, and possessive.

One very common position for a noun is the subject position. The **subject** of a sentence is the part of the sentence performing the action. For example, in the sentence *The dog ran*, the dog is performing the action. The action performed, *ran*, is the verb. Every sentence must contain both a subject and a verb in order to be classified as a sentence. Another term for a complete sentence is **independent clause**; it is independent because it can stand alone.

Eli loves his grandmother. (**Eli is the subject and loves is the verb.**)

Will you go home now? (**You is the subject and will go is the verb.**)

NOTE: Sometimes a subject can be **compound**; in other words, there are two subjects joined by the **coordinating conjunction** *and*. Look at the following examples:

Ben and Jerry make really good ice cream.

Joan and Pam went to the conference in Little Rock.

Nouns can also function as direct objects in sentences. **Direct objects** answer the questions *what* or *whom*.

I like chocolate ice cream. (**I like what? I like ice cream, which is the direct object.**)

Tim saw Jackie at the movie theater. (**Tim saw whom? Tim saw Jackie, which is the direct object.**)

An **indirect object** is always the recipient of the direct object and will come before the direct object in the sentence. The direct object still answers the questions *what* or *whom*; the indirect object indirectly receives the action of the verb.

Melina gave the dog a bath. (**The dog is the recipient of the bath; therefore, dog is the indirect object and bath is the direct object, telling what Melina gave.**)

Sherry purchased Ann and Rusty tickets for *My Fair Lady*. (**Ann and Rusty are the recipients of the tickets; therefore, both Ann and Rusty are indirect objects and tickets is the direct object, telling what Sherry purchased.**)

A **predicate nominative** is identical to a direct object in that it answers the questions *what* or *who*. The difference between the two is that a predicate nominative will be the object of a **linking verb**. You will learn about linking verbs later on.

Patrick is president of the student government. (**Patrick is what? Patrick is president. Thus, president is the predicate nominative.**)

Grant became a driver for UPS. (**Grant became what? Grant became a driver. Thus, driver is the predicate nominative.**)

A noun often functions as the **object of a preposition**. Like a direct object, when a noun is functioning as the object of a preposition, the noun answers the questions *what* or *whom*.

Dalton and Cynthia moved across town. (**Across what? Across town. Therefore, town is the object of the preposition across.**)

Bluedog ran down the street. (**Down what? Down the street. Therefore, street is the object of**

the preposition *down*.)

Types of Nouns

There are three distinct types of nouns: common, proper, and collective. It is important to know the differences among the three.

Common nouns refer to general persons, places, things, or ideas. They are nonspecific. Look at the following example:

Your choice of college should be based on several factors.

In this example, the writer is referring to *any* college, not a specific one, such as North Arkansas College or Pulaski Technical College. Therefore, the word *college* is a common noun. Likewise, the word *girl* is a common noun, whereas *Claudia* and *Sarita* are not, because they name specific girls.

In contrast to common nouns, **proper nouns** name *specific* persons, places, things, or ideas. Proper nouns are always capitalized. The proper nouns *Julian* and *Doris* are capitalized because they refer to specific people. Likewise, *Ford* and *Mercedes* are proper nouns and would be capitalized because they name specific makes of automobile. *Democrat* and *Republican* are proper nouns because they are the names of specific political parties in the United States.

A **collective noun** refers to *one unit* that contains *more than one* person or animal. Collective nouns are peculiar in that they can be either singular or plural, depending on how they function within the sentence. The following is a list of some common collective nouns that refer to people: *army, audience, band, board, cast, choir, class, committee, company, congregation, corporation, council, crowd, department, faculty, family, firm, gang, group, jury, majority, minority, navy, party, public, school, senate, society, team*. Collective nouns can also refer to animals, such as a *gaggle* of geese, a *flock* of seagulls, or a *herd* of buffalo.

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns. There are eight different types of pronouns: personal, indefinite, demonstrative, reflexive, intensive, interrogative, reciprocal, and relative. Each will be explained in this reading. It is important to know that pronouns have **antecedents**, nouns or pronouns to which they refer.

Ruiz is in my chemistry class. He sits in the front row. (**The pronoun *he* refers to the proper noun *Ruiz*.**)

The trash can sits in the corner of the room. It is made of wicker. (**The pronoun *it* refers to the common noun *trash can*.**)

Everyone should hand in his or her project by the end of the week. (**The pronouns *his* and *her* refer to the pronoun *everyone*.**)

Later, you will deal with pronoun agreement issues; for now, simply note that pronouns must agree in number with their antecedents. In other words, singular pronouns must have singular antecedents, and plural pronouns must have plural antecedents.

Many pronouns can function in the same ways that nouns function: as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions. (You will study prepositions later.)

He is Susan's father. (***He* is the subject of the sentence.**)

I saw her standing on the corner. (***Her* is the direct object of the sentence.**)

Mom baked me a cake. (***Me* is the indirect object of the sentence.**)

Eli ran to you. (***You* is the object of the preposition *to*.**)

The most common pronouns are **personal pronouns**. A list of personal pronouns follows:

First person singular: I, me, my, mine

First person plural: we, us, our, ours

Second person singular: you, your, yours

Second person plural: you, your, yours

Third person singular: he, him, his (**masculine**); she, her, hers (**feminine**); it, its (**neutral**)

Third person plural: they, them, they, theirs

Note that some personal pronouns function as adjectives that modify nouns, as in *their house* or *her paper*. They are called **possessive adjectives** when they function in that manner.

Indefinite pronouns are pronouns that do not refer to specific people, places, or things. All words ending in *–one* or *–body*, such as *anyone* and *everybody*, are indefinite pronouns.

Demonstrative pronouns refer to specific people or things. *This* and *that* are singular demonstrative pronouns, and *these* and *those* are plural demonstrative pronouns. Note that *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* are **demonstrative adjectives** when they modify nouns, as in *these dresses* or *that movie*.

Reflexive pronouns always end in *–self* or *–selves*, depending on whether the antecedent is singular or plural. Reflexive pronouns always indicate that the subject is acting upon, for, or to itself.

Like reflexive pronouns, **intensive pronouns** end in *–self* or *–selves*. The principal difference is that intensive pronouns emphasize, or *intensify*, the word before them in the sentence.

Interrogative pronouns are used to ask the questions *who*, *whom*, *what*, *which*, and *whose*. Sometimes students are confused about when to use *who* and when to use *whom*. The difference is one of function: *who* functions as a subject or a predicate nominative in the sentence or clause, and *whom* functions as an object in the sentence or clause.

The **reciprocal pronouns** are *each other* and *one another*. *Each other* always refers to two people, whereas *one another* denotes more than two.

Finally, **relative pronouns** often introduce adjective clauses or noun clauses. They are used to connect groups of words to nouns or other pronouns in the sentence. A list of relative pronouns follows:

who, *whom*, *whoever*, *whomever*, and *that* (**used to refer to people**)

that, *which*, *what*, and *whatever* (**used to refer to things**)

Note that *that* is the only relative pronoun that can be used to refer to both people and things.

Adjectives

Adjectives modify (describe or limit) either nouns or pronouns. They tell *how many*, *what kind*, or *which one*.

four dogs

blue shirt

those trees

a **snowy** evening

few participants

Some adjectives introduce questions.

Which one is the wrong answer?

Whose coat is this?

An adjective can appear before or after the noun or pronoun that it modifies.

I will have **another** slice of **juicy** steak.

She is a woman **possessed**.

He is **strong** and **rugged**.

One special class of adjectives includes the words *a*, *an*, and *the*, which are called **articles**. These words precede and point out specific people, places, or things.

She ate **a** piece of candy.

Tell me **the** story again.

She drank **an** ounce of medicine to relieve **the** coughing.

Like nouns, adjectives can be individual words, or they can be phrases.

He made the decision **to go to Paris**.

Trying to skip, she tripped and fell.

Most adjectives have two additional forms. One of them, the **comparative** form, is used to compare two things. The other, the **superlative** form, is used to compare three or more things.

| Adjective | Comparative | Superlative |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| pretty | prettier | prettiest |
| young | younger | youngest |
| smart | smarter | smartest |
| dull | duller | dullest |
| hungry | hungrier | hungriest |

You usually add *-er* to the end of many adjectives to form the comparative form. You add *-est* to the end to form the superlative form. However, some adjectives stay the same and add the word *more* to form the comparative and *most* to form the superlative.

| Adjective | Comparative | Superlative |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| grateful | more grateful | most grateful |
| foolish | more foolish | most foolish |
| determined | more determined | most determined |
| gorgeous | more gorgeous | most gorgeous |

Still other adjectives are irregular and change forms altogether.

| Adjective | Comparative | Superlative |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| good | better | best |
| bad | worse | worst |
| little | less | least |
| much, many, some | more | most |
| far | farther | farthest |

Action Verbs and Linking Verbs

As well as being one of the eight parts of speech, **verbs** are one of the two essential parts of a sentence: Every sentence must contain a subject and a verb. There are various types of verbs: action verbs, linking verbs, and helping verbs.

Action verbs refer to the action the subject is performing, such as *go*, *see*, or *read*. Any verb that is not a linking verb or a helping verb is considered an action verb. Action verbs are either **transitive** or **intransitive**. The key difference between the two is that a transitive verb takes a direct object and an intransitive verb does not. Remember that a direct object answers the questions *what* or *whom*.

I asked Keith to be my partner. (**I asked whom? I asked Keith. Therefore, *Keith* is the direct object of the transitive verb *asked*.**)

We left the party early. (**We left what? We left the party. Therefore, *party* is the direct object of the transitive verb *left*.**)

Intransitive verbs do not take direct objects.

We ran on Saturday.

Jill danced all night at the prom.

A **linking verb** expresses a state of being. It connects—links—the subject of a sentence with a word or a word group in the predicate part of the sentence. That word or word group is the predicate nominative or predicate adjective. The most common linking verb is *be* and all of its forms: *is*, *am*, *are*, *was*, and *were*; and *be*, *been*, and *being*, all of which must have helping verbs.

Verbs dealing with the senses (such as *looks*, *smells*, *feels*, *tastes*, and *sounds*) can also be linking verbs. A good way to tell if one of these verbs is used as a linking verb is to substitute a form of *be* for the verb: If the sentence retains the same meaning, the verb is a linking verb.

Jane *feels* (**is**) sick.

That color *looks* (**is**) awful on you.

The casserole *tastes* (**is**) terrible.

A linking verb is linked to a noun, a pronoun, or an adjective in the predicate part of the sentence. When a linking verb links to a noun or a pronoun, that noun or pronoun is referred to as a **predicate nominative**. A predicate nominative is like a direct object in that it answers the questions *what* or *whom*. However, unlike a direct object, a predicate nominative follows a linking verb.

The man in the blue shirt is Jake. (**The man is whom? The man is Jake. Therefore, *Jake* is the predicate nominative.**)

It is I. (**It is whom? It is I. Therefore, *I* is the predicate nominative.**)

This is a good movie. (**This is what? This is a movie. Therefore, *movie* is the predicate nominative.**)

When a linking verb is followed by an adjective that modifies the subject, the adjective is called a **predicate adjective**.

Alice is beautiful. (**The adjective *beautiful* describes the proper noun *Alice*; it is a predicate adjective.**)

The movie we went to see was scary. (**The adjective *scary* describes the noun *movie*; it is a predicate adjective.**)

Mother's pearls are timeless. (**The adjective *timeless* modifies the noun *pearls*; it is a predicate adjective.**)

Helping Verbs

A **helping verb** is also called an **auxiliary verb**. It helps the main verb by making it clear when the action took place or by forming a question. There are two types of helping verbs: those that are always helping verbs and those that sometimes function as helping verbs and sometimes function as main verbs.

The following helping verbs always function as helping verbs:

| | |
|-------|----------|
| can | ought to |
| could | shall |
| may | should |
| might | will |
| must | would |

The following helping verbs can also function as main verbs:

am
are
has
be
been
being
did
do
does
had
have
is
was
were

A helping verb plus a main verb together make up the **complete verb**. However, be careful not to mistake an adverb that is between the helping verb and the main verb as part of the complete verb. For example, look at the complete verbs (underlined) in the following sentences, which are separated by adverbs (boldfaced).

The child was **not** consoled by the balloon.

The paper has been **carelessly** written.

Also, be aware that sentences can have compound verbs, with or without helping verbs. **Compound verbs** are two or more verbs that are either in a series or joined by the coordinating conjunction *and*. The following sentences contain compound verbs, which are underlined:

We swam, hiked, and fished on our vacation.

Wordna sang and played the piano at temple.

Verbs can also be joined by the coordinating conjunctions *but* and *or*, as in the following sentences:

He ran but fainted.

They play or forfeit.

Verb Tenses

There are several verb tenses: simple, perfect, progressive, and perfect progressive.

Verb **tense** indicates when an action took place. There are four verb tenses: simple, perfect, progressive, and perfect progressive. Before examining verb tense, you need to be aware that a present tense verb with no ending on it is called the **base verb**. In other words, if you wanted to know the meaning of the

words *sang*, *sung*, or *singing*, you would look up their meanings in the dictionary under the present tense form of the verb—*sing*. The **past tense** of verbs varies according to whether the verb is a regular verb or an irregular verb. A **regular verb** is one in which the past tense is formed simply by adding *-d* or *-ed* to the base form of the verb: *march—marched*, *laugh—laughed*, *cite—cited*. An **irregular verb** is one that follows no set pattern to form the past tense. The **past participle** of a verb is the form used to indicate completed action or time. The following verbs are irregular:

| Base Form | Past Tense | Past Participle |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------|
| be | was | been |
| become | became | become |
| begin | began | begun |
| bite | bit | bitten |
| blow | blew | blown |
| burst | burst | burst |
| catch | caught | caught |
| choose | chose | chosen |
| come | came | come |
| dive | dived (dove) | dived |
| do | did | done |
| draw | drew | drawn |
| drive | drove | driven |
| eat | ate | eaten |
| fall | fell | fallen |
| find | found | found |
| fling | flung | flung |
| fly | flew | flown |
| get | got | gotten |
| give | gave | given |
| go | went | gone |
| grow | grew | grown |

| Base Form (continued) | Past Tense (continued) | Past Participle (continued) |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| have | had | had |
| know | knew | known |
| lay | laid | laid |
| lead | led | led |
| leave | left | left |
| lie | lay | lain |
| lose | lost | lost |
| ride | rode | ridden |
| ring | rang | rung |
| rise | rose | risen |
| say | said | said |
| set | set | set |
| sit | sat | sat |
| speak | spoke | spoken |
| swear | swore | sworn |
| swim | swam | swum |
| tear | tore | torn |
| tell | told | told |
| throw | threw | thrown |
| wear | wore | worn |
| write | wrote | written |

Simple verb tenses are the most basic. They show whether an action takes place in the present, took place in the past, or will take place in the future. Look at the conjugation of the regular verb *kiss*.

Singular:

Present: I kiss; you kiss; he, she, or it kisses

Past: I kissed; you kissed; he, she, or it kissed

Future: I will kiss; you will kiss; he, she, or it will kiss

Plural:

Present: We kiss; you kiss, they kiss

Past: We kissed; you kissed; they kissed

Future: We will kiss; you will kiss; they will kiss

Perfect verb tense is formed by adding the helping verbs *have* (or *has*), *had*, and *will have* to the past participle of the verb to form the different tenses.

Singular:

Present perfect: I have kissed; you have kissed; he, she, or it has kissed

Past perfect: I had kissed; you had kissed; he, she, or it had kissed

Future perfect: I will have kissed; you will have kissed; he, she, or it will have kissed

Plural:

Present perfect: We have kissed; you have kissed; they have kissed

Past perfect: We had kissed; you had kissed; they had kissed

Future perfect: We will have kissed; you will have kissed; they will have kissed

The **progressive tenses** are used for actions in progress and for continuing actions. They are formed by adding *-ing* to the base verb and combining it with the present, past, and the future forms of the verb *be*.

Singular:

Present progressive: I am kissing; you are kissing; he, she, or it is kissing

Past progressive: I was kissing; you were kissing; he, she, or it was kissing

Future progressive: I will be kissing; you will be kissing; he, she, or it will be kissing

Plural:

Present progressive: We are kissing; you are kissing; they are kissing
 Past progressive: We were kissing; you were kissing; they were kissing
 Future progressive: We will be kissing; you will be kissing; they will be kissing

The last tense is the **perfect progressive tense**, which is a combination of the perfect and the progressive tenses, utilizing both *have* and its forms and *be* and its forms.

Singular:

Present perfect progressive: I have been kissing; you have been kissing; he, she, or it has been kissing

Past perfect progressive: I had been kissing; you had been kissing; he, she, or it had been kissing

Future perfect progressive: I will have been kissing; you will have been kissing; he, she, or it will have been kissing

Plural:

Present perfect progressive: We have been kissing; you have been kissing; they have been kissing

Past perfect progressive: We had been kissing; you had been kissing; they had been kissing

Future perfect progressive: We will have been kissing; you will have been kissing; they will have been kissing

Verb Tense Shifts and Verbals

As you write, you will want to make sure that you use verb tenses consistently. Mixing past and present tenses inappropriately can confuse readers. Note the shift in verb tense in the following sentence:

present tense

past tense

We **shop** at Food Emporium, and I **bought** tomatoes.

The first verb, *shop*, should be in the past tense, *shopped*. We may shift tenses like this in casual conversation, but we should not write this way. If you start out in the past tense, remain in the past tense throughout the sentence and/or paragraph. If you start out in the present tense, remain in the present tense.

As you are learning to identify verbs in sentences, you will also need to watch for words called **verbals** that look like verbs but function as other parts of speech in sentences. There are three kinds of verbals: **infinitives**, **gerunds**, and **participles**.

An **infinitive** is composed of the word *to* plus the base form of the verb. Infinitives often act as nouns in sentences.

He wanted **to drive**. (**The infinitive *to drive* is a direct object that answers the question *wanted what?***)

To write was her only goal. (***To write* is the subject of the sentence.**)

Infinitive phrases include the infinitive and its modifiers, objects, and/or complements.

He wanted **to drive all day long**.

To write a best-selling novel was her only goal.

A **gerund**, which is a verb form with *-ing* on the end, functions as a noun.

Losing was not easy. (***Losing* is the subject of this sentence.**)

He loved **swimming**. (***Swimming* is the direct object.**)

A gerund phrase includes the gerund and its modifiers, objects, and/or complements.

Losing the race was not easy.

He loved **swimming in the pool**.

Participles are verb forms that end in *-ed* or *-ing*. They function as adjectives in sentences.

Dancing, he fell and broke his leg. (***Dancing* is an adjective that describes *he*.**)

I caught her **stealing**. (***Stealing* is an adjective that describes *her*.**)

He was a fugitive **hunted** in three states. (***Hunted* is an adjective that modifies *fugitive*.**)

As you see in the third example, a participle phrase consists of a participle and its modifiers, objects, and/or complements. Modifiers in participle phrases can be prepositional phrases.

Dancing on the slippery floor, he fell and broke his leg.

I caught her **stealing a pack of gum**.

Verbs: Voice and Mood

You also need to know the difference between active and passive voice. In a sentence written in **active voice**, the subject of the sentence is performing the verb action, as in the sentence "John kicked the ball." The subject of the sentence, John, performed the action, kicked. In a sentence that uses **passive voice**, the subject is acted upon rather than does the acting. This sentence is written in passive voice: "The ball was kicked by John." The ball did not do the kicking; instead, it was acted upon by John.

I wrote my report on Saturday. (**active voice**)

My report was written on Saturday. (**passive voice**)

Brittany took the dog to the vet. (**active voice**)

The dog was taken by Brittany to the vet. (**passive voice**)

The active voice is common in many forms of academic writing. However, in some disciplines, including many of the sciences, passive voice is standard. For example, if you write a lab report for a science course, your science instructor may ask you to report your procedures using the passive voice. If you feel very strongly that using the passive voice would be more appropriate in a particular passage in your paper, seek your instructor's advice. There may be some situations where passive voice is more natural or effective.

The last thing about verbs that you need to be aware of is **mood**. The mood of a verb indicates the speaker's or writer's attitude toward the action. There are three moods: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive.

The **indicative mood** is used for statements and questions.

We **wrote** our papers in class.

Did you **write** your paper in class?

The **imperative mood** is used for commands or requests. The subject of an imperative sentence is the understood *you*.

(You) Shut the door.

(You) Close the window.

The **subjunctive mood** is used to express desires, wishes, or statements contrary to fact. It can also be used to state requirements or suggestions. When it is used to express desires, wishes, or statements contrary to fact, the past tense of the verb is used.

If I **were (not was)** you, I would get my homework done tonight.

If I **had (not have)** the chance, I would marry you all over again.

When the subjunctive mood is used to state requirements or suggestions, the infinitive form of the verb is used. (An infinitive is the word *to* plus a verb.)

The instructor required that Jack **be** on time for her class.

I suggest that you **complete** your work tonight, so you can go to the concert tomorrow.

Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs by telling *when*, *where*, *how*, or *to what degree* an action occurred. Many adverbs end in *-ly* (*certainly*, *hungrily*, *really*), but not all of them do. Adverbs can appear anywhere in a sentence.

She **unhappily** does her homework. (does it **how**?)

The rooster crowed **loudly**. (crowed **how**?)

We are having a party **tomorrow**. (are having a party **when**?)

We should go **home**. (go **where**?)

They were **very** surprised. (surprised **to what degree**?)

Adverbs can be phrases as well as individual words.

We threw her **into the pool**. (threw her **where?**)

I want your answer **by next week**. (want it **when?**)

NOTE: Answers to the question *what* are direct objects, not adverbs.

direct object adverb

She stubbed her **toe on the bed post**.

The question *Stubbed what?* is answered by *toe*, which is the direct object. The question *Stubbed where?* is answered by *on the bed post*, which is the adverb.

Conjunctive adverbs show the close relationship between complete sentences or independent clauses, often joined by a semicolon. Conjunctive adverbs help you show relationships such as the following:

Comparison: likewise, similarly, nevertheless

Addition: furthermore, moreover, additionally, also, further

Contrast: similarly, however, instead, nonetheless, otherwise, although

Time: meanwhile, finally, next, then, still

Result: accordingly, hence, consequently, therefore

Like adjectives, some adverbs can have comparative and superlative forms. Usually, you add the word *more* to form the comparative and *most* to form the superlative.

| Adverb | Comparative | Superlative |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| bravely | more bravely | most bravely |
| quick | more quickly | most quickly |
| rudely | more rudely | most rudely |

Of all the people I spoke to, Ellen behaved **most rudely**.

This shrub grows **more quickly** than that shrub does.

Prepositions

Prepositions are words or groups of words that show how a noun or pronoun, called an **object of the preposition**, is related to the rest of the sentence. Many prepositions show position or time orientation.

Prepositions:

| | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| about | before | but | into | over |
| above | behind | by | like | past |
| across | below | despite | near | through |
| after | beneath | down | of | to |
| against | beside | during | off | toward |
| along | between | except | on | under |
| among | in | unlike | until | up |
| from | on | upon | at | with |
| without | out | outside | | |

Prepositional phrases:

according to ahead of along with

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|---------|-----------------|
| although | before | since | whereas |
| as | but that | so that | wherever |
| as if | if | until | while |
| as long as | in order that | when | notwithstanding |
| as soon as | whenever | | |

*subordinating
conjunction*

While I waited, she ran some errands.

dependent clause independent clause

*subordinating
conjunction*

We cancelled the outdoor party because it was snowing.

independent clause

dependent clause

NOTE: You probably noticed that some of the words in the list of conjunctions can also be prepositions. To tell them apart, determine whether the word is part of a phrase or a clause.

She finished **before** dinner. (**preposition**)

She finished **before** we ate breakfast. (**conjunction**)

Finally, **interjections** are words or phrases that express emotion or surprise.

Oh, you scared me.

Darn! We lost again.

Hey! He looks great.

Because of their informality, interjections are rarely appropriate in academic and professional writing.

Lesson 2.2: Using the Parts of Speech

Lesson 2.2 Introduction

Now that you have reviewed the eight parts of speech, you can begin to see how words are put together to form sentences. Once you learn about basic sentences, you can begin to understand how to make your own sentences interesting, sophisticated, and grammatically correct.

A basic sentence contains both a subject and a verb. This subject and verb must agree in number; that is, if the subject is singular (one person, place, thing, or idea), then the verb in the sentence must also be in its singular form. If the subject is plural (more than one person, place, thing, or idea), then the verb in the sentence must also be in its plural form. A sentence may also contain a pronoun in place of a noun. In this section, you will also learn how to choose the correct pronouns for your sentences.

Basic subject–verb agreement and basic pronoun agreement are relatively straightforward. However, you will need to write sentences that will present you with trickier subject–verb agreement and pronoun–agreement situations. This section covers the kinds of sentences that will make choosing the correct verb and the correct pronoun a little more challenging. It will also cover appropriate use of modifiers.

Subject–Verb Agreement

One major grammatical principle that you need to be aware of is **subject–verb agreement**. Subjects of sentences and their verbs need to agree in number (singular or plural) and person (first, second, or third). You will probably find that your ear can often detect whether your subjects and verbs agree, but there may be situations when agreement is harder to determine, and you may have to check the rules and guidelines presented in this section.

Remember that the subject of a sentence is the word that is performing the action. In figuring out whether a subject and verb agree, you first need to determine the simple subject of the sentence. Your next step is to identify the verb in the sentence—the word that either expresses the action the subject is performing (an action verb) or that expresses the subject's state of being (a linking verb). At that point you can determine if you have matched a singular subject with a singular verb and a plural subject with a plural verb.

If a subject is singular, it must have a singular verb to correspond with it. Likewise, if a subject is plural, it must have a plural verb to correspond with it. Think of a subject and verb as being opposite of each other in the sense that a plural subject will usually end in *s*, but a singular verb will end in *s*. Look at the following examples, in which the subjects and verbs have been italicized.

The *boy* (**singular subject**) *plays* (**singular verb**).

The *boys* (**plural subject**) *play* (**plural verb**).

Although occasionally a plural subject may not end in *s*, it still needs to be paired with a plural verb. Look at the following examples, in which the subjects and verbs have been italicized.

The *child* (**singular subject**) *sees* (**singular verb**) the dog.

The *children* (**plural subject**) *see* (**plural verb**) the dog.

Some common errors in subject–verb agreement occur when the subject and verb are separated from one another by prepositional phrases or by other dependent clauses. In the following examples, the subjects and verbs of the sentences are italicized while the prepositional phrases or other dependent clauses are enclosed in parentheses.

One (of the roads) *leads to* the land of Oz.

The *dress* (that Julia chose for the pageant) *is* a beautiful shade of teal green.

Compound subjects are two or more subjects that are joined with the conjunction *and*. They are always considered plural, and, therefore, always take plural verbs. The following sentences, which contain plural subjects (in italics), take plural verbs (also in italics).

The *cat* and the *dog* *are* best friends most of the time.

Both *John* and *Megan* *have taken* the test already.

Alternative subjects are two subjects that are joined with the conjunction *or*. In sentences containing alternative subjects, the verb always agrees with the subject nearer to it.

My roommates (**plural**) or my boyfriend (**singular**) *determines* (**singular**) my choice of pizza. The alternative subject *boyfriend* (**singular**) is closer to the verb; thus the verb must be singular (**determines**).

My boyfriend (**singular**) or my roommates (**plural**) *determine* (**plural**) my choice of pizza. The alternative subject *roommates* (**plural**) is closer to the verb; thus the verb must be plural (**determine**).

When you have alternative subjects in a sentence, it is often a good idea to arrange the subjects so that the plural one is last, to avoid awkwardness.

Finally, recall that a collective noun is a noun that refers to a group of people or animals. Collective nouns can be either singular or plural, depending on the way they are used. To determine whether to use a singular verb or a plural verb with a collective noun, you have to determine whether the collective noun is

functioning as a singular noun or as a plural noun. That is, does the collective noun function as a *unit* (singular) or as *individuals* (plural) within the unit?

The team is winning the game. (**The team is functioning as a unit to win the game, so the verb must be singular—is winning.**)

The team are wearing new uniforms. (**The team is functioning as individuals, each wearing a new uniform. The verb must be plural—are wearing.**)

Pronoun Case and Agreement

Personal pronouns can take up to three forms, depending on the case: the **nominative case** (the pronoun is a subject or a predicate nominative), the **possessive case** (the pronoun shows possession or ownership), and the **objective case** (the pronoun is a direct object).

Here are the personal pronouns in their different forms.

Singular

| Nominative | Possessive | Objective |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| I | My | Mine |
| You | Your/yours | You |
| He | His | Him |
| She | Her/hers | Her |
| It | Its | It |

Plural

| Nominative | Possessive | Objective |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| We | Our | Us |
| You | Your/yours | You |
| They | Their | Them |

Students don't generally have difficulties with possessive pronouns; the main problem students have with pronoun case is the problem of occasionally misusing pronouns when they are part of a compound subject or a compound object. For example, in the following sentence, how do you know which pronoun from each pair in parentheses is correct?

Jack and (her, she) want to give this gift to Jane and (I, me).

The grammatical reason to choose *she* is because it functions as part of the compound subject of the sentence (thus, the nominative case) and *me* because it is functions as part of the compound object of a preposition (thus, the objective case). However, most of the time you can choose the correct pronoun by using a little trick: Cover up the *Jack and* or the *Jane and*, and you will select the correct pronoun every time. After all, you would not write "Her wants to give this gift to I," would you?

Another major issue with pronoun use is pronoun agreement. To start with, you need to know the meaning of the term *antecedent*. An **antecedent** is the word that the pronoun takes the place of. *Jake* is the antecedent of the pronouns *he* and *him* in the following sentence.

Another major issue with pronoun use is pronoun agreement. To start with, you need to know the meaning of the term *antecedent*. An **antecedent** is the word that the pronoun takes the place of. *Jake* is the antecedent of the pronouns *he* and *him* in the following sentence.

Jake is an excellent forward, but he is playing guard because that is where the coach needs him.

The main rule to remember about pronouns and their antecedents is that the pronoun must agree in number with its antecedent. In other words, if the antecedent is **singular** (referring to one), the pronoun must be singular as well; if the antecedent is **plural** (referring to more than one), the pronoun must also be plural. Therefore, if you use the word *people* in a sentence, you must use *they* or *them* to agree with it. However, if you use the word *person* (which is singular—referring to one) in a sentence, you must use a singular pronoun such as *he* or *she* to agree with it:

People should make a list of what they want before they go house hunting.

A person should make a list of what he or she wants before he or she goes house hunting.

At one time in the United States it was considered acceptable to use the pronoun *he* all by itself to agree with the word *person*. However, in order to avoid sexist language, writers are advised to use both the masculine (*he/him*) and the feminine (*she/her*) pronouns. The only problem with that practice is that repeating *he or she* (or *him or her*) too many times sounds cumbersome and awkward. Therefore, you may want to use *he or she* if it is only needed once or twice in a paper.

Most of the time you will have no trouble making your pronoun agree with its antecedent if you pay close attention to your words. However, two groups of words that sometimes give writers problems are the *ones* and the *-bodies*. The words *anyone*, *someone*, *everyone*, *no one*, *anybody*, *somebody*, *everybody*, and *nobody* are always singular and, therefore, will always take a singular pronoun.

Pronouns: Subject and Reference

Another common error involving the use of personal pronouns is the tendency to insert a pronoun as an unnecessary subject. For example, students sometimes want to say "My grandfather he was a good man" instead of "My grandfather was a good man." You do not need to repeat the subject of a sentence by inserting a pronoun in front of it.

A final issue is vague pronoun reference. Because of the way a writer might structure a sentence, it may be unclear to the reader exactly what the antecedent of a particular pronoun is. Here is an example:

If you take the ribbon off the pillow, you can have it.

Does the pronoun *it* refer to the ribbon or to the pillow? How might the sentence be revised so that its meaning is clear? The writer could rephrase the sentence to reflect his or her meaning, or replace *it* with the word *he* or *she* meant.

If you take it off of the pillow, you can have the ribbon.

If you take the ribbon off of it, you can have the pillow.

If you take the ribbon off the pillow, you can have (the ribbon/the pillow).

Precise Use of Adjectives and Adverbs

Occasionally writers use adverbs when they should use adjectives and vice versa. To avoid making mistakes, always pay careful attention to what you intend to say, and keep in mind that adjectives can *only* modify nouns, and adverbs can *only* modify verbs, adjectives, adverbs, or complete sentences.

Certain adjectives and adverbs are easily confused if you are unsure which is which. The words *good* and *well*, *bad* and *badly*, and *real* and *really* are the three pairs that are most often misused in sentences.

The adverbs in these pairs are *well*, *badly*, and *really*. The last two are easy enough to remember because they both end in *-ly*, like many other adverbs.

You read **well** last night. (**not** you read *good*)

He sings **badly**. (**not** he sings *bad*)

She is **really** exhausted. (**not** she is *real* exhausted)

The adjectives are *good*, *bad*, and *real*. They all describe nouns, but they are often misused with linking verbs:

He feels **bad** about that. (**not** he feels *badly*)

The chicken smells **good**. (**not** the chicken smells *well*)

Notice how the meaning changes in the following sentences depending on whether you use an adjective or an adverb:

He smells bad.

He smells badly.

In the first sentence, the adjective *bad*, which follows a linking verb, communicates that the subject is the source of a foul odor. In the second sentence, the word *smells* is an action verb, and the word *badly* is an adverb. Therefore, the sentence indicates that the subject's nose is not functioning properly.

Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

In a sentence an adjective modifier must be placed next to the word it describes. If a modifier is not next to the word it describes, it is called a **misplaced modifier**.

Debbie saw a turtle **driving down the street**.

In this sentence, the phrase *driving down the street* modifies *turtle* because that is the closest word to the phrase. Therefore, this sentence is saying that the turtle was driving down the street. Actually, though, it was Debbie who was doing the driving. To correct this sentence, rewrite it so that the modifier is next to the word that it modifies.

Driving down the street, Debbie saw a turtle.

Misplaced modifiers can be phrases or single words. The word *only*, for example, is commonly misplaced:

When he reached for a cookie, he **only** found crumbs.

In this sentence, the word *only* is modifying the verb, but it should be modifying the word *crumbs*. Therefore, it needs to be moved:

When he reached for a cookie, he found **only** crumbs.

If the word the modifier is supposed to be describing is not in the sentence at all, the error is called a **dangling modifier**.

Working hard for two weeks, the project was finally finished.

At four years old, my grandfather began my reading instruction.

In the first sentence, the modifier *working hard for two weeks* is incorrectly describing *project*. It is not the project that worked hard but rather the person or people who completed it. In the second sentence, the modifier *at four years old* is incorrectly describing *grandfather*. It is not the grandfather who was four years old but rather the speaker of the sentence. To correct these errors, rewrite the sentences to add the missing information:

Working hard for two weeks, **the group** finally finished the project.

At four years old, **I** began reading instruction with my grandfather.

Lesson 2.3: Punctuation

Lesson 2.3 Introduction

Correct punctuation is important in sentences. The proper punctuation marks help readers read more easily, and these marks also prevent confusion and misreading. In this section, you will learn the rules for the major punctuation marks: periods, question marks, exclamation points, commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, and quotation marks. You will also study capitalization rules.

Commas

Commas often seem to be tricky punctuation marks. However, there are actually only seven rules for comma usage. Memorize these seven rules; then each time you wonder whether or not you should insert a comma, ask yourself if the situation is one of those described here.

Commas separate certain elements in sentences. Use commas to:

1. Separate words in a series of three or more words, phrases, or clauses:

I went to the library and looked through some fiction, nonfiction, and reference books.

The paper blew across the yard, down the street, and into the river.

2. Connect two independent clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *yet*, *or*, *so*):

I went to the department store, **but** I forgot to buy stockings.

3. Separate introductory elements from a sentence, including dependent clauses:

Running down the street, I broke the heel of my shoe.

Because she attended every class, she received an award for perfect attendance.

4. Separate a **nonrestrictive element**—such as an appositive, certain relative clauses, or the name of the person being spoken to—that could be removed from the sentence without changing its meaning:

The play, which is overly long, is difficult to sit through.

Mrs. Miller, my piano teacher, is very talented.

I wonder, Elaine, if it is acceptable to take that book without asking.

In each of the previous sentences, if the clause or phrase were removed, the sentence would retain its meaning.

So what happens when you remove a phrase or clause from a sentence and the sense of the sentence is altered? If that is the case, the phrase or clause is called a **restrictive element**, and it does not require commas.

5. Separate two or more coordinate adjectives:

This delicate, colorful shirt looks great on you.

Coordinate adjectives are adjectives that modify the same noun, such as in the phrase *the beautiful, red dress*. The adjectives *beautiful* and *red* both modify, or describe, the noun *dress*. A good way to determine if you have coordinate adjectives is to see if you can place the word *and* in between them and still have the same basic sense, or meaning. See how that works: *the beautiful and red dress*. It may not sound particularly good, but it still retains the same basic meaning. Here is another example: *the blonde, blue-eyed girl*. You could just as easily say *the blonde and blue-eyed girl*. Therefore, you know that the words *blonde* and *blue-eyed* are coordinate adjectives and, therefore, should be separated by commas.

6. Separate elements in direct quotations:

She said, “Yes.”

7. Separate phrases that indicate contrast:

I asked her to hand me a cup, not a bowl.

Semicolons and Colons

Semicolons and colons are the cause of much confusion among student writers. The two are not interchangeable. With the exception that semicolons are used to separate items in a series that have internal commas, two good rules of thumb are the following:

- A semicolon must have an independent clause on both sides of it. An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence.
- A colon must have an independent clause on the left of it. The group of words on the right may or may not be an independent clause and will explain or give examples of the independent clause on the left.

With a little practice, you will never misuse a semicolon or a colon again.

Semicolons can be used to join two sentences, or independent clauses, that are closely related.

You should give me a ride; I do not have a car.

Greg and Jennifer did not carpool to work; otherwise, she would have been on time.

To determine if you can use a semicolon, you must first confirm that you have two independent clauses by identifying the subject and verb of each clause.

Other than separating two independent clauses, semicolons do have one other use: to separate items in a series when those items have internal commas.

In attendance at the meeting were Mr. Jones, president; Ms. Anderson, vice president; Mr. Lee, treasurer; and Mrs. Lopez, secretary.

Any time items in a series have internal commas, separate those items with semicolons in order to prevent misreading.

Students are often unsure when it is correct to use a colon. A good rule of thumb is that a **colon** will have an independent clause on the left of it, and the words on the right of the colon will give either an explanation or an example of the statement on the left. In the following example, note how the independent clause that follows the colon explains or elaborates on the idea conveyed in the independent clause that comes before it.

There is only one thing that Janie and Bill still have to do before the wedding: they are supposed to undergo premarital counseling with their pastor.

Another key difference between a colon and a semicolon is that a colon does not have to have an independent clause on both sides of it, just on the left. What is to the right of a colon does not have to be an independent clause; it can be a phrase, a dependent clause, items in a series, or a direct quotation.

Ernest Hemingway said that all American novels go back to one book: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

I want you to do the following before you go to the party: pick up your clothes, sweep the kitchen floor, and vacuum the living room.

The Humane Society is in need of the following items: dry cat food, wet dog food, and newspapers.

Every time I use salt in my cooking, I throw a bit over my right shoulder and say: "Once over the shoulder for good luck."

If you will remember that the words on the right of a colon explain or give examples of the statement on the left, you will use colons correctly.

Apostrophes and Quotation Marks

Apostrophes have only three uses.

1. They form contractions:

do not = don't

have not = haven't

there is = there's

you are = you're

2. They indicate possession:

Mrs. Smith's garden

the girls' mittens

my brother-in-law's motorcycle

3. They are used to form plurals of single letters and numerals:

She earned A's in all of her classes.

When you are rolling dice, two 1's are called *snake eyes* and two 6's are called *boxcars*.

Similarly, quotation marks have three main uses in sentences. They are used to:

1. Indicate that you are using someone else's exact words:

Someone once said, "Beauty is only skin deep."

2. Indicate an unusual use of a word or reservation:

I do not agree with Mayor Elliott's position on the energy "program."

Used in this way, the quotation marks indicate that the writer thinks that "program" is not the correct way to describe the energy situation.

3. Indicate titles of poems, short stories, songs, and articles:

I recently read the poem "To a Skylark."

End Punctuation

Periods, question marks, and exclamation points are all types of end punctuation. That is, they indicate that a sentence has ended.

I cannot see you.

Where did you go?

There you are!

Using a period is the most common way to end a sentence. If a sentence does not ask a question or present something in an exclamatory way, such as the first sentence in the preceding group, it ends with a period. The question mark ends a sentence that asks a question, such as *Where are you?* If a sentence is exclamatory in nature, such as the last sentence in the preceding example, it ends with an exclamation point. You probably will not use exclamation points as frequently as you use periods and question marks in your writing, but if you want to emphasize the severity or excitement of a certain sentence, an exclamation point is appropriate.

A period is also used to indicate abbreviations, such as those for Doctor (Dr.), Registered Nurse (R.N.), or Mister (Mr.).

Capitalization

Sometimes students are confused about when to **capitalize** words. They are probably aware that the first word of a sentence must be capitalized, but they may not know when to capitalize within a direct quote. Likewise, they may know to capitalize proper nouns and adjectives but may be unsure how to identify those words. Finally, there is the issue of when to capitalize words within titles. Fortunately, there are a few simple rules of capitalization that can clear up any issues.

A major rule of capitalization is to capitalize the first word of every sentence. The same is true of a direct quotation: Capitalize the first word of the material that is enclosed in quotation marks. For example, look at the following direct quotation:

American writer Daniel J. Boorstin states, "One of the most interesting and characteristic features of democracy is, of course, the difficulty of defining it."

An exception to this capitalization rule occurs when you incorporate a direct quotation into your own sentence structure; you can lowercase a word by putting **brackets** around the letter you changed from uppercase to lowercase, as in the example that follows:

It is true that "[o]ne of the most interesting and characteristic features of democracy is, of course, the difficulty of defining it" (Boorstin).

Proper nouns and proper adjectives are capitalized. These include the following:

- Names of people and animals, such as *Robert Frost*, *John Smith*, or *Rover*. The words *mother/mom*, *father/dad*, *grandmother/grandma*, and *grandfather/grandpa* are capitalized when you could substitute a specific name in place of the word in a sentence. When the word is preceded by a possessive, such as *my mother* or *Jan's grandfather*, it is not capitalized.
- Names of specific geographical places, such as cities, counties, states, countries, or geographical areas or regions are capitalized. Nouns referring to particular regions of the United States, such as *the South* or *the Midwest*, are capitalized, but direction words such as *south* or *west* are not capitalized.
- Names of groups of people and languages, such as *Native Americans* and *Swahili* are capitalized.
- Names of government organizations and buildings, such as the *House of Representatives* and the *Carnegie Public Library* are capitalized.
- Names of organizations, such as *Campfire Girls* and *Daughters of the American Revolution* are capitalized.
- Names of months, days of the week, holidays, and religious holy days, such as *August*, *Thursday*, *Veterans Day*, and *Easter Sunday* are capitalized.

Capitalization rules for titles follow:

- Capitalize the first word of a title.
- Capitalize the last word of a title.
- Capitalize all other words except *a*, *an*, *the*, or short prepositions, such as *by*, *in*, or *to*.
- If a title has a subtitle, separate the title and subtitle with a colon and capitalize the first word of the subtitle as well as the last word and all words except *a*, *an*, *the*, or short prepositions.

MODULE 3

PREPARING TO WRITE

Introduction

After you use prewriting to generate ideas, the next step of the writing process is to organize those ideas and prepare an outline to follow as you write.

When you are generating ideas, those ideas will rarely occur to you in an organized manner. Nor should they. When you prewrite, you want to free your creative mind to let the ideas flow without your worrying about their order. Before you write, you must bring some organization to these thoughts. When you read something, you expect the author to have grouped ideas together, divided them into paragraphs, and linked thoughts together so that you can follow them. Likewise, the readers of your writing will expect you to have done the same. If you offer your readers a collection of disorderly, random thoughts, they are likely to become confused about what you are trying to say. They are also likely to miss important connections that you want them to make.

Determining the right order for ideas can be a challenging task because there are often several different ways to arrange your thoughts. To find the most effective pattern, you might have to think of several different possibilities before you can decide which one is best. It is important to devote some time and attention to examining all of the pieces and figuring out how to fit them together, for your organization (or lack of it) can make or break your paper. And as you place your ideas in a pattern, one of the most important pieces to examine is your thesis statement.

Lesson 3.1: Thesis Statements

Introduction

It is likely you have practiced generating a working thesis as part of your prewriting practice. This working thesis becomes the **thesis statement**, the sentence in the essay that states the main idea. Recall that a thesis has two parts: It states the topic of the paragraph, and it also states the writer's point about that topic. Notice how each of the following sentences contains both a topic and an idea about that topic.

Topic

Point

My hometown

is a great place to live

Americans

should do more to conserve energy

Studying in a group

is more effective than studying alone

When you write thesis statements for essays of your own, remember that an effective thesis statement has four essential characteristics: It is a complete sentence that includes both a topic and a point, it is not too broad or too narrow, it contains a critical opinion, and it takes into account not just the topic but also the essay's audience and purpose.

From Working Thesis to Thesis Statement

A thesis statement must contain both of its required parts: a topic and some point about that topic. A topic in the form of a sentence fragment is not a topic sentence.

Incomplete: Extreme sports

Complete thesis statement: Extreme sports have been increasing in popularity for several reasons.

Incomplete: Recent improvements in technology

Complete thesis statement: Recent improvements in technology have given us the ability to get more accurate information more quickly.

Incomplete: Sending astronauts to Mars

Complete thesis statement: Sending astronauts to Mars should become one of America's priorities.

If you try to begin writing with only a topic in mind, then you will probably not produce a coherent and well-developed essay. When you are unsure about exactly what you mean to say, then your essay will probably ramble aimlessly. Make sure that before you begin to write, you have a complete thesis statement that includes both your topic and your point.

In addition to being complete, a thesis statement must also be appropriately specific. If an idea is too broad or too vague, it will not keep you properly focused as you write. For example, look at the following examples.

Too broad: People can be very rude.

Too vague: Something should be done about the quality of education in this country.

Neither of these statements expresses one clear idea, so each would probably lead to rambling when it came time to write. To improve these two statements, rewrite them to narrow the topic and/or the idea.

Many cell phone users are guilty of behaving rudely in public.

A merit pay system for teachers would help to improve the quality of public school education.

On the other hand, though, you do not want to make your thesis statement so specific or limited that you cannot develop it at all.

Too specific: Bill Clinton served two terms as U.S. president, from 1993 to 2001.

Because this sentence states a fact, there is not much more you can say about the topic. To improve it, broaden the topic and the idea.

During his two terms of office, Bill Clinton managed to achieve a number of needed improvements in the United States.

Be aware that your thesis statement may not be perfect on your first try. You may have to work on it, experimenting with the wording and rewriting it, even after you have begun writing, until it says exactly what you want to express.

Look, for example, at one student's thesis. Lee was assigned to write about the topic *student success*, so he generated ideas about studying. He came up with the following idea: *Studying with a group*. But then he realized that this phrase was not a complete sentence, so he revised it to read, *Studying with a group is more effective than studying alone*.

Another student, Jennifer, generated prewriting on the same topic and decided on the following thesis: *Good study habits are important*. But then she realized that this statement was too broad and vague. She revised it to read: *Several study techniques will help you better understand and recall information for tests*.

As you can see, a thesis statement may not be perfect the first time you write it. If yours seems to be lacking something, do not proceed with writing the rest of the essay until you have figured out what is missing and have corrected the problem. If you are not sure of exactly what you are trying to communicate to your readers, then you will be in greater danger of rambling or failing to adequately develop what you want to say.

Critical Opinion

After you have chosen and narrowed a topic, it is time to develop a critical opinion, something you can support or prove in your essay. A critical opinion does not state a fact, but rather makes a specific judgment about the topic you have selected. Once you have stated a critical opinion, you have a thesis.

Examples:

| Topic | Opinion |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Scary movies | are great |
| Punk music | shows influence of early folk music |
| Bill Gates | Is a modern-day icon |

When you express a critical opinion, make sure that you make a judgment about the topic rather than simply stating a fact. Notice the difference between the following two sentences:

Will Smith starred in a television show called *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*.

Will Smith changed the way that African Americans were portrayed on television.

Note how the first sentence merely states a fact; there is nothing in the sentence that could be argued and proven by support. On the other hand, the second sentence makes a judgment by stating the critical opinion that Will Smith *changed the way that African Americans were portrayed on television*. In other words, you would have to support your critical opinion with examples, data, statistics, or quotations.

It is easy to use the following pattern to write a thesis: Narrow Topic is/are/was/were Critical Opinion. However, you can experiment to come up with a more sophisticated form of your thesis. The following example illustrates the process:

| Broad Topic | Narrow Topic | is/are/was/were | Critical Opinion |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Food | Mom's recipe for seafood gumbo | is | excellent. |

Here is a more creative, sophisticated version of the same thesis:

Everyone who tries Mom's seafood gumbo raves that it is a true culinary treat.

Audience and Purpose

Effective thesis statements are complete and appropriately specific. As you evaluate the accuracy and effectiveness of your thesis statement, remember the effects of audience and purpose on that statement. When you are composing your thesis statement, you will want to consider not only *what* you want to say but also *why* and *to whom* you want to say it. Therefore, in addition to the topic, there are two other factors—audience and purpose—that will affect how you express your thesis statement.

The first of these factors is your audience or readers. *Who* is going to read your writing? *What* do these people need to know or want to know about the topic? Your thesis sentence should take into account this audience's needs and desires.

The second factor is your purpose. Do you want to inform your readers about your topic so they can learn something new? Or do you want to persuade them to believe what you believe about the topic? Your thesis statement should clearly reflect this purpose.

For example, consider the thesis statement "Running your own business and working for someone else both have their advantages and disadvantages." The writer intends to explain to someone who is interested in exploring different career options the pros and cons of self-employment and regular employment. But notice how the purpose of this next statement differs:

You should start and operate your own business instead of working for someone else.

Although the audience is probably the same, the words *you should* indicate that the writer's purpose is persuasive.

Lesson 3.2: Introduction to Rhetorical Modes

Introduction

Just like house plans reveal the inner workings of a structure, your paragraph or essay plan reveals a clear purpose for writing. You can base your plan on one or more of what are known as **rhetorical modes**. You may already be familiar with using some of the common rhetorical modes, such as narration, comparison and contrast, and argument. Other common modes include the following: description, process, illustration, definition, cause and effect, and classification.

As you explore these rhetorical modes, let your purpose guide your organizational plan, which, in turn, guides your writing.

The Rhetorical Modes

As you think about the best way to organize your ideas, you will want to consider the common strategies for organizing ideas. This section provides brief explanations of these common patterns. The list that follows provides a brief description of each one:

- **Narration.** Tell a story from your own or someone else's experience.
- **Description.** Provide details about people, places, and things so that readers can picture them in their minds.
- **Process.** Explain the steps of a procedure.
- **Illustration.** Provide specific examples that illustrate the main idea.
- **Definition.** Explain the meaning of a term.
- **Cause and Effect.** Explain why something occurred or examine the results or outcomes.
- **Classification.** Group items into categories.
- **Comparison/Contrast.** Examine how two things are alike and/or different.
- **Argument.** Present a series of reasons to convince readers to change their minds or behaviors.

Often your thesis will either dictate or suggest organizing your essay according to one or more of these patterns. For example, the thesis "Driving over the speed limit can lead to many serious consequences" clearly indicates that the essay will discuss effects. Therefore, the essay's supporting points should be the different effects of speeding. The thesis "Although both are learning experiences, attending college is very different from attending high school" indicates comparison/contrast; thus, the supporting points should be in the form of points of comparison.

When you write a thesis, be aware of clue words that indicate an appropriate pattern for the supporting points. The following list provides some examples of phrases that often suggest a certain pattern:

Narration: *several events, a number of developments, over time*

Description: *features, characteristics*

Process: *three steps, several stages, process, procedure*

Illustration: *examples*

Definition: *defined, definition, is*

Cause and effect: *causes, effects, consequences, reasons*

Classification: *types, categories, groups, classes, kinds*

Comparison/contrast: *similarities, differences, likenesses, compares, contrasts*

Argument: *reasons*

Narration and Description

Narrative examples are simply examples that tell a story. As such, they always contain characters, a setting, and a plot. Narratives are written from one character's points of view with a purpose in mind. They also tend to be in chronological order. Narrative examples make wonderful motivators because few people can resist a good story. Sometimes the best way to illustrate a particular concept or idea is through narration.

You are likely to use narration throughout your life personally, academically, and possibly even professionally. We employ narrative techniques any time we tell a story to a friend or family member. For example, if your best friend asks about the concert last night or about a movie you saw last weekend, you may very well tell a story to answer his or her questions. In your college English class, you may be asked to give a plot summary of a short story or of a novel you read; that would be a narrative. When you are in the workforce, you may be asked to file a report on the effectiveness of a particular conference you attended. Again, a narrative could do the job. Although narratives may be used in many different ways, they share some common characteristics.

- They make a point (through either an explicit or an implied topic sentence or thesis statement).
- They tell a chronological story (with characters, a setting, and a plot).
- They use a consistent point of view (either first person or third person).
- They use a consistent verb tense (either present or past).

Narratives can be either stand-alone paragraphs, or they can be entire essays. Fortunately, the principles that you will learn for paragraphs will carry over into essays.

While the goal of narration is to tell a story, the goal of descriptive paragraphs and essays is to create a profound impact through the use of vivid details. You may have heard someone say, "Don't *tell* me; *show* me." In a sense, that is what descriptive writing does: It shows the reader something with specific, concrete details. Which of the following statements has greater impact?:

It was a hot night.

Although the sun had gone down, I still couldn't sit outside without sweat beading on my brow and my dress sticking to the backs of my legs when I got up from the lawn chair.

Obviously, with the latter example, you can visualize, and maybe even feel, just how hot the night was. So, you see how much stronger it is to *show* your readers your point, rather than to simply *tell* them.

A descriptive paragraph or essay has each of these hallmarks.

- It contains a **dominant point**, which is created by a strong topic sentence (for a paragraph) or a strong thesis sentence (for an essay).
- It contains **vivid details** that appeal to the reader's senses, thus supporting or “proving” the dominant point.

Its details are presented in a **logical arrangement**—geographically (or spatially), chronologically, or by order of importance.

Process and Illustration

Throughout your life, you will often be asked to describe various processes; in fact, many *how* questions are asking for a process: How do I get to Third Street? How did you earn an A on that test? How did you make that delicious guacamole? How does osmosis work?

There are two types of process papers: “how to” and “how it works.” “How to” papers tell how to do something, for example, how to make your grandmother's special Three Milk Cake or how to shop for a good used car. “How it works” papers explain how something works, for example, how rivers cut out canyons over a period of years or how temperatures of cold-blooded animals adapt to their surroundings. In order to write process paragraphs and essays, you need to do the following:

- Write topic sentences and theses that state a topic and a critical opinion that indicates why knowing the process is valuable.
- Keep a consistent point of view.
- List steps smoothly in **chronological order**.
- Use transitions that indicate a sequence.

Similarly, throughout your college career, you will often be asked to provide illustration, or to give examples, of something. For instance, in your history course, you may be asked to illustrate the events leading up to the United States' participation in World War II. In your science course, you may be asked to illustrate osmosis, and in your American literature course, you may be asked to illustrate transcendentalism, drawing upon the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. You may not realize it, but you are already acquainted with the concept of illustration, because to illustrate something is to support it with examples.

As you may recall, there are many types of examples. You can give a series of brief examples, or you can give one extended example, such as a narrative example or an extended, very thorough brief example. Direct quotations and statistics can all be examples. It has been said that the key to good writing is to use good examples, and to a certain extent that is true. Good illustrative writing contains vivid examples that are arranged well, using appropriate transitions.

Definition and Cause/Effect

Many times throughout your college career you will be asked to define various things: osmosis, paradox, The Great Awakening, your stand on racial profiling. Just within the context of your everyday life, you may need to use definition. If you are told that your mother has Parkinson's, you will probably want to research the disease in order to define it, to find out what to expect as far as characteristics, options for treatment, and long-term prognosis. Sometimes even basic

terms need to be defined. For example, what is your definition of a romantic evening? It may not be the same as that of your significant other. How do you define such things as high quality of life, or a bargain? We have all heard the saying, "What is one man's trash is another man's treasure." How true this is. It is all in how you define it. So, you see, some things, like Parkinson's or Crohn's disease, may have fairly universal definitions; other things, like love or contentment, do not.

So how do you go about defining something? Most definition paragraphs and essays have three things in common.

- Definitions are usually reduced to categories with distinguishing characteristics in either the topic sentence or the thesis.
- Definitions are supported through examples that illustrate the term defined.
- Transitions help to emphasize the definition.

Much of your college career will also be spent analyzing causes and/or effects. Think of some of the essay questions you may have been asked to address in various classes: What are the reasons the United States entered World War II? How did Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership of the Civil Rights Movement change the face of the South?

Cause papers are concerned with reasons, or *why* something happened. Effect papers are interested in results, or *what* happened because of something. Paragraphs will generally focus on either cause or effect; essays may deal with *both* cause and effect.

Therefore, the first order of business is to determine if you are going to focus on, causes or effects. To focus on causes, ask the question: "Why did this happen?" To focus on effects, ask the question: "What happened because of this?" For example, if you were writing a cause paper dealing with why students drop out of college, you might examine the following reasons:

- Lack of funds
- Lack of success
- Lack of motivation

If your focus were the effects of students' dropping out of college, you might come up with the following results:

- May be limited to low-skilled, poor-paying jobs
- May struggle with feelings of failure
- May deal with parental disappointment

After choosing the focus of your paper, you must decide the best way to organize your support. Some valid choices are:

- **Chronologically**
- In order of importance
- Geographically, or **spatially**
- **Categorically**

Lastly, you must determine if your points are related to one another or if they are independent. That knowledge, along with the organization you have chosen for your paper, will determine your transition choices.

Classification and Comparison/Contrast

Many of us categorize things in our lives without thinking about it: We may group white socks together on one side of the drawer, the brown socks together in the middle, and the black socks together on the other side of the drawer. Our closets may be similarly categorized: casual clothes in one section, business attire in another, and dressier, evening wear in yet another section. Everywhere we look, classification—or simply putting objects, people, or ideas in categories—is all around us. Grocery stores are sectioned into categories: produce, dairy, meat. And often, within categories there are more subcategories. Meat can be subdivided into beef and pork, and then beef can be subdivided into roasts, steaks, hamburger meat, and so on. When you go to buy a new car, the small cars are together on the lot, the larger luxury cars are together on the lot, and the sports cars are together on the lot; the same is true of the trucks and SUVs. So, although you may have never thought about it, you are actually quite familiar with the mode of classification.

One thing that is critical for an effective classification paper is that you base your classification according to the same criterion. For example, the shirts in your closet could be classified according to several possible criteria: color, sleeve length, function, and even age. You just have to be consistent once you have selected your criterion, and make sure that your subcategories do not overlap and that you do not leave out major details.

Once you have determined the **criterion**, or basis, for your categories, you compose a topic sentence (for a paragraph) or thesis (for an essay), and choose the subtopics you plan to discuss. Once you determine your subtopics, plan vivid support that emphasizes the unique characteristics of each category. Finally, plug in effective transitions that further emphasize classification.

We actually also spend quite a bit of our lives comparing and contrasting. You may compare Andy's frozen custard to that of Shake's, or you may contrast your sister Melanie's elegant wedding to the casual beach wedding of your best friend, Courtney. Many times in your college career you will be asked to compare or contrast: In American Literature class, you may have to contrast naturalism with realism, and in U.S. History class you may compare the post-traumatic stress disorder of many Vietnam veterans with the difficulties of veterans of more recent wars.

To compare two things, people, or ideas is to focus on their similarities; to contrast is to focus on their differences. However, keep in mind that often when you are focusing on comparing, it is still essential to contrast somewhat, and even when you are focusing on contrasting, it is still essential to compare somewhat. Furthermore, especially when you are trying to decide between two things, you may want to focus equally on comparing and contrasting.

Comparison/contrast paragraphs and essays follow a strict organization: They are either discussed point by point or subject by subject.

Argument

Imagine you have a cousin who never buckles up when he gets in your car. You finally convince him to use his seatbelt when you inform him that, according to a website called "Safety Belt Statistics" sponsored by James Madison University, half of the people who die each year in automobile accidents would have survived had they been wearing their seatbelt. You decide to use your experience of convincing your cousin to wear a seatbelt as the introduction to your persuasive speech in your oral communications class.

Or suppose you are assigned a paper in your American government class in which you are to discuss an issue of national concern. After much research, you decide that the welfare system in the United States needs a complete overhaul. You write a persuasive essay in which you present the issues and pose solutions to remedy the problems.

Whether in a real-life situation or in your academic career, any time you make an argument, you are using the art of persuasion. To persuade someone to accept your viewpoint, you must do the following:

- Select a subject about which you hold a strong opinion and for which alternative or opposing opinions can be held.
- Develop a critical position in which you state what you are trying to convince your readers to think or do.
- Support your position with compelling evidence: statements by experts, scholarly research, statistics, and case studies.

Lesson 3.3: Organizing and Outlining

Introduction

Outlines come in different forms, but they all list the ideas or information you will present in the order in which you will present them. The best outlines also indicate how ideas are related to one another. Regardless of their form, they all provide the writer with a guide to follow as he or she writes.

When people object to creating an outline prior to writing, they usually argue that they can save time by skipping the outline and just working out their organization as they write. Or they may argue that it is pointless to create an outline when it never matches the finished product. Both of these arguments, however, rest on the following myths about outlining:

Myth #1: Skipping the outlining step saves time. On the contrary, failing to outline actually *adds* time to composition. When you do not spend time determining and writing down a plan of organization before you begin writing, you force your brain to juggle two challenging mental tasks (organizing and composing) at the same time. Because doing this is more complicated, the writing usually takes longer. Separating the outlining stage and working out the organization of your ideas before you begin to write can actually save you valuable time in the long run by making the writing step easier, and therefore, faster.

Myth #2: An outline is useless because the final paper rarely matches it. The outline is your best determination of your composition's overall structure. However, it is not cast in stone, and you may very well find better ways to organize your thoughts as you write. Just because you alter your original plan does not mean that it was not useful for getting you started.

Starting to Organize Ideas

In order to outline, you will need to determine the best framework for arranging your ideas about your main point. You begin to create this framework when you examine your thesis and your

prewriting (your brainstorming, freewriting, clustering, or whatever other type you used) and go through a three-step process to decide on what to include and how to order that information.

Step 1: Circle ideas and information that match your thesis, and ignore or cross out ideas that seem irrelevant.

Step 2: Group similar ideas and information together.

Step 3: Decide on the best way to put these groups of ideas in order.

In step 1, you look at the ideas that you collected during prewriting with your thesis in mind. You evaluate each thought or piece of information, asking yourself if it relates to or supports the point in your thesis. Then you circle, highlight, or otherwise mark these relevant ideas. At the same time, you either ignore or cross out the ideas and information that do not relate to the point in your thesis. Do not erase these ideas; you might decide later that one or two really are useful, so you should not eliminate them for good. But develop a system for marking the ideas that will be useful.

As you complete this first step of the organizing process, you will need to honestly evaluate the quantity of your ideas. Did you generate enough ideas in your prewriting, or did you come up with only a few? If the number of ideas you have generated seems skimpy, go back to the prewriting stage, perhaps selecting another technique, and try to think of more.

After you have identified relevant ideas in step 1, you are ready to go on to step 2, which involves grouping similar things together. Similar things can be grouped in a number of different ways. Such will be the case when you look at the ideas that you generate for writing. Sometimes the right grouping will be immediately apparent to you. At other times, you may have to experiment with different ways to group thoughts together.

After you have determined possible groupings for relevant items, step 3 involves deciding on the order in which you should present these groups to your reader. Sometimes the groups will naturally organize themselves. For those topics that do not naturally order themselves, you will have to use logic, letting the relationships among the groups suggest the best arrangement.

Organization

When you are deciding on the best order for your ideas, you will have to decide whether to use natural organization or logical organization. Some topics organize themselves, so they are arranged with **natural organization**. When you tell a story, for instance, or write a set of directions to explain how to do something, you will give your readers the events or the steps chronologically, in the order in which they occur.

However, many more topics do *not* naturally organize themselves. For these topics, you will have to use **logical organization**. In other words, you will have to evaluate the groups you created and apply logic to decide if they are related to each other in some way. These relationships may indicate a certain order for presenting the groups. For example, the items in one of the groups may actually be the cause of the items in another of the groups. Suppose, for example, you create three groups of reasons why Serena Williams is a good role model: her athletic

achievements, her humanitarian efforts, and her attitudes and personal qualities. Does one of these things cause another? You could say that her attitudes and personal qualities lead her to act in certain ways. As a result, you might want to discuss those first. But then, should you discuss her athletic achievements or her humanitarian efforts next? You would have to determine if it matters whether you should present the discussion of one before the other.

This is not the only way to arrange these groups. You might decide, for instance, that Serena Williams is a role model first and foremost because of her athletic achievements. If so, you would discuss that point first. Then you would have to apply logic to determine which of the other reasons should be presented next.

When you examine your groups, you might decide that some are more important than others. Order of importance may affect how you arrange your ideas. Sometimes it is best to present the most important information first, and sometimes it is best to save it for last. In either case, though, consider whether you should order groups by their relative importance. You might do this, for instance, with ideas about how generosity and hard work make Steph Curry a role model. Which of the qualities is most important in a role model? If you think that it is generosity, then you might want to present that quality first. If you think that hard work is a role model's most admirable trait, either present that quality first or save it for last, ranking and ordering the other two characteristics accordingly.

One common mistake that you should avoid as you work on organizing ideas is trying to use natural organization when you should use logical organization. It is not advisable, for example, to present your ideas to the reader in the order in which you thought of them. If you do that, you will have completely skipped steps 1 and 2 of the organization process. Nor do you want to try to use a story form to present information about a topic that is not really a story. For example, telling a story about the time that you actually met Steph Curry and merely mentioning here and there the things about him that you admire is probably not the best way to address why he is a good role model.

Informal Outlines

Creating an outline of your ideas before you write will help you keep the overall big picture in mind as you concentrate on the smaller details. It will also prevent you from the following:

- Straying from your main point and including information or ideas that are irrelevant
- Rambling or jumping from thought to thought in a manner that confuses the reader
- Mixing different kinds of information together
- Discussing an idea in the wrong place

If an outline is not a requirement of your assignment, and you are creating one just as a tool for yourself, then you are free to use any method that works for you. Informal types of outlines can take the form of brief lists of ideas in the order in which you want to discuss them. For example, the following sketch is an informal outline:

Main idea: The Red Cross is a worthy organization that will make good use of your financial contribution.

1. Disaster relief services

—Provides shelter, food, water, health care to victims of floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other disasters

2. Training and education

—Blood bank

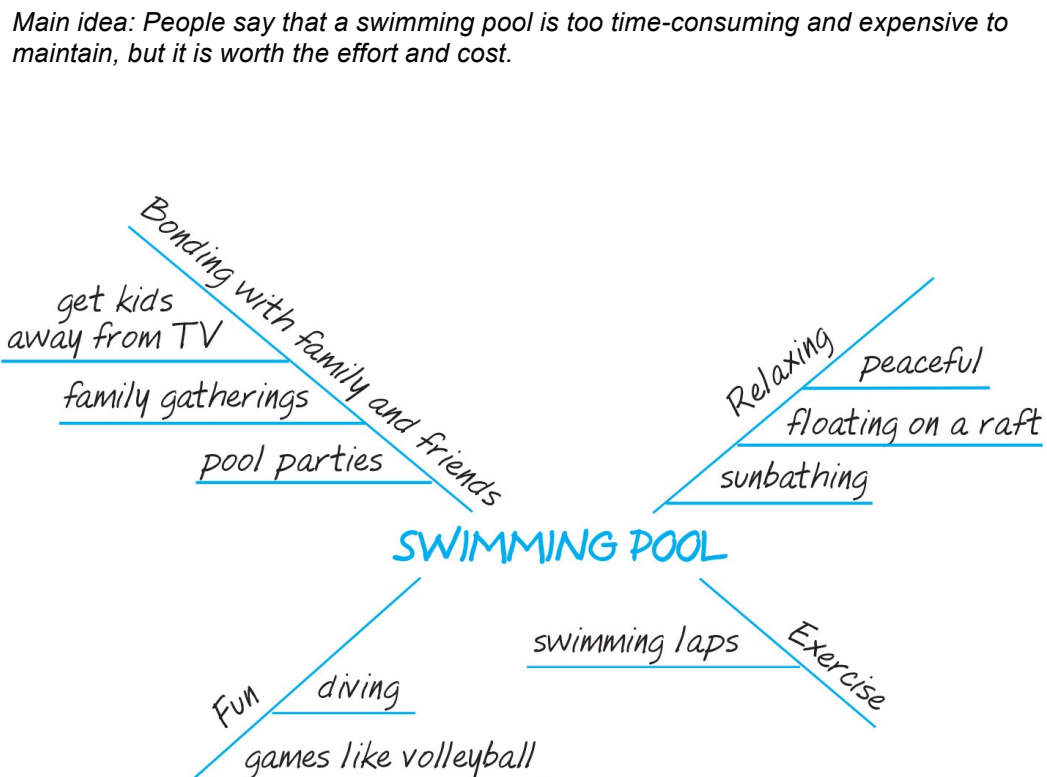
—Teaches first aid and CPR, teaches swimming and lifeguarding, trains babysitters

—International in scope

3. Uses its resources wisely and efficiently

—More than 90 percent of every dollar it receives is used to pay for its programs and services

An informal outline can also take the form of branching. This form looks a lot like the clustering prewriting technique. You start with a topic and then draw “branches” of subtopics and details that radiate from the central topic. Here is an example of branching:



Formal Outlines

When you think of an outline, you may picture one that includes Roman numerals. A **formal outline** is one that uses some combination of Roman numerals, letters, and/or Arabic numbers. One common type of formal outline, for example, uses all three.

- I. Main idea
 - A. Supporting detail
 - 1. Statistic
 - 2. Example
 - B. Supporting detail
 - 1. Expert opinion
 - 2. Data

In this type of outline, the Roman numerals correspond to the main ideas while the letters and Arabic numbers indicate supporting information. This is the type of outline that is usually a required part of longer assignments, such as research papers, because it serves as a kind of table of contents for a lengthy paper.

However, creating a formal outline is worthwhile even if it is not a required part of an assignment. This format not only is useful for showing the order of your ideas but also serves another valuable purpose: It clearly indicates your ideas' relationship to one another. Thus, as you write, one glance at this outline would help you keep in mind your overall structure of the entire paper, allowing you to stay organized *and* make important connections for your reader. Obviously, it takes some time to create a detailed outline like this, but the time and effort are worth it, for the composition process is then often faster and yields a more successful finished product.

The ability to create a good outline is a valuable skill to master because you will need this skill for many other personal and professional tasks. The following list briefly summarizes some of the many uses for outlines:

- 1. A guide for an oral presentation.** Your delivery of a speech will often be much more effective if you use an outline and speak naturally rather than read a script.
- 2. An agenda to use as a guide for a meeting.** Effective leaders know that an agenda in outline form can help make meetings more efficient and productive.
- 3. A study guide for a textbook chapter.** Outlining a chapter is a very effective way to comprehend and recall its contents.
- 4. Taking notes on a professor's lecture.** Use an outline form for your notes to help you better understand the information.

5. A PowerPoint presentation. One quick way to create an entire PowerPoint presentation is to simply outline it and let the PowerPoint program create the slides.

6. A site map for a website. A site map is an outline of all of the pages associated with a particular website, so you will need outlining skills to create one.

Aligning Outline and Thesis

Once you have refined your thesis statement, you will need to reevaluate your outline to make sure that it still matches your main idea. Make sure this outline still includes the right kinds of supporting ideas, and decide if they are still listed in the right order. Make any necessary adjustments to your outline before you begin.

Look, for example, at Lee's revised thesis statement and existing outline:

Studying with a group is more effective than studying alone.

- Motivates you to study more regularly and for longer periods of time*
- Groups can wander from the task at hand if members do not stay focused*
- Inconvenience of scheduling study sessions with others*
- Talking aloud is a good learning strategy*
- Others can clarify things you do not understand*
- You can waste time covering info you already know*

The outline includes some disadvantages of studying with a group, so the thesis statement and outline no longer match. Lee did not want to change his thesis statement, so he knew he would have to make a few changes to his outline. He dropped all of the disadvantages of study groups and just left the advantages.

Studying with a group is more effective than studying alone.

- Motivates you to study more regularly and for longer periods of time*
- Talking aloud is a good learning strategy*
- Others can clarify things you do not understand*

Now the outline matches the thesis statement.

MODULE 4

GRAMMAR II: SENTENCES

Introduction

Once you are comfortable with the eight parts of speech and the basics of punctuation, you can start writing sentences of all kinds and constructing entire papers based on these sentences. But in order to begin writing longer and more interesting paragraphs, you need to first understand the various constructions that make up a sentence (appositives, clauses, conjunctions, and so on) and how they can be combined to form different sentence structures. In learning the proper ways to construct sentences, you can avoid many common sentence errors, like fragments and run-ons, that would otherwise detract from your writing. And as a bonus, you'll be able to make your papers stand out and be more interesting by varying your sentence length and structure.

When you take the time to learn these basic grammatical rules and constructions, you will be amazed by how much simpler the writing process will become.

Lesson 4.1: Sentence Errors

Introduction

Just as there are grammatical and mechanical errors at the word and punctuation level, so are there errors at the sentence level. But never fear! These errors, though common, are often easy to spot and even easier to fix. Just like the boards you might use to build a house, strategies for avoiding common grammatical and usage errors are the building blocks you use to make your writing understood. By becoming familiar with these errors and their fixes, you will add these materials to your toolbox to create college writing that is free of errors such as fragments and run-ons, which only distract the reader from the substance of the paper.

Sentence Fragments: An Overview

One of the most common grammatical errors (and one of the most costly grade-wise) in students' papers is the sentence fragment. A **sentence fragment** is a group of words that cannot stand alone as a sentence; in other words, a fragment is lacking a subject, a verb, or both.

Look at the subjects (in boldface print) and the verbs (in italics) in the following sentences. Remember that the subject performs the action expressed by the verb, and the verb (unless it is a linking verb) is the action the subject is performing.

The **cat** *gave* an evil smile to the intruder.

James *decided* to cook spaghetti for his family.

Mother *cleaned* Patrick's room for the tenth time that month.

Every college **student** *needs* a computer for writing papers.

We *saw* a small white dog running down the street.

Although the definition of a fragment remains constant, there are several different kinds. Four common types of fragments are the following:

- A complete subject without a predicate or a predicate without a subject
- An *-ing* word group by itself
- A dependent clause standing alone

- An appositive standing alone

Subjects without Predicates and Predicates without Subjects

A sentence can be divided into two parts: a complete subject and a predicate. The **complete subject** contains the subject and everything attached to the subject. The **complete predicate** is the rest of the sentence (and always contains the verb). Examine the following sentences; the complete subject is boldfaced and the predicate is in italics.

The long-haired white and gray cat *gave an evil smile to the intruder while sharpening her claws.*

James, who was tired of eating Spam with crackers, *decided to cook spaghetti for his family.*

Mother, who wondered where she had gone wrong, *cleaned Patrick's room for the tenth time that month.*

Every college student *needs a computer for writing papers.*

While we were out walking, we *saw a small white dog running down the street.*

Some common fragments are nothing more than complete subjects that are missing their predicates. Look at the following examples of subjects without predicates:

Danielle, Mr. Coone's incredibly beautiful assistant

The beautiful, long-haired cat with blue eyes

The antique bed with the homemade quilt

Now, look at the same subjects with appropriate predicates:

Danielle, Mr. Coone's incredibly beautiful assistant, *helps keep him on task.*

The beautiful, long-haired cat with blue eyes *has a sweet disposition.*

The antique bed with the homemade quilt *was actually my mother's when she was growing up.*

Likewise, a common type of fragment is a predicate that is missing its subject. The following predicates have no subjects:

Ran down the road at top speed

Consistently spent quality time in detention in high school

Should be working quietly at her desk

Now look at the predicates with a subject attached:

Zoe, the miniature dachshund, ran down the road at top speed.

Did you know that Dr. Howerton consistently spent time in detention in high school?

Mrs. Boswell, whom no one suspects of leading a double life, should be working quietly at her desk.

This type of sentence fragment is corrected simply by adding either a complete subject or a predicate, whichever is missing.

Fragments Consisting of *-ing* Word Groups

Generally, a fragment consisting of an *-ing* word group is a group of words that simply needs to be attached either to the sentence before it or to the sentence after it. Here are some examples of fragments consisting of *-ing* word groups:

Speeding to the hospital with my pregnant sister in the car

Running along the beach
Kissing under the bleachers

See how each fragment needs to be attached to another word group in order to “sound right”? Now examine the following sentences, in which the fragment has been attached to an independent clause (in italics) that comes either before it or after it.

Speeding to the hospital with my pregnant sister in the car, *we ran three red lights and one stop sign.*
We saw a man in a Speedo swimsuit running along the beach.
I saw your sister and her boyfriend kissing under the bleachers.

This type of fragment is easily corrected. Simply determine if it needs to be connected to the sentence before it or to the sentence after it, and attach it.

Dependent Clauses Standing Alone

An **independent clause** is a group of words that can stand alone as a separate sentence because it contains both a subject and a verb, along with their modifiers and objects. Likewise, a **dependent clause** is a group of words that contains both a subject and a verb and their modifiers and objects. However, a dependent clause cannot stand alone; in order to make sense, it must be attached to an independent clause. Therefore, a dependent clause *depends* upon an independent clause to complete its meaning. Dependent clauses often begin with one of the following words:

| | | |
|------------|-------------|----------|
| after | even if | until |
| although | even though | when |
| as | if | whenever |
| as if | since | where |
| as long as | so that | whereas |
| as soon as | such as | wherever |
| as though | that | whether |
| because | till | while |
| before | unless | who |

Here are some examples of fragments created by dependent clauses that are not attached to independent clauses:

Although we were exhausted
Because Mr. Ezell hired a new lab assistant
Such as Jack Russells, golden retrievers, and border collies

Here are the same dependent clauses, this time connected to independent clauses (in italics).

Although we were exhausted, *we did our homework before going to bed.*
The tutoring lab is running much more smoothly now because Mr. Ezell hired a new lab assistant.
Many breeds of dogs are very high energy, such as Jack Russells, golden retrievers, and border collies.

Notice that when dependent clauses occur at the beginning of sentences, they usually require a comma after them. However, when dependent clauses occur at the end of sentences, they often

do not require commas. Look at the following examples, in which the dependent clause is italicized:

Because we were tired, we went to bed early.
We went to bed early *because we were tired*.

There are some notable exceptions to this rule, however. When a dependent clause at the end of a sentence begins with *whereas* or *such as*, a comma often precedes it, as in the following examples:

Celia went to bed early, *whereas Larisse did not*.
Alex loves Italian food, *such as manicotti and cannelloni*.

Fragments created by dependent clauses standing alone are not difficult to fix. Simply write an independent clause to attach to the dependent clause.

Appositives Standing Alone

An **appositive** is a noun or a noun phrase that follows a noun or a pronoun and renames it. Often an appositive gives a name or a characteristic about a person or a place, such as the italicized words in the following examples:

The Brookses have two sons, *Beck and Merritt*.
Ryan named his puppy Amiga, *which means “a friend that is female” in Spanish*.
Beautiful cabins in the woods near Jasper, Arkansas, Lookout Mountain Cabins are a popular tourist destination.

A fragment occurs when you separate an appositive from an independent clause, as shown here:

The Brookses have two sons. Beck and Merritt.
Ryan named his puppy Amiga. Which means “a friend that is female” in Spanish.
Beautiful cabins in the woods near Jasper, Arkansas. Lookout Mountain Cabins are a popular tourist destination.

To correct a fragment created by an appositive standing alone, simply attach the appositive to the sentence it belongs with, using a comma.

Run-on Sentences: Fused Sentences and Comma Splices

Run-on sentences are probably the most common major error in papers produced by college students. There are two types of run-on sentences: fused sentences and comma splices. Both are easily corrected, and both are corrected in the same way.

Fused sentences are simply two sentences run—or fused—together. Correcting a fused sentence is a matter of figuring out where the first sentence ends and the one that follows it begins. Here is an example of a fused sentence:

The bus has left already you can ride to the game with me if you like.

Read the sentence several times. Often, reading aloud to find run-ons can be helpful. The auditory feedback you get from your own voice can give you clues as to where one sentence ends and another begins. Looking for subjects and their verbs can also help you determine where you need to split the two sentences. Here is the fused sentence presented earlier with the subjects underlined and the verbs boldfaced.

The bus **has left** already you **can ride** to the game with me if you like.

Marking subjects and verbs makes it easy to see that there are two sentences fused together.

Similarly, a **comma splice** consists of two independent clauses that are separated with only a comma, which is inadequate punctuation.

They laughed, the joke was very funny.
The rain stopped, the skies cleared.

In both of these examples there are two complete thoughts expressed in two different independent clauses. Unlike in a fused sentence, however, the writer recognized that there should be punctuation and separated each idea with a comma. As with fused sentences, the trick to fixing comma splices often involves deciding on the correct punctuation.

Correcting Fused Sentences Using a Period or a Semicolon

The easiest way to repair a fused sentence is by inserting a period between the two independent clauses.

The bus has left already. You can ride to the game with me if you like.

You can also repair the sentence by inserting a semicolon. The reason that you ran two sentences together in the first place is probably because the two ideas were so closely related that it felt as if they belonged in the same sentence. Note that the first letter of the first word after the semicolon is not capitalized.

The bus has left already; you can ride to the game with me if you like.

You can also repair a fused sentence by inserting a period or semicolon and a conjunctive adverb. Look at the following examples using the conjunctive adverb *however*:

The bus has left already. However, you can ride to the game with me if you like.
The bus has left already; however, you can ride to the game with me if you like.

A conjunctive adverb can reinforce the meaning relationship, or the link, between the two independent clauses. Here is a list of common conjunctive adverbs:

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| accordingly | furthermore | next |
| also | hence | nonetheless |
| as a result | however | on the contrary |
| consequently | in addition | similarly |
| finally | in fact | therefore |
| for example | likewise | thus |
| for instance | moreover | to conclude |

Usually a comma is inserted after a conjunctive adverb. The only time the comma would not be necessary is when the conjunctive adverb does not introduce an independent clause (a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence). Here is an example of a conjunctive adverb (*for example*) that does not introduce an independent clause:

A business owner should do everything possible to prepare for a possible audit by the IRS, for example keeping detailed records of expenditures.

Correcting Fused Sentences by Subordinating One of the Independent Clauses

Sometimes you can simply add a subordinating conjunction to a fused sentence, turning one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause. Remember our example?

The bus has left already although you can ride to the game with me if you like.

Adding the subordinating conjunction effectively corrects the fused sentence. Remember that you need no punctuation before the subordinating conjunction. However, if you flip-flopped the dependent clause and the independent clause, putting the dependent clause at the beginning of the sentence, you would need a comma after it, as in the following example:

Although you can ride to the game with me if you like, the bus has left already.

Here is a list of common subordinating conjunctions:

| | | |
|------------|-------------|---------|
| although | as though | so that |
| as | because | such as |
| as if | even if | unless |
| as long as | even though | whereas |
| as soon as | since | |

You can also combine your two sentences by making one of them into a phrase. For example, you could say the following:

The bus having left already, you can ride to the game with me if you like.

Correcting Fused Sentences Using a Comma and a Coordinating Conjunction

Coordinating conjunctions can separate independent clauses. (Recall that an independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence). There are seven coordinating conjunctions: *and*, *or*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *so*, and *yet*. If you correct a fused sentence by using a coordinating conjunction, be sure to put a comma before the coordinating conjunction. Look again at our fused sentence:

The bus has left already you can ride to the game with me if you like.

Because the two independent clauses express a contrast, the most logical choice of coordinating conjunction to separate our fused sentence is *but*.

The bus has left already, but you can ride to the game with me if you like.

The easiest way to remember the coordinating conjunctions is to think of the acronym FANBOYS. *Acronyms* are words made by using the first letters of the words you are trying to remember. Each letter in FANBOYS is the first letter of one of the coordinating conjunctions: **F**(or), **A**(nd), **N**(or), **B**(ut), **O**(r), **Y**(et), **S**(o).

Run-on Sentences: Comma Splices

A **comma splice** is very similar to a fused sentence in the sense that it is two sentences run together; the only difference is that, with a comma splice, the writer's instincts told him or her that *something* needed to go in between the two independent clauses. Unfortunately, he or she put a comma instead of the correct punctuation mark! We could take our original fused sentence—*The bus has left already you can ride to the game with me if you like*—and turn it into

a comma splice: *The bus has left already, you can ride to the game with me if you like.* However, this “correction” does not solve the problem and would cost the writer big points in a formal essay.

The good news is that you fix a comma splice exactly the way you would correct a fused sentence. Here is a comma splice to illustrate:

Freshman Seminar is a valuable class, it teaches you how to study effectively.

Just like with a fused sentence, inserting a period or a semicolon in place of the offending comma in a comma splice is often a good remedy. Inserting a period results in separating the two independent clauses entirely.

Freshman Seminar is a valuable class. It teaches you how to study effectively.

Replacing the comma with a semicolon enables the two ideas to remain in the same sentence, emphasizing their interrelatedness.

Freshman Seminar is a valuable class; it teaches you how to study effectively.

You also can repair a comma splice by inserting a period or semicolon and a conjunctive adverb. Look at the following corrections, in which the conjunctive adverb has been italicized.

Freshman Seminar is a valuable class. *For example*, it teaches you how to study effectively.

Freshman Seminar is a valuable class; *for example*, it teaches you how to study effectively.

Be sure that the conjunctive adverb that you select illustrates the link, or the meaning relationship, between the two independent clauses that make up the comma splice.

You can correct a comma splice by turning one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause and inserting a subordinating conjunction in front of it. In the following examples, the subordinate clause is italicized, and the subordinating conjunction is boldfaced.

Freshman Seminar is a valuable class **because** *it teaches you how to study effectively.*
Freshman Seminar, **which** *teaches you how to study effectively*, is a valuable class.

Remember that when the dependent clause occurs at the beginning of a sentence, it will need to be followed by a comma, but when it occurs at the end of a sentence, it usually will not need to be preceded by a comma.

You can use a coordinating conjunction to remedy a comma splice. Remember the acronym FANBOYS and select the coordinating conjunction that makes the most sense, given the meaning you are trying to convey in your sentence. In the following example, the coordinating conjunction is italicized:

Freshman Seminar is a valuable class, **for** *it teaches you how to study effectively.*

Remember to put a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

Lesson 4.2: Parallelism

Introduction

When a sentence contains either a pair or a series of elements, those elements must be **parallel**. That is, the elements must be in the same grammatical form or have the same structure. Parallelism gives sentences balance, which makes them easier to read and understand. When we speak, we don't worry about parallelism because we are able to clarify our meaning immediately if our listener doesn't understand. However, when we write, using parallel structure clarifies our writing and helps our readers follow our ideas. So, as you write, you will need to make sure that words, phrases, and clauses are all parallel.

Recognizing Parallel Thoughts

Many sentences contain what we call parallel thoughts. An example follows:

Janet spent all morning working on math problems and writing her essay.

The two parallel thoughts are *working on math problems* and *writing her essay*. They are both things that Janet spent all morning doing. Contrast the preceding example with the following sentence:

Janet spent all morning working on math problems, and she also wrote her essay.

Both sentences convey how Janet spent her morning, but the first uses **parallel construction**. It is more efficient, less clumsy, and friendlier to the ear than the second sentence.

When thoughts are parallel, you should use parallel forms to express them. Look at the following words:

Singing, dancing, playing

All three are *-ing* verbs; they are in parallel structure. Now look at the following series:

To sing, to dance, to play

All three items are the infinitive form of the verbs; they are in parallel structure. And finally, look at this series:

Have sung, have danced, have played

All three items in the series are verbs in present perfect tense; once again, all three are in parallel structure.

The importance of maintaining parallelism in your writing applies to other parts of speech as well. Look at these words:

Tall, dark, handsome

All three words are adjectives, and all are words that you could use to describe a person; they are in parallel form. If it is possible, it is best to balance a noun with a noun, a verb with a verb, a modifier with a modifier, and so on.

Using Parallel Forms

There are seven coordinating conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, *so*, and *yet*. Look at the following sentence:

Ian enjoys reading, writing, and working math problems.

All three things that Ian enjoys are *-ing* words; thus, this sentence is in parallel form. Examine the sentence that follows:

Our dog is ugly but behaves well.

This sentence exhibits faulty parallelism because *ugly* is an adjective and *behaves well* is a verb and an adverb. Look at the revised sentence:

Our dog is ugly but well-behaved.

Now the sentence is in parallel form because both *ugly* and *well-behaved* are adjectives. Look at this sentence:

The baby is wet, hungry, or is crying for no apparent reason.

Wet and *hungry* are both adjectives and are thus parallel with one another. However, *crying for no apparent reason* is a form of a verb and a prepositional phrase. It would be difficult to come up with a modifier that says exactly the same thing; therefore, the sentence may be rewritten in parallel form like this.

The baby is wet or hungry, or else he is crying for no apparent reason.

Now *wet* and *hungry* are parallel modifiers joined by the coordinating conjunction *or*, and *baby is* and *he is* are parallel subjects and verbs joined by the coordinating conjunction *or*.

Correlative conjunctions are conjunctions that occur in pairs. Common correlative conjunctions are *either ... or*, *neither ... nor*, *not ... but*, *not only ... but also*, *both ... and*. Look at the following sentence:

Either lying in the sun or to swim in the pool is my idea of a relaxing summer day.

This sentence is not parallel. To achieve parallelism, it may be rewritten one of the following ways:

Either lying in the sun or swimming in the pool is my idea of a relaxing summer day.
Either to lie in the sun or to swim in the pool is my idea of a relaxing summer day.

Look at another example of a sentence with parallelism issues:

Not only was Muffy a good dog, but also an excellent hunter.

The problem with the previous sentence is that *was Muffy a good dog* contains both a subject and a verb, but *an excellent hunter* contains neither. Here are two ways to correct the faulty parallelism:

Muffy was not only a good dog, but also an excellent hunter.
Not only was Muffy a good dog, but she was also an excellent hunter.

Always make sure that parallel groups of words (and parallel thoughts) in sentences have parallel structure. For example, look at the following sentence:

Will promised to come to class every day and that he would study hard for every exam.

This sentence does not exhibit parallel structure. There are two easy ways to create parallel structure in this sentence:

Will promised to come to class every day and to study hard for every exam.

Will promised that he would come to class every day and that he would study hard for every exam.

Here is another example of parallel thoughts not being expressed with parallel structure:

By decorating the reception area myself and because I made my own wedding cake, I saved money on my wedding reception.

This sentence could be corrected one of two ways:

By decorating the reception area and making my own wedding cake, I saved money on my wedding reception.

Because I decorated the reception area myself and made my own wedding cake, I saved money on my wedding reception.

Also, items in a series need to be expressed in parallel form. Look at the following sentence in which the items in a series are not expressed in parallel structure:

Lynn wants to be a nurse, a doctor, or she wants to go to dental school.

It is easy to put these thoughts in parallel form:

Lynn wants to be a nurse, a doctor, or a dentist.

Lesson 4.3: Four Sentences

Introduction

There are four different types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. Understanding the different types of sentences will help you to vary your sentence structure, which will result in your writing better paragraphs and essays. Structuring the different types of sentences can even help you improve your thinking—certainly one of the goals of your college experience.

To make the necessary connections for your readers, to reduce wordiness, and to increase the overall sophistication of your writing, you will want to vary the length of your sentences. This is another characteristic of effective college-level writing known as **varied sentence structure**. Often, you may want to combine sentences in order to improve the flow of your writing, perhaps turning two simple sentences into a compound sentence or into a complex sentence. Combining sentences involves not only linking sentences, but also blending them together. Combining the ideas in two sentences can be achieved in a number of ways, each of which we will discuss.

Types of Sentences

Simple sentences are sentences that consist of one independent clause and no dependent clauses. In other words, a simple sentence contains one subject and one verb (although they can be compound subjects and verbs). All of the following are simple sentences because they contain one subject and one verb; however, note the differences in length:

Birds fly.

Dr. Gresham's classes in social psychology and social work theory always fill up fast.

He is an excellent soccer player.

I will stay and finish the job. (**Note that this simple sentence contains a compound verb.**)
 Stacy's degree is in international business.

Compound sentences are made up of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction. Remember FANBOYS, the acronym you learned to help you remember the coordinating conjunctions (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so**)?

You may also recall that when you have an independent clause on both sides of the coordinating conjunction, you need a comma before the coordinating conjunction. All of the following sentences are compound sentences:

Yasmeen graduated college in May, and she had a job by June.
 You can come with me now, or you can come with me later.
 Paul lacks self-confidence, so we want to help build his self-esteem.
 We did not intend to hurt you, nor did we intend to upset any of your family.
 Irene was exhausted from working all day, but she stayed up and finished her project before going to bed.

Complex sentences contain one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. Remember that dependent clauses will be noun clauses, adjective clauses, or adverb clauses. Dependent clauses usually begin with either a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun. The following are common subordinating conjunctions:

| | | |
|-------------|----------------|----------|
| after | in as much as | that |
| although | in case | though |
| as | in order that | unless |
| as far as | in so far as | until |
| as if | in that | when |
| as soon as | now that | whenever |
| as though | once | where |
| because | provided that | wherever |
| before | rather than | whether |
| even if | since | while |
| even though | so that | why |
| how | supposing that | |
| if | than | |

Here is a list of relative pronouns:

| | |
|----------|----------|
| that | whose |
| whatever | whom |
| which | whoever |
| who | whomever |

All of the following are complex sentences:

Because my family is coming to visit on Monday, I spent all weekend cooking and cleaning house.
 While you were at the store, I cooked dinner.

Because I wanted to get ahead, I worked all of the math problems after I read the chapter and watched the tutorial. **(Note that this complex sentence contains two dependent clauses.)**

We will do whatever you want.

Even if you leave, I will stay and finish the job.

Compound-complex sentences contain two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. All of the following sentences are compound-complex sentences:

Because Dr. Collins advised Mother to lose weight, she began walking two miles every day, and she purchased a membership to a local gym so she could work out with weights.

Since the local meteorologist predicted rain, I brought my umbrella, and I parked as close as I could to the school entrance.

If you want your yard to be beautifully landscaped, you must hire a gardener, or you will have to learn to take care of the yard yourself.

Before Ray can buy a new car, he must get a steady job, so he can afford to make payments.

Go to class and study hard, so that you can graduate early. **(Note that the two independent clauses in this sentence are short, with the understood *you* as the subject of each.)**

Varying Sentence Structure

You can improve your writing by experimenting with different sentence patterns. One way to combine two simple sentences is to join them with a coordinating conjunction. Recall that there are seven coordinating conjunctions: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Sometimes students are confused about which coordinating conjunction to use. To choose correctly, you need to pay close attention to the meaning relationship your sentences express.

- **And signifies that the independent clauses are of equal importance.**
I signed up for chemistry this semester, and I enrolled in algebra as well.
- **Or shows alternative choices.**
You can use my fishing pole, or you can bring your own.
- **Yet and but signify contrast.**
He treated her terribly, yet she still married him.
She asked him to stay home, but he left anyway.
- **Nor requires a negative.**
You are not to leave home, nor are you to answer the door while I am gone.
- **For and so show causal relationships.**
I am not surprised that his project is good, for he worked extra hard on it.
It is raining heavily, so be sure to take your umbrella.

You can convert two simple sentences into one complex sentence by using a subordinating conjunction. Again, the subordinating conjunction you select should express the meaning relationship between the two independent clauses you combine.

Look at the following sentences, which have been combined with an appropriate subordinating conjunction:

- I was tired. I went to bed early. *Because I was tired, I went to bed early.*
- Lyle was swimming in the ocean. He noticed a fin close by. *While swimming in the ocean, Lyle noticed a fin close by.*

- Make sure that you do not have to work on Friday night. Then buy your ticket to the show. *Before buying your ticket to the show, make sure that you do not have to work on Friday night.*

Transitional words and phrases are all conjunctive adverbs. Conjunctive adverbs can be used with a semicolon to combine sentences that are closely related. Here is a list of common conjunctive adverbs:

To give an example: *for example, for instance, to illustrate, as a case in point, in fact*

To add an idea: *second, third, in addition, also, furthermore, moreover, finally*

To show a contrast: *however, but, in contrast, on the contrary, on the other hand*

To draw a conclusion or to sum up: *therefore, thus, in conclusion, as a result, clearly, consequently*

To show a sequence: *next, then, first, second, third, finally*

The following sentences have been combined using a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb:

- Parking downtown is a huge problem. The city council decided to build a three-story parking garage.
Parking downtown is a huge problem; therefore, the city council decided to build a three-story parking garage.
- Becky has a habit of speaking her mind bluntly. She has very few friends.
Becky has a habit of speaking her mind bluntly; consequently, she has very few friends.
- Anyone can lose weight. Keeping weight off is an entirely different story.
Anyone can lose weight; however, keeping weight off is an entirely different story.

One of the best ways to combine sentences is to use participial phrases. A participial phrase is a verbal that contains either a present participle (*finding, changing*) or a past participle (*earned, reported*) and that functions in a sentence as an adjective. In the following sentences, one independent clause in each pair has been converted into a participial phrase and then joined to the remaining independent clause:

- Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote "Letter from Birmingham Jail." He wrote it in response to a letter from eight white clergymen.
Responding to a letter from eight white clergymen, Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote "Letter from Birmingham Jail."
- I received approval of my application for study abroad. I began to make arrangements to go to Spain.
Receiving approval of my application for study abroad, I began to make arrangements to go to Spain.
- I managed to stick to my diet. I ate more carrots and celery than I ever thought possible this last six months.
I managed to stick to my diet, eating more carrots and celery than I ever thought possible this last six months.

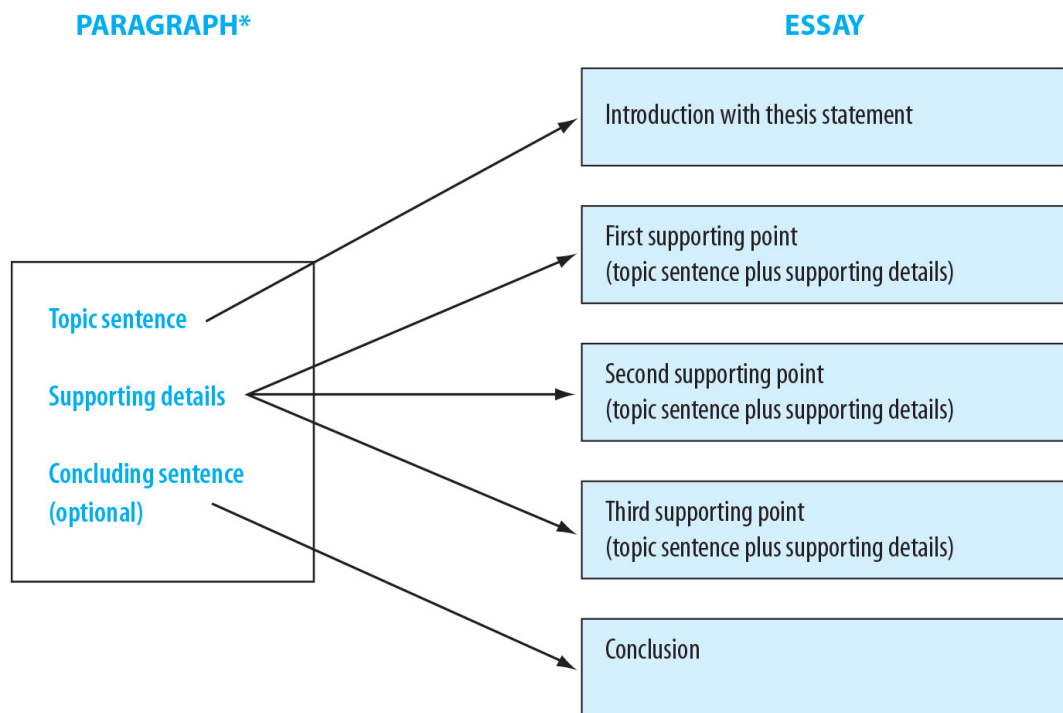
When combining sentences using participial phrases, be careful not to create dangling modifiers. One of the major rules of effective writing is that modifiers, whether single words or groups of words, should be next to or as close as possible to the word(s) they modify. Dangling modifiers are created when there is no word in the sentence that the modifier logically refers to.

MODULE 5

THE FIRST DRAFT

Introduction

Writing begins by using prewriting techniques for generating ideas, including a main idea, and then practiced organizing and outlining ideas. This section focuses on the third step of the writing process, composing a draft of an essay.



An **essay** is a multiparagraph composition that develops one idea or opinion, which is called the **thesis**. Like a paragraph, an essay focuses on one point and includes details that support that point. As a matter of fact, the parts of the paragraph often correlate to those of an essay, as the following diagram shows:

However, an essay is not just an expanded paragraph. For one thing, the thesis usually expresses an idea that requires more development than the idea expressed in a paragraph's topic sentence. Therefore, an essay is broader in scope and thus needs to be longer.

An essay has three main parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The **introduction** gives readers background information, gets them interested, and provides the thesis statement. The **body** is composed of several paragraphs that include all of the evidence to explain or prove the thesis. The **conclusion** provides a satisfying ending to the essay.

Lesson 5.1: Writing Introductions

Introduction

In general, the purpose of the introduction to a piece of writing is two-fold: to motivate the reader to *want* to read the essay and to introduce the thesis (the idea that the essay is going to support) and the main topics of the body paragraphs. An effective introductory paragraph should not be too brief; a good rule of thumb is to make the introductory paragraph of a college essay at least five or six sentences in length.

Strategies for Writing Engaging Introductions: Anecdotes and Examples

In addition to stating the thesis, the introduction of an essay should grab readers' attention with a **hook** and get them interested in the essay's topic and the author's point about that topic. A hook is one or several sentences that essentially "hook" the reader into reading the essay.

You may choose to use any number of strategies to engage the reader from the essay's inception. Below are some of these strategies and examples of how they may be used in an essay.

Begin with an Anecdote. Everyone likes to hear stories, so you can tell a brief story that is related to your topic and leads to your main point. An anecdote is a tried-and-true technique for hooking readers' interest and making them want to continue reading.

One day, while riding in the car, my five-year-old son asked me why my name was different from his daddy's. I welcomed the opportunity to explain some of my feminist ideas, especially my strong belief that women did not need to take their husband's name upon marriage. I carefully explained my reasons for keeping my own surname. My son listened intently and was silent for a moment after I finished.

Then he nodded and said, "I think it's good you kept your own name Mom!"

"You do?" I asked, pleased that he understood my reasons.

"Yep, because you don't look like a Bob."

Begin with an Example. You can make the topic immediately interesting by showing how it relates to a specific individual. This technique may involve telling a story about that individual.

As a student, I have often struggled with memorization of facts, such as all the states and their capitals. This struggle has caused me to consider how I would help my students with similar tasks when I was required to teach college students about rhetorical techniques and grammatical rules. Many students learn grammar rules in elementary school but fail to remember them by the time they get to college. Therefore, students are not transferring this knowledge from their working memory into their long term memory. Although memorizing grammar rules does not demonstrate a high level of Bloom's Taxonomy, becoming familiar with grammar rules and rhetorical techniques are important to effective writing, a particularly important skill in every occupation. *Essentials of Educational Psychology*, by J. Omrod (2012), has already proven to be an effective resource in discovering effective pedagogical techniques. In chapters one and two, I have learned about three particularly helpful notions: action research, reflective teaching, and techniques for transferring short term knowledge into long term knowledge. In my own action research project, I have used these pedagogical tools as I studied the effects that visual representations have on ESL students who are learning verb tenses.

More Strategies for Writing Engaging Introductions

Provide an Interesting Fact or Statistic. You can also arouse readers' curiosity by providing some information that is surprising, startling, or even shocking.

Every two seconds, a child dies of hunger here on planet Earth. That means 40,000 children die per day. Worldwide, 60 million people starve to death every year. Meanwhile, almost a third of Americans are overweight or obese. Clearly, U.S. citizens must do more to solve this problem. We can start by increasing our financial aid to struggling countries while also continuing to improve agricultural technologies for food production.

Provide a Direct Quotation. Beginning with a clever or humorous statement made by someone else can be a good way to get readers interested in the topic.

John F. Kennedy once said, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” These words resonate more than ever today, what with all of the obstacles and challenges our country faces in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Maria, and widespread poverty. People—the citizens of this great nation—need our help, and it is up to us to help them. We are all part of this country, and we need to support each other in times of need. Volunteering, either for a large-scale operation like Hurricane Katrina relief or for a small scale one like cooking at a local soup kitchen, can allow you to help your fellow citizens and make you an integral part of other people’s lives and welfare. Volunteering can make you feel better about yourself and about the world around you.

Ask Readers a Question. You can often draw readers into your essay by asking them questions to get them thinking about their own ideas or opinions about the topic.

The study of anthropology and history reveal that cultures vary in their ideas of moral behavior. Are there any absolutes when it comes to right and wrong?

Explain the Topic’s Relevance or Significance to the Reader. Immediately connect the topic to your readers’ interests, goals, or desires.

If you are like millions of Americans, you have tried one of the thousand diets that purport to help you lose weight faster. From the Atkins Diet to Jenny Craig to Weight Watchers, there is a diet for everyone. Obesity is a huge problem in America today, and many people feel—because of media pressure or just for personal reasons—that they have weight to lose. The problem is that it is harder to keep weight off than it is to lose it, which is why the diet industry is a multi-billion-dollar business. But there is no magic pill or secret to losing weight. All you must do is eat fewer calories, exercise more, and make an effort to maintain a healthy lifestyle for the rest of your life.

Begin with a Contradiction. Present to the reader some commonly held idea or opinion and then go on to contradict or refute it.

Most people would say that successful businesspeople must have a lot of confidence. After all, they carry themselves with great poise and can assert themselves in any situation. They can often command a room just by clearing their throats. However, studies have shown that the opposite is true—people in positions of power really think of themselves as imposters who are just waiting to be found out by the people who work for them. Often, the most successful are the most insecure; they just work twice as hard as the rest of us to maintain the appearance of competence, coolness, and control.

Purpose of the Introduction

One purpose of the introduction is to provide readers with necessary background information about the topic. After you have gotten readers interested, you may need to provide some facts or explanation about your topic so that they will understand the point you make in your thesis.

Do not assume that readers will know all about your topic. Provide them with a brief orientation so that you are sure they have the information they need to understand your ideas. For example, look at the following thesis statement.

The Head Start program has its critics, but the federal government should continue to fund that program.

What do you think readers will need to know before they can understand this point? The writer will need to answer the following questions: *What is the Head Start program? What is its purpose, and whom does it serve? Who are the program's critics, and what are their concerns? What has prompted the debate about the program's future?* If readers do not get the answers to these questions, they may not understand the thesis statement.

To review, an introduction must fulfill three purposes: state the thesis, interest the reader, and provide necessary background information. However, an introduction may not necessarily fulfill these three purposes in the order in which they have been presented. In most cases, it will probably be best to get readers' attention and orient them *before* stating the thesis, but there may be times when it seems most appropriate to begin the essay with the background information or even with your thesis statement. Just make sure each introduction you write accomplishes all three goals.

Lesson 5.2: Body Paragraphs: Support

Introduction

The body of an essay supplies all of the ideas and information that explain or prove the point made in the thesis statement. The body consists of several body paragraphs, one for each separate idea or reason that supports the thesis. Each idea or reason is usually stated in a clear topic sentence. Then the rest of the paragraph develops this topic sentence with details such as facts, examples, observations, or other kinds of support.

While the thesis presents the subject and critical opinion that the entire essay will support or prove, the topic sentences present the critical opinion of each particular body paragraph. It makes sense for the body paragraphs to have the same opinion as the thesis, as the body paragraphs present the points of the essay and, thus, prove the thesis. Your topic sentences are directly linked to your thesis.

Body Paragraphs

The thesis statement is the central idea of an essay, and the topic sentence has the same role in a paragraph. Their function is similar but they differ in scope. Multiple topic sentences throughout an essay, one per body paragraph, provide support for the singular thesis statement that appears in the introduction.

The Paragraph

A **paragraph** can be defined as a group of sentences that all support or develop one particular idea about a topic. Paragraphs vary in length from just a few sentences to many sentences. A paragraph can stand alone, or it can be combined with other paragraphs to form a longer piece of writing, such as an essay.

The purpose of a paragraph, particularly in a longer piece of writing, is to group related sentences together so that readers can clearly understand the writer's ideas. Imagine if the books or articles that you have read had contained no paragraphs and had presented thoughts and information in no particular order, leaving you to try to make sense of it all. Reading such a book or article would be a confusing and unpleasant task. Just as you expect writers to have grouped their sentences into related units of thought, the readers of your writing will expect you to have done the same with your own ideas.

A paragraph has two main parts: a topic sentence and a body. The topic sentence states the paragraph's main idea, and the remaining sentences—the body—develop that idea with more information and explanation.

Topic Sentences

Topic Sentence

In a paragraph, it is the **topic sentence** that states the main idea. But do not let the name fool you. This sentence does not just identify a topic. Just like a thesis, it has two parts: It states the topic of the paragraph, and it also states the writer's point about that topic. Notice how each of the following topic sentences contains both a topic and an idea about that topic:

Topic**Point**

Any habit

can be broken.

Topic**Point**

Environmental factors

are causing a sharp increase in asthma.

Topic**Point**

All day-care employees

should be required to have a two-year college degree.

Remember that the term *topic sentence* might seem a little misleading, for the topic sentence does more than simply state the sentence's topic. It also states an *idea* about that topic.

In a well-written paragraph, the topic sentence will be apparent. It will be the most general statement in the paragraph, and all of the other sentences will clearly develop the point that it makes. Topic sentences are often the first sentence of the paragraph, but they do not have to be. They can appear anywhere in the paragraph: at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end.

When you write topic sentences for paragraphs of your own, remember that an effective topic sentence has some essential characteristics: It is a complete sentence that includes both a topic and a point, and it is not too broad or too narrow.

First of all, a topic sentence must contain both of its required parts: a topic and some point about that topic. A topic in the form of a sentence fragment is not a topic sentence. If you try to begin writing with only a topic in mind, then you will probably not produce a coherent and well-developed paragraph. When you are unsure about exactly what you mean to say, then your paragraph will probably ramble aimlessly. Make sure that before you begin to write, you have a complete topic sentence that includes both your topic and your point.

Because each body paragraph is working in unity to prove the thesis, the topic sentence should restate the critical opinion from the thesis. That restatement of the critical opinion is known as a **reminder of the critical opinion**. When you are composing your topic sentences, you may want to vary the way you state the reminder of the critical opinion. There are several ways to do this: You can state a form of the word (example: use *beneficial* instead of *benefit*); you can state a **synonym** of the critical opinion (example: use *advantage* instead of *benefit*); or you can use a word that suggests the critical opinion (example: use *positive aspect* instead of *benefit*).

Be aware that your topic sentence may not be perfect on your first try. You may have to work on it, experimenting with the wording and rewriting it, even after you have begun writing, until it says exactly what you want to express.

Types of Support: Brief Examples

When you are ready to start supporting or proving your points, the key is to be thorough. That said, three supports can often be **adequate** as long as each support is more than one sentence and **vividly** detailed. In fact, the real key to good writing is to provide lots of details—and the

more specific and concrete, the better! When you write, you strive to convey the image from your mind to your paper; for example, if your details of your first water-skiing experience are vivid enough, your reader should almost be able to taste the lake water, feeling that he or she is there with you.

There are four main types of support: brief examples, narrative examples, statistics, and supporting quotations. A **brief example** is a short, concrete support, while a **narrative example** is a detailed story that illustrates or reinforces your point. **Statistics** contain numbers or averages to back up your points, and **supporting quotations** are just that: quotations that support your points.

Brief Examples. Brief examples are simply specific examples that support your topic. For example, if you are discussing the abundance of chain restaurants in the United States, you could mention a few brief examples such as Olive Garden, Outback Steakhouse, and Red Lobster. If you are writing about exotic pets, you could mention albino pythons, leopard frogs, and hedgehogs. If you are examining how nations around the world are rapidly going “paperless,” the fact that you register and drop classes online would be a brief example supporting that statement. It is easy to compose entire body paragraphs using nothing but brief examples.

Look at the first body paragraph of this essay about being successful in college:

First of all, a **good** student prepares for class by preparing to listen.
For example, one who wants to focus in class will eliminate any physical distractions. This takes some simple planning: one who is cold-natured might want to bring a jacket to class, and everyone should eat a good breakfast as well as make time for a lunch break to keep that stomach from rumbling.
Another way to avoid physical distractions is to choose a seat where one will not be tempted to look out of the window or talk to a classmate.
Likewise, successful students take steps to eliminate mental distractions.
For instance, students who are distracted by family problems might **visualize** themselves mentally placing those problems on a shelf to be dealt with later as they tell themselves that they cannot fix anything while they are in class anyway. Students who are also parents **would enhance their chances of scholastic success** if they make a list of all the family responsibilities for that day: Johnny has practice at 4:00, Suzy has a piano lesson at 4:30, and the **PTSA** requires four dozen cupcakes for tomorrow's bake sale. By listing all of these to-do items, they give themselves permission to set the items aside and listen in class.
Finally, just as people who has never seen a football game would be totally lost as they watched the Cowboys play the Redskins, a student who has not read the assigned material or done the homework problems gain very little from a class lecture. On the contrary, one who has read the chapter and worked the problems is much more likely to understand the concepts the instructor is introducing and, therefore, **to perform well** on any projects or tests.

If we took out all of the brief examples, here is what we would have left:

First of all, a good student prepares for class by preparing to listen.
For example, one who wants to focus in class will eliminate any physical distractions. Likewise, **successful** students take steps to eliminate mental distractions. Students who are also parents **would enhance their chances of scholastic success** if they make a list of all their family responsibilities for that day.

So, you can see how important brief examples are to vivid writing.

Types of Support: Narrative, Statistics, and Quotations

Narrative Examples. Narrative examples are stories, complete with **characters**, a **setting**, and a **plot**. Because very few people can resist a story, narrative examples are often quite effective.

For example, the following narrative example came from a developmental writing course and was titled “The Disappointment at the Door”:

People rarely meet the man or woman of their dreams on a blind date. When Heather’s friend Jade set her up with Justin, a long-time friend of Jade’s boyfriend, Ryan, Heather was excited. Jade told her that Justin was nice-looking, fun to be around, and very smart. For their date, Heather splurged on a new outfit, complete with new boots and a matching purse. She took her time getting ready, trying to make herself as attractive as possible. When Justin finally showed up, thirty minutes late, the first thing he said to Heather was that “she didn’t look like the picture Jade had shown him.” Heather didn’t know quite how to take that although if the truth be known, he did not look as she had pictured him either. Then, after expressing his belief, upon seeing Heather’s cat, that the only thing cats were good for was target practice, he told her that instead of going to dinner they were hanging out with his friends at a local bar since he hadn’t had a chance to win back the money he had lost the previous week playing pool (a game Heather had always detested). Then, Justin thought they might drop in on the tractor pull at the fairgrounds. Heather, who was more of a dinner theater or night at the ballet type of girl, suddenly decided she “didn’t feel well” and cut the date short before it had even begun!

Sometimes a narrative can be quite effective. However, keep in mind that, depending on how long your narrative is, it might be the sole support of a paragraph, as the previous example, or it might simply be one of the supports within the paragraph.

Statistics. Statistics are another kind of support that will strengthen your writing. For instance, it is much more convincing to state that “In 2007, the average annual salary of a person with a bachelor’s degree was \$51,206 compared to \$27,915 for a person with a high school diploma only” than simply to state “Someone with a college degree will earn more money than someone with a high school degree.” Statistics make your points believable. It is important, however, to make sure your statistics are from sources that are reliable. For example, if you find a statistic on the Internet, make sure it comes from an .edu, a .gov, or an .org source, as those are generally considered reputable by college instructors. Unless your instructor specifically tells you that it is acceptable, avoid sources like Wikipedia or personal website. It is usually desirable to cite the source of your statistic in the text of your writing. For example, the previous statistic would be much more convincing if the writer acknowledged that the statistic came from the U.S. Census Bureau: “According to the U.S. Census Bureau, . . . (then follow with the statistic).”

Quotations. Quotations are quoted statements, often by an authority on your subject, that help support your point. For example, if you were discussing the slow-moving wheels of justice in this country, you might quote Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham City Jail”: “Justice too long delayed is justice denied.” Just be sure to give King credit in the text of your paper. It is also wise to document sources. For now, just be sure to identify the author of your quotation in the text of your essay: According to Martin Luther King, Jr., “justice too long delayed is justice denied.”

Citing Sources

Any time you use any type of research in your essays, you must cite your sources. The two most widely used styles of citation are MLA and APA. *MLA* stands for Modern Language Association and is the style of documentation that you will use in writing papers for any college English course and in some humanities courses. *APA* stands for American Psychological Association; you will use this style of documentation for any writing assignments in the social sciences as well as in some other areas. If you are a history or political science major, you will likely be required to learn the Chicago style of documentation, and if you are in nursing or allied health, you will be asked to document according to specific formats commonly used in those fields. Always ask your instructor which style of documentation he or she expects.

Lesson 5.3: Writing Body Paragraphs

Lesson 5.3 Introduction

The body of a paragraph includes all of the sentences that support, explain, or prove the idea expressed in the topic sentence. The topic sentence consists of a topic, and then a point about that topic. These sentences provide all of the evidence the reader will need in order to accept the main idea as true, and this evidence can take a variety of different forms, including:

- Facts
- Statistics and other data
- Examples
- Stories
- Reasons
- Comparisons
- Descriptive details

The Body of a Paragraph

In the following paragraph, the topic sentence is highlighted in bold. Read the paragraph and try to decide which of the different kinds of evidence in the preceding list are given to support the topic sentence.

Most people strongly dislike giving speeches. The mere thought of standing up in front of an audience to speak makes their hearts begin to beat faster and their stomachs begin to fill with butterflies. In fact, according to Gallup polls, fear of public speaking has for years been at or near the top of people's list of situations that provoke the most anxiety. Many have admitted that the thought of speaking in public terrifies them more than the fear of anything else, including heights, snakes, needles, flying, and even dying! I myself would become numb and almost paralyzed right before giving a speech. My hands would shake, my mouth would go dry, and my heart would race. I was sure that I would do or say something that would make everyone think that I was stupid, boring, or ridiculous.

This paragraph supports the topic sentence with descriptive details, facts gathered from polls, and an example (the writer's experience with public speaking).

You can think of the support in a body paragraph in terms of layers of development. A **layer of development** provides more specific information about a general idea stated in the sentence that came before it. Therefore, a layer of development anticipates and answers questions that pop into readers' heads as they read. For example, let us say that you write the sentence "Some people are fanatical about cleanliness." The words *fanatical* and *cleanliness* are relatively general terms that can mean different things to different people. As your readers read this sentence, they will probably wonder, *What do you mean by "fanatical about cleanliness"?* or *How are people fanatical about cleanliness?* Instead of going on to another new idea, you need to add some information—a layer of development—to answer these questions. In other words, you need to explain what you mean. So you might add this sentence:

My mother, for example, keeps her home absolutely spotless.

This sentence gives readers an example of a fanatically clean person. However, you should ask yourself, *Will my readers have any questions about this sentence?* They will probably wonder, for instance, *What do you mean by a spotless home?* or *What does her home look like?* You might add yet another layer of development to answer these questions:

She would not dream of letting any guest see any dust on her furniture or even one speck of dirt on her floors.

By adding these two sentences, it becomes much clearer to readers what you mean by “fanatical about cleanliness.”

Developing the Body of a Paragraph

Every time you write a sentence, ask yourself this question: *Is there some idea here that I should explain more by giving another fact, detail, or example?* There is no rule about how many layers of development should be included in a paragraph. The number of layers you include will always depend upon the idea or information in each different sentence you write. But if you get in the habit of wondering if you just wrote something that might need further development, then you will be less likely to leave readers guessing about what you really mean, and your ideas will be clear.

When you are examining a paragraph to make sure it is adequately developed, consider using the following techniques:

Use different colors of highlighter markers to identify the layers in your paragraph. Use one color, such as yellow, to highlight the topic sentence, which is the most general sentence in the paragraph. Use another color, such as pink, to highlight the second sentence, which should develop the first sentence. If the third sentence develops the second sentence, use yet another color to highlight it. If the third sentence develops the first sentence, highlight it with the same color that you used for the second sentence. Follow this same procedure for all of the other sentences in the paragraph. Then, after you have highlighted every sentence, see how colorful your paragraph is. In general, paragraphs that contain more colors are probably developing the main idea with sufficient details. A paragraph that is highlighted with only two colors, however, may need the addition of more specific information and examples.

Count the sentences in your paragraphs. There is no magic minimum or maximum number of sentences for a paragraph. The number of sentences a paragraph contains will depend upon the main idea and the supporting information. However, if a paragraph contains only three or four sentences, it may be incomplete because it is not adequately developed. Get in the habit of scrutinizing short paragraphs, in particular, to make sure that they include enough layers of development.

Scan your drafts for the phrase *for example*. This phrase often begins sentences that really help readers grasp your ideas. If you never begin sentences this way, you may not be including the specific information your readers need in order to understand your thoughts on a topic.

Coherence

You may be thinking that *coherent* simply means making sense, right? We all like to think we make sense when we speak and when we write—and generally we do. However, it really isn’t that simple. Have you ever had to slow down one of your friend’s verbal tirades with “Wait, wait, wait! Start over! You lost me! I don’t know what you mean!”

Sometimes, especially when we are passionate about something, or even just in a hurry, we may leave out crucial details. For example, 911 emergency calls are often that way: The caller may say something like, “Baby, dog, fire!” The emergency operator is at a loss of what rescue services to send until he or she finds out if the house is on fire with the baby and the dog inside, or if the dog bit the baby and the baby fell into the fire, or if the baby set the dog on fire somehow!

Unfortunately, students’ papers are occasionally that hard to interpret. You achieve coherence in your writing when you provide lots of details and link your ideas in one sentence to the ideas in the sentences that come before and after it (as well as to the topic sentence).

Support, no matter what kind it is, should always be highly detailed and concrete. It is usually a good idea to try to appeal to the senses when writing your support. In other words, don’t just say that Ozarks Campground is beautiful at night; describe the woodsy scent of the campfire as it dies down and the clear sky with millions of twinkling stars. Don’t just say that Ashley looked beautiful on her wedding day; state that she looked beautiful in her white satin dress with a sparkling tiara and a bouquet of long-stemmed yellow roses.

Transitions

Transitions are words and phrases whose function is to show the relationships between thoughts and ideas. The word *transition* comes from the Latin word *trans*, which means “across.” Transitions bridge the gaps across sentences and paragraphs and reveal how they are related. The following list includes some common types of transitions with a few examples of each type:

Transitions that signal addition

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----|----------------------|
| also | in addition | too | first, second, third |
| furthermore | finally | and | another |

Transitions that show time order

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|---------|------------|
| now | then | today | next |
| soon | later | finally | previously |
| eventually | meanwhile | | |

Transitions that indicate causes or consequences

| | | | |
|-------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| so | therefore | as a result | consequently |
| hence | because | thus | for this reason |

Transitions that signal examples

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------------|
| for example | for instance | in one case | as an illustration |
| to illustrate | | | |

Transitions that signal comparisons

| | | | | |
|---------|-----|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| also | too | likewise | similarly | on the other hand |
| however | but | yet | in contrast | |

While it is not imperative, often you will want to begin your topic sentence with a transition. Although the following list of transitional words and phrases is not exhaustive, it contains appropriate choices for your topic sentences:

To Begin Your First Body Paragraph: *first, first of all, for example, for instance, one way, one reason, one example*

To Begin Your Second Body Paragraph: *second, also, in addition, furthermore, another reason, another example, moreover*

To Begin Your Third or Last Body Paragraph: *third, also, in addition, furthermore, finally, a final reason, a final example, moreover, most importantly*

Lesson 5.4: Conclusions

Lesson 5.4 Introduction

There is only one thing left to make your essay complete: a conclusion. A good conclusion fulfills two functions: it restates your main points, and it makes your essay sound finished. A good conclusion consists of two parts:

- A **reworded thesis**
- A **concluding statement** (a statement that refers back to the hook, asks a rhetorical question, or makes a memorable statement about your subject).

By starting with a restatement of the thesis and by ending with a concluding statement that refers back to the hook, a conclusion somewhat resembles an upside-down introduction.

The Reworded Thesis and Concluding Statement

When you begin your conclusion with a reworded thesis, you are driving home the points you made in your essay. Because most people are more apt to remember the last thing they heard, restating your thesis helps it stick in their minds. Take a look at this example, with the thesis statement in italics:

Bryan Watkins, a student at a local university, tells the story of how his freshman seminar teacher told the class to stand and look at the students on either side of them. The teacher then informed them that one of those two students would not be there by the end of the semester. However, if that is true, that most colleges lose fifty percent of their freshman class, then why do so many students drop out of college? Could it be that they feel they are in over their heads, that they are not prepared for college? It is a shame that so many people drop out before they have really even gotten started. All it takes are a few basic tips to be successful in college. *In fact, almost all college students can be successful in college if they will make the effort to prepare to listen, to take good notes, and to learn effective study habits.*

Now, let's look at the conclusion, with the reworded thesis statement in italics:

Clearly, there are basic strategies that can enable virtually anyone to be successful in college. Preparing for class, learning to take good notes, and picking up good study skills take concentrated effort. However, the payoff comes in the form of good grades, a feeling of accomplishment, and, ultimately, that dream job with the nice paycheck. Working hard in college is an investment in one's future!

Notice that this particular conclusion begins with a transition, which is often a good idea.

Both conclusions begin by restating the thesis statement. Although this is certainly not the only way to write a conclusion, it is effective because most people are more likely to retain the last thing that they read; therefore, the conclusion is your one last chance to make sure that your points stick with your reader. By beginning your conclusion that way, you are driving home the points you have just proven in your body paragraphs.

The Conclusion

In a brief essay, the conclusion is the very last paragraph. It is usually unnecessary to repeat or summarize all of the ideas you have just presented. Instead, think of the purpose of the conclusion as providing closure, or a satisfying ending, for the reader. View the conclusions you write as opportunities to wrap up your essay and to suggest how your readers might respond. Write your conclusion under the assumption that you have convinced your readers that the idea

or opinion in your thesis is true. Now that they agree with you, what should happen next? To achieve closure, you might use one of the following methods:

Describe the Consequences of the Idea or Opinion in Your Thesis Statement. Briefly explain the effects of what you have just shown to be true.

Looking back on my experience, I can honestly say that it made me a stronger person. While I was going through all of the pain and turmoil, I thought sometimes that I would die of a broken heart. But I did not. Somehow, I managed to keep going, and little by little, day by day, things slowly improved. Now I am stronger and more confident in my ability to handle life's ups and downs. I still miss Angelo, but losing him helped me mature and begin to take care of myself rather than expecting someone else to do it.

Make a Prediction That Arises from the Idea or Opinion in Your Thesis Statement. Tell what you think will happen in the future.

No matter how cheap or convenient it becomes to get movies on DVD or to download them from pay-per-view services, people will still enjoy going to movie theaters. Movie theaters have long been a part of America's past, and they are sure to be a part of its future for many years to come.

End with a Suggestion That Readers Act in Some Way. Call readers to action, and ask them to do something such as join an organization, donate time or money, or make some kind of change.

For all of these reasons, you should try to travel abroad whenever you get the opportunity. The next time you are considering vacation destinations, think seriously about visiting a foreign country. You will be glad you did, so get your passport and start broadening your horizons!

End with a Question That Keeps Readers Thinking. Just as you can begin an essay by asking questions that draw readers in, you can end with a question or two that encourages readers to continue reflecting upon the topic or issue.

Clearly, there are ways to solve the problem of hunger and starvation on this planet. In a world of plenty, it is inexcusable to allow thousands of people to die every day because they do not even have a piece of bread to eat. Our generation can be the one that finally wipes out this problem once and for all, and we must. How can we continue to just stand by and let our fellow human beings starve to death?

The concluding statement provides closure for the essay. Although you can simply comment on the subject of your essay, present a statistic, or ask a rhetorical question as your concluding statement, the easiest type of concluding statement to write is one that refers to your hook. When a concluding statement refers back to the hook, it gives closure by creating a sense that the essay has come full circle. One of the major benefits of a concluding statement that refers to the hook is that it seemingly tightens the organization of the essay, making the essay appear more organized.

MODULE 6

POLISHING: REVISING, EDITING, AND PROOFREADING

Introduction

Take a moment and think about the word *revision*. Notice that it includes the prefix *re-*, meaning “back or again,” and the root word *vision*. So *revision* literally means “to look at again.” Once you have written your essay, you need to look at it again to make sure that you have successfully explained your main idea for your readers. Some people may trip themselves up by merely proofreading their writing for grammar and punctuation errors. Any experienced writer will tell you that, although grammar and punctuation are important, they are secondary to quality content. So your first step is to examine your essay carefully and evaluate your content.

Revising and editing, which—along with proofreading—makes up the fifth step of the writing process, are not the same things. When you revise an essay, you are looking for and then correcting larger-scale problems. In other words, you are evaluating and improving, if necessary, the way that your whole essay is organized or developed. Editing involves examining the essay at the sentence and word levels and correcting errors in sentence construction, grammar, word choice, and spelling. It is best to accomplish revision and editing as two separate, distinct steps, for each process involves looking at different aspects of the essay.

Lesson 6.1: Revising

Lesson 6.1 Introduction

Unity is a term that means “oneness,” a uniformity of thought. If you think of an essay as a journey to prove your thesis, each support is a stop along that journey. It is your job as a writer to make sure that all of the stops along the way are moving you toward your destination. To illustrate, if you were heading to Panama City Beach for spring break from your college campus in Oklahoma, you would not make a detour through the Smokey Mountains on your way to the beach. Unfortunately, students’ papers sometimes “change lanes” mid-trip.

To revise an essay and make sure it is unified, you will need to evaluate it for the three C’s: completeness, cohesiveness, and coherence.

Completeness

When you examine an essay to make sure it is *complete*, or adequately developed, you evaluate two things. First of all, look at how many supporting points (reasons, examples, causes, effects, steps, types, features, parts, and so on) you included to support your thesis statement. Most of the time, you will need to include at least two points. But if you have included only two, are there additional points that would provide even more support for the opinion stated in your thesis?

Let us say, for example, that a student decided to support the thesis statement *Students drop out of out high school for many different reasons*. Then she writes an essay that explains, first, how poor academic performance can lead to quitting and, second, how teenage pregnancy produces the same result. Do these two reasons sufficiently support the idea stated in the thesis? No, they do not. The thesis statement itself promises a discussion of *many* reasons; offering only two does not adequately develop the main idea. This student needs to go back to the prewriting stage to come up with more reasons to add.

The second thing to evaluate when checking for completeness is the amount of development provided in each individual body paragraph. Is the general idea presented in every topic sentence adequately developed with enough specific examples and other kinds of explanation? Has the writer anticipated and answered all of the readers' questions? Get in the habit of scrutinizing short paragraphs of only three or four sentences, in particular, to make sure that they are adequately developed.

Cohesiveness

If an essay is *cohesive*, all of its paragraphs and sentences “stick together” to support one main idea. In other words, a cohesive essay has unity because it focuses on and develops just one point.

After you determine that your essay includes enough supporting points that are adequately developed, the next step is to make sure that every paragraph and sentence in your essay relates to the idea presented in your thesis statement. When you are writing, it is easy to get side-tracked and to go off on tangents when new thoughts come to mind. Evaluating an essay for cohesiveness is the process of looking for any paragraph or sentence that does not directly relate to the main idea.

The following body paragraphs were written to support the thesis statement *Several new pieces of medical equipment are helping doctors diagnose illnesses in their early stages*. Which paragraph is not related to this thesis statement?

The magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine is one amazing medical advancement. Made up of a special scanner, a large magnet, and a powerful computer, the MRI takes detailed pictures of the inside of a patient's body. It is a safe, painless technique that allows doctors to “see” tissue inside your body without cutting the skin or taking x-rays. The computer images generated during an MRI exam help your doctor pinpoint and diagnose problems early.

The CT (computed tomography) scan, too, helps doctors detect problems and diagnose illnesses. This is a safe, painless x-ray technique that produces images that resemble “slices” of tissue. Using special scanning equipment, x-ray images are taken from many directions and then combined into computer-processed pictures. These pictures provide an excellent view of your body's bones, organs, and other tissue. They allow doctors to locate tumors, cancers, disorders in organs such as the liver or brain, and damage to the back or joints.

Once these problems are identified, they can be treated with an array of new drugs. Medicines that control high blood pressure, for example, are preventing heart attacks. Cholesterol medications, too, are helping people with heart disease. In addition, several amazing new drugs are helping cancer patients live longer or completely recover.

Did you identify the third paragraph as the one that is not related to the thesis statement? Because the thesis focuses on medical equipment that diagnoses problems, a paragraph about drugs that treat problems does not belong in the essay. The third paragraph prevents the essay from being cohesive.

To determine whether or not you have included any paragraph or sentence that prevents cohesiveness, try the following three techniques:

Make sure that each supporting point directly relates to the thesis statement. Does each point truly support the overall idea or opinion stated in the thesis? If it does not, it may need to be eliminated or revised so that it can be included.

Reexamine any especially long paragraphs in the essay. A relatively lengthy paragraph may have lost its focus on the idea stated in the topic sentence. Reread longer paragraphs to look for sentences that stray from the paragraph's main idea or thesis statement.

Read the sentences of your essay backward, beginning with the last sentence. After you read each sentence, reread the thesis statement. Decide if each individual sentence truly relates to your essay's main idea.

Coherence

In addition to being complete and cohesive, an essay needs to be coherent. If an essay is *coherent*, it makes sense because it offers a clear progression of thought. In other words, readers can easily follow the writer's ideas from paragraph to paragraph and, within paragraphs, from sentence to sentence.

Evaluating an essay's coherence involves examining its overall organization and its transitions. Specifically, you should answer these four questions about your draft:

Does Your Draft Match Your Outline? Your draft does not have to match the outline that you put together during stage 2 of the writing process. However, it was in stage 2 that you applied your powers of logical thinking to the organization process. You may very well have come up with a better organization plan during stage 3 as you were composing. If that is the case, then it does not matter at all that your final essay differs from your outline. Make sure, though, that the essay does not differ from the outline *by accident*. If you did not make conscious choices to change to a better organization plan as you wrote, and you strayed *unintentionally* from your initial outline, then your essay may have become disorganized.

Are Your Supporting Points Presented in an Effective Order? Now that you have written the draft, make sure that your supporting points still seem to be in the right order. Essays based on natural organization should include the major events or steps in chronological order. But for those essays based on logical organization, make sure that the supporting points make sense in the order in which they are presented. Be willing to move whole paragraphs around until the order seems logical.

Are Your Paragraphs Linked by Transitions or Other Information? Have you used transitions to indicate the relationship of a body paragraph to the one before it? In addition, you can strengthen the progression of thought by repeating, summarizing, or referring back to an idea or piece of information that was presented earlier.

Are the Details in Each Body Paragraph Where They Belong? Check each body paragraph to make sure that its examples and details belong with the particular supporting point of that paragraph. If you find a specific fact, example, anecdote, statistic, or other piece of information that belongs in a different paragraph, move it.

Your next step in writing your essay is to go back to what you have written and improve your coherence. Have other people read your work once you have improved its coherence. They can often point out weaknesses in your paper that you, being too close to the subject, are unable to see. Similarly, you are likely to see weaknesses in their papers that they have not seen.

Paragraph and Essay Unity

Often unity issues occur within body paragraphs. Especially if a writer has not carefully mapped out each support before he or she begins writing, it is easy to wander off in another direction. Think how one thought triggers another thought; this is what often happens within body

paragraphs when a writer does not adhere to a specific plan. Look at the following paragraph in which the unity has been disrupted.

Getting ready for company is hard work. For example, it is a chore just to clean house. My house always looks as if we exploded out of it every morning. Beds are unmade, drawers are ajar with clothes peeking out of them, and the kitchen table usually contains breakfast dishes—plates sticky with syrup and glasses half full of milk. All of this must be straightened, raked up, or washed before company comes. *Occasionally, in the process of cleaning up, I will find things that I forgot I had. For example, once I found a whole roll of black and white pictures from my parents' 1987 wedding. I had a good laugh at my dad's huge glasses and my mom's big hair!*

Furthermore, I have the job of planning meals that guests as well as my family will enjoy. Since most of the time my refrigerator boasts a head of wilted lettuce and a bottle of pop that has lost its fizz, grocery shopping is the first item on my to-do list. It is not always easy to purchase food for several meals in advance; I usually end up making several trips to the store to buy forgotten items. Finally, there is the task of changing all the beds. Not only do I have to locate clean sheets in all the correct sizes, but I always have a difficult time finding sheets that actually match. Therefore, I need several days to deal with the hassle of getting ready for company.

Do you see how the writer's mind **wandered off on a tangent** about finding the pictures of her parents' wedding? None of those details are relevant to the topic sentence. In fact, you must always ask yourself the following question about each support: Does this particular detail support the opinion expressed in my topic sentence? If you look at the preceding paragraph, the opinion that is expressed is that it is difficult to get ready for company. Obviously, the detail about finding the roll of black and white photos has nothing to do with it being difficult to prepare for overnight guests. Writers must be careful not to include any information that does not support or prove the topic sentence. The way to correct the preceding paragraph is simply to leave out the support that does not pertain to the topic sentence.

Sometimes students disrupt the unity within the essay, not just within the body paragraphs. This is considered a more serious problem than simply wandering off a bit within a body paragraph. When you look for unity issues within body paragraphs, you examine each sentence to see if it points back to the opinion expressed in the topic sentence; to examine an entire essay for unity problems, you need to look at whether each body paragraph supports the critical opinion in your thesis. Take a look at each topic sentence. Does it clearly indicate "proof" for the thesis? If it does not, then read the body paragraph again to see if it veers away from the thesis. If you are convinced that it does not support your thesis, then that body paragraph does not belong in your essay.

Lesson 6.2: Style

Lesson 6.2 Introduction

The style of writing refers to the words the writer has chosen and the way in which sentences are constructed. There are many different kinds of writing styles and you will surely develop your own style as you continue to improve your overall writing skills. Right now, however, you should concentrate on choosing words and constructing sentences so that your writing will be interesting, clear, and easy to read. You can do that by paying attention, especially during proofreading, to the length and type of your sentences as well as to the words you have selected.

Choices in Diction

Diction refers to the individual words you choose. These words affect your style, so you should make sure that they are appropriate in a number of respects. In particular, you should evaluate the appropriateness of your words' level of formality, specificity, emotion, and originality. To determine whether a word is appropriate or not, you must consider your readers and decide if the word is suitable for those readers.

First of all, evaluate your choices of words for their **level of formality**. Although each pair of words in the following chart are synonyms, notice that the words in the two columns vary in their level of formality.

| Formal | Informal |
|-------------|-------------|
| apartment | pad |
| companion | buddy |
| brave | has guts |
| superior | head honcho |
| trepidation | cold feet |

Many forms of writing, including academic papers and work-related documents, call for a relatively high level of formality. It is unlikely that the words labeled *informal* in the previous chart would be appropriate in such documents, for readers expect a more elevated style. In contrast, more personal kinds of writing, such as email messages and letters to family members and friends, can be much more informal. They are likely to include slang terms and conversational words like those in the chart labeled *informal*.

You will also need to consider whether your words are **specific** enough. Specific words help readers form clear images in their minds so that they can grasp your meaning more easily. Using general or more vague terms makes it harder for readers to understand your ideas. Notice how the following revised sentences become clearer when the vague terms are replaced with more specific ones.

Too general: The play was amazing.

More specific: The running back leaped three feet in the air and caught the ball with his fingertips in one corner of the end zone.

Words like *play* and *amazing* do not provide the reader with very much information. In fact, the word *play* has different meanings, and it is impossible to know which one the writer intends in the first sentence. The revised sentence, however, contains more specific terms that provide readers with a lot more detail and help them form a clear mental image.

Read the following sentence and consider which words are too vague and general:

Carl ate a lot of food quickly.

Did you notice the words *a lot*, *food*, and *quickly*? These are the words that provide relatively little information. If this sentence were rewritten to read "Carl gobbled two foot-long submarine sandwiches in fewer than four minutes," it would be much clearer for the reader.

The next aspect of diction to examine is the **emotion** conveyed through the words you have chosen. Some words, like *cat*, are relatively neutral. That is, they carry no particular emotional suggestion. But compare *cat* with the word *kitty*, which indicates affection for that animal.

When you are evaluating your word choices, think about what they reveal about your emotions. Although it is fine to feel strongly—either positively or negatively—about the subject you are writing about, you must also think about your reader, especially when your topic is a controversial one. You do not want to offend, insult, or annoy readers because if you do, they will reject your ideas. So make sure that your words are not inappropriately emotional.

For example, the following sentence contains emotional word choices:

Bums and vagrants are hanging out in our city park, and our city must deal with this problem.

The words *bums* and *vagrants* have negative, judgmental connotations attached to them, so readers might be offended by the writer's lack of sympathy for those who lack a place to live. Revising the sentence to be less emotional by substituting a term like *homeless people* might be a good idea.

When you are examining the diction of your writing, one last problem to look for is **wordiness**, or unnecessary words. Clear writing always expresses an idea in as few words as possible. Wordy writing just makes it more difficult for readers to understand your thoughts, for the extra words slow them down and get in the way.

Always ask yourself, *Can I find a way to say this in fewer words?* It is quite natural to be wordy when you are writing your first draft and trying to find the right words for expressing your ideas. However, you should get in the habit of examining your drafts during the editing stage and eliminating the words that are not contributing anything. When you are examining your writing for wordiness, look for common expressions that can add unnecessary words.

Tone

When you write, it is crucial that your language match the type of writing you are doing. Because most of the writing you do in college is academic in nature, you need to make sure that you do the following:

- Select and maintain proper tone
- Avoid clichés
- Avoid slang, vulgar language, and colloquialisms
- Avoid contractions and nonstandard spelling

In writing, the term **tone** refers to the mood created by your words. Observe the difference in tone (as well as in spelling) of the two messages that follow, one a text to a friend and the other an e-mail to a professor:

Hey bud, we r going 2 c bands at commons 2nite. come with if u want. Jake

Dr. Rentfro,

I apologize, but I will be unable to attend class on Wednesday as my aunt's funeral is at 10:00. I will contact Susan to get notes, and I will e-mail my homework to you. Please let me know what I need to do to be prepared for Friday's class.

Sincerely, Kyle Meadows

Obviously, your tone as well as your language would be very different if you were talking to your chemistry teacher rather than your best friend. That same formality is appropriate in academic papers. While the writing you do for your classes should reflect your individuality, it should not “sound” like your casual speaking.

In academic writing, there is no place for slang, vulgar language, or colloquialisms. **Slang** refers to anything that is not considered proper, or standard, English, such as telling someone that “it ain’t nothing” or asking, “What you be doing?” Also, you should avoid vulgar language, which involves both profanity, such as saying someone was “running like hell,” and references to crude terms, such as referring to buttocks as *butt* or *ass*. Finally, eliminate any colloquialisms from your writing. **Colloquialisms** are words and phrases that are common in various areas of the country, but are not considered proper English and may not be understood by all of your readers. For example, in some parts of the United States, it is common to hear people say “He like to of never” or “I am fixing to do that.” Even the southern *y’all* and the northern *you guys* are colloquialisms. While we may be able to get away with speaking in colloquialisms, it is not proper to write using colloquialisms—especially at the college level.

Another writing weakness that should be avoided in academic papers is the use of clichés. A **cliché** is a saying, such as “the third time is the charm” or “the grass is always greener on the other side.” While there is at least a grain of truth in every cliché, you should strive for a fresh and engaging way to present your ideas; doing so demonstrates to your reader your originality and creativity. There is no place for clichés in academic writing.

Because academic writing is generally formal in tone, you should avoid using contractions. Your professors look for scholarliness in your written work, and one of the best—and easiest—ways to create a scholarly tone is by replacing all contractions in a piece of writing with their two-word counterparts.

Finally, avoid “textspeak” in your college writing. Most people are used to abbreviating when they text or e-mail their friends; however, you must be careful not to let any nonstandard spelling creep into your academic papers. In other words, remember that *you* is not spelled *u*, and *are* is not spelled *r*. Nonstandard spelling in formal college writing is unacceptable.

Sentence Length

In addition to diction and tone choices, you should be aware of your sentence length and structure. Writing that is composed mostly of very short sentences usually sounds dull and monotonous to readers. If readers are bored by your sentences, they will have a more difficult time concentrating on your meaning. Also, short sentences may not be making important connections, so readers may not fully understand your ideas. The following paragraph contains too many short sentences:

I enjoy cooking. It is rewarding. The dishes I prepare nourish my family. These dishes also give them pleasure. Cooking gives me a chance to be creative, too. I like experimenting. I combine foods in unique ways. I try out new recipes. I modify them to suit my family’s preferences. Plus, being in the kitchen relaxes me. The pleasant colors, textures, and aromas of cooking food delight my senses. I focus on mixing, stirring, chopping, frying, and baking. I usually forget about everything else. Sometimes I head to the kitchen on especially stressful days. Cooking can even be a form of meditation.

As this example shows, too many short sentences make the whole paragraph sound unsophisticated. But notice how the paragraph becomes clearer, easier to read, and less childish when the sentence length is varied.

I enjoy cooking because it is rewarding. The dishes I prepare not only nourish my family but also give them pleasure. Cooking gives me a chance to be creative, too. I like experimenting by combining foods in unique ways and trying out new recipes that I modify to suit my family’s preferences. Plus, being in the kitchen relaxes me, for the pleasant colors, textures, and aromas of cooking food delight my senses. When I focus

on mixing, stirring, chopping, frying, and baking, I forget about everything else. Sometimes I head to the kitchen on especially stressful days because cooking can even be a form of meditation.

Now the paragraph includes a mix of shorter and longer sentences that not only are more pleasurable to read, but also sound much more sophisticated.

If you have a tendency to write too many short sentences, recall that you may try to combine some of them using the following techniques.

1. Join two sentences with a coordinating conjunction—*and, or, but, nor, for, yet, or so*.

Two short sentences: Julie is an airline pilot.

Her brother Jeff is a cruise ship captain.

Combined sentence: Julie is an airline pilot, and her brother Jeff is a cruise ship captain.

2. Turn one sentence into a dependent clause and attach it to an independent clause.

Two short sentences: She plays the piano.

Her playing makes her dog howl.

Combined sentence: When she plays the piano, her dog howls.

3. Embed the information of one sentence into another sentence.

Two short sentences: Xavier is my neighbor.

He grows a beautiful rose garden.

Combined sentence: Xavier, my neighbor, grows a beautiful rose garden.

Types of Sentences

Another way to achieve a style of writing that is interesting is to vary not only the length but also the type of sentence you write. Recall that there are four types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

A **simple sentence** contains just one independent clause (one subject–verb relationship).

subject verb

The **cashier counted** the money in the drawer.

A **compound sentence** contains two independent clauses. Each contains at least one subject and one verb and could stand alone as a complete sentence.

subject verb

subject verb

My **aunt likes** cats, but my **uncle is** allergic to them.

A **complex sentence** contains a dependent clause and an independent clause.

dependent clause

independent clause

If I am going to make an A on the exam, I will have to study.

A **compound-complex sentence** includes a dependent clause and two independent clauses.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>dependent clause</i> | <i>independent clause #1</i> |
| As the final buzzer sounded, | <i>subject verb</i> |
| | Mike shot the ball, and |
| <i>independent clause #2</i> | |
| <i>subject verb</i> | |
| it went into the basket. | |

When you check your sentences during the editing stage, determine the type of each sentence in your paragraph. Then, if you see that you are relying too heavily on simple sentences, combine some of them to add more variety.

Lesson 6.3: Editing and Proofreading

Lesson 6.3 Introduction

The final steps of the writing process involve editing and proofreading. When you reviewed your writing during the revision step, you were searching for large-scale errors such as problems with the overall organization or development of your idea. To edit your writing, you **proofread**, or search for errors at the sentence and word levels. In other words, you comb through the paper carefully, searching for grammatical and spelling errors and making adjustments to sentences to improve your overall style. **Editing** means making the necessary corrections. After locating and fixing errors, you prepare your final draft for submission.

Editing and Proofreading Your Written Work

Although revising and editing usually go hand-in-hand, editing is generally the action you take as you revise. As you write, you will revise somewhat as you go, making any edits as you see fit. However, you will find that you will need to revise and edit each paper more than once, probably several times. You are finished with the process when you proofread and find nothing that you need to edit.

Editing Tips

1. Read your content edits out loud to make sure that you have supported your thesis thoroughly and that you are pleased with your argument. Make any necessary changes to word endings and delete any unnecessary words.
2. Have someone else read your content changes to double-check coherence. You know what you mean, but others may not, so they are more apt to catch any coherence errors.
3. Make your grammar and punctuation edits, but make sure you have a grammar or punctuation rule to back up your changes.
4. After making your changes, read a hard copy of the paper out loud once more to make sure everything is correct. Please do not make the mistake of only going over your paper on the computer monitor. You will not catch all of your mistakes if you limit your proofreading to reading your essay on the computer.

Proofreading is the final step of ensuring that you have a good paper. If you understand that revising and editing are akin to performing “open-heart surgery” on an essay, you will see that if you only proofread a paper, you may be simply putting a Band-Aid on a gaping wound.

Proofreading is the act of going over a paper “with a fine-toothed comb” **after** you have made all of what you believe are necessary changes.

In addition to proofreading your drafts to ensure sentence variety and appropriate language and to eliminate wordiness, you will need to find and correct major errors in sentence structure. You will need to scan your writing for the many other kinds of grammatical and mechanical errors, including subject–verb agreement errors, errors in verb tense, and capitalization and punctuation errors. Of course, it can be difficult to identify these errors, especially if you did not realize that you had included them in the first place. Thus, one good technique for locating errors is to have others read your drafts and point them out. If you use a Peer Review Sheet, ask your reviewers to identify the specific locations of possible errors in your draft. Then make sure you correct all of those errors before or during your preparation of your final draft.

Another way to find errors is to learn to recognize them yourself. Increase your knowledge of grammar and mechanics so that you will stop making the same mistakes over and over again. Pay special attention to your instructors’ comments. If an instructor identifies subject–verb agreement errors in a paper you have written, use a writing aid—look for one on the Internet or go to a writing center—to find out what subject–verb agreement errors are and how to correct them.

It is very important to correct errors in your writing because submitting a final draft that is marred with errors will undermine your credibility as a writer. When a paper contains errors, readers often question the writer’s intelligence and overall writing ability, or they assume that the writer did not care enough about the document to ensure that it was error free.

Finding Errors: Words that Sound Alike

When you are correcting errors in your writing, watch out for words that sound alike. Many of the words discussed in this section are easily confused because they sound alike. When you are speaking, you probably don’t think about the fact that words that sound alike may be spelled differently. This section will help you learn about these words and their spellings.

To, Too, and Two

Many people do not know the differences among *to*, *too*, and *two*. However, you can always choose the correct word in your writing if you memorize a couple of things.

First of all, *two* is the word form of the numeral 2. There are no exceptions to this rule. So, if you can substitute the numeral 2 for the word *two* in a sentence you’ve written, you’ve spelled it correctly.

Now, to determine whether you need *to* or *too*, you just need to know when to use *too*. We use the word *to* frequently in our speaking and writing. However, we use the word *too* in only two instances: when we mean *also* and when we mean *excessively*. Therefore, a good test to determine if you need *too* in a sentence is to see if you can substitute it with either the word *also* or the word *excessively*.

In all other instances, the word you need in your sentence will be *to*.

So, in a nutshell, if you can substitute the number 2, you need *two*; if you can substitute either the word *also* or the word *excessively*, you need *too*; and in any other instance, the word you need will be *to*.

They’re, Their, and There

Another easily confused set of words is *they’re*, *their*, and *there*. However, once again you only need to know a couple of things to keep them straight.

- *They're* is the contraction for *they are*.
- *Their* shows ownership; it is the possessive pronoun meaning "belonging to them."
- *There* is used in any other circumstance.

So use *they're* to mean *they are* and *their* when you want to indicate possession or ownership. If neither applies, use *there*.

Effect and Affect

Sometimes writers do not know when to use *effect* and *affect*. However, if you keep the following in mind, you will be able to choose the right word every time:

- *Effect* is almost always used as a noun meaning "result."
- *Affect* is almost always used as a verb meaning "to have an effect on."

Effect is a verb when it is used to mean "to bring about," as in the following sentences.

The college's new president was eager to effect changes that would benefit students.
(**Effect is used as a verb meaning "bring about."**)

The legislation effected a dramatic change in national policy. (**Effected means "brought about."**)

Although the word *affect* (accent on the second syllable) is a verb, its "twin" *affect* (accent on the first syllable) is a noun that is sometimes used in the field of psychology to mean "emotional response." In your college career and beyond, you will likely not see or use *affect* as a noun very often; most often, you will use it as a verb.

Then and Than

When do you use *then*, and when do you use *than*? If you will remember the following, you will never use either word incorrectly:

- *Then* always has to do with time.
- *Than* always has to do with comparison.

Additional Help

Your final draft should always be free of spelling errors. There are three ways to identify and correct errors in spelling.

1. Use a computer spell-checker. If you have an electronic version of your draft, use the spell-check feature of your word processing program to locate errors. Most of these spell-checkers will suggest possible alternative spellings for each error identified. Note, however, that these spell-checkers are not foolproof. They may actually ignore words that are incorrectly spelled. Therefore, use the next two methods in addition to this one.

2. Ask someone to proofread your draft for spelling errors. Ask someone you know who is a good speller to circle possible errors in spelling in your draft.

3. Whenever you have the slightest doubt about the spelling of a word, look it up in a dictionary. Always check the spellings of words you question in a book or online version of a dictionary. You can find several different online dictionaries at www.onelook.com.

Most colleges and universities have writing labs or centers where students can go to get help with their writing. These writing centers, which are typically staffed by either teachers or students with excellent writing skills, usually offer one-on-one tutorials and/or assistance with the revision of a paper.

Many colleges have also created online versions of their writing centers. An online writing lab (OWL), which is also known as an online writing center, is a website on the Internet that often offers students online resources to help them with their writing. These resources usually include tutorials and exercises. Some of them even allow students to send their writing to staff members for feedback and advice.

Final Touches

After you have edited your paper for style and errors, you are ready to prepare your final draft. You will, of course, need to follow your instructor's guidelines for final drafts. Regardless of your paper's final format, however, the paper should always be neat, clean, and professional looking. It should be typed or handwritten, as your instructor requires, and its appearance should reflect the fact that you have invested time and effort in your writing.

In general, both typed and handwritten final drafts usually have one-inch margins at the top, bottom, left, and right sides of the page. This means that the first sentence begins an inch from the top edge of the paper, and the last line on the page stops an inch away from the bottom edge of the paper. Each line begins one inch from the left edge of the paper and reaches all the way to one inch from the right edge of the paper. Every new paragraph is indented five spaces. Many instructors require assignments to be double-spaced, which means that a handwritten paragraph should skip every other line on the page. At the top of the first page, include your name and any other information the instructor wants you to list (such as course name or number and date).

After you have prepared your final draft, you should go over it one more time to look for typographical errors, which are accidental mistakes that occur during the typing or printing of a document. If you find such an error, you should always neatly correct it either by carefully striking through the error and writing the correction with a black pen or by covering the error with correction fluid and then writing the correction.

MODULE 7

MODES 1: NARRATIVE MODE

Introduction

You know how to develop the main idea of an essay with various kinds of information and examples. Learning about different patterns, or modes, will further help you organize the development of your thesis statement or thesis. The narrative mode of development is one such mode.

Lesson 7.1: The Narrative Mode

Lesson 7.1 Introduction

You probably use **narration**, or storytelling, fairly often. You tell stories about the things that happen to you, your friends, and your family members, and you also tell stories you have heard about other people's experiences. As a writer, you will need to be able to tell a good story in order to develop some point or idea. Sometimes, the story will be about something that happened to you. At other times, you will tell a story about something that happened to someone else.

Whether you write about your own experiences or someone else's, you will need to incorporate some features that are common to all effective narratives. These features include purpose, point of view, vivid language, consistent verb tense, and—often—chronological order.

Determining a Main Idea and Writing a Thesis Statement

The first step in writing an effective narrative essay involves deciding on the point you want to make about the events you will relate. As you look at the details you generated during the prewriting stage, ask yourself *why* you want to tell the story. Is there some moral or lesson that someone could gain from hearing the story? Does the story illustrate some truth about your life or the lives of others? Do you want to help readers learn something, or do you want to entertain them? These questions will help you decide on the one main idea you would like your readers to know or to accept. Then write a thesis statement to express this main idea.

For an example, look at a brainstorming sample generated by a student who was assigned to write about a time when she had learned something about herself. She decided to generate ideas about her battle to give up smoking.

- *smoked cigarettes for 9 years, from age 16 to 25*
- *suddenly started to get chest pains*
- *could hardly breathe when climbing stairs, could not run or exercise*
- *worried that I would die, no one to raise my two-year-old daughter*
- *decided to quit*

- *went cold turkey, but addiction too strong*
- *read stop-smoking books*
- *tried hypnosis, did not work*
- *enrolled in a free stop-smoking course at hospital*
- *followed a program that gradually decreased amount of nicotine over several weeks*
- *smoked last cigarette on April 3, 2004*
- *still had to deal with cravings*
- *gained weight*
- *have not smoked since then*

After completing this brainstorming, the student decided that she wanted to tell readers how quitting smoking taught her that she has the strength to overcome other problems. She wrote the following thesis statement.

Conquering my addiction to cigarettes taught me that I am strong and can achieve anything if I am determined enough.

As you complete this step in the process, remember that a thesis statement includes both your topic (the incident or event) and the point you want to make about that topic.

Chronological Order

As a general rule, narratives are written in chronological order, somewhat resembling a play-by-play. Think about listening to a football or baseball game on the car radio. The announcer is relating events as they happen, or chronologically.

That is exactly what you want to do when you are writing a narrative. Therefore, it is often desirable to plan out your sequence of events before you commit it to an essay (or even to a paragraph). For example, notice the chronological sequence of events here.

When my children were little, there was a pet shop in the mall near our house that had puppies of several kinds, kittens of various colors, as well as certain exotic pets such as ball pythons, ferrets, and even hedgehogs. I learned the hard way never to take a child to a pet shop.

That afternoon my young son, Spencer, had been forced to endure many stores as I worked through my “to do” list. First, we had gone to the hardware store for light bulbs, and then to the grocery store for the milk, butter, and produce that were now in the cooler in the back of my van. The mall was our last stop because we needed to find my son a new coat since he had definitely outgrown last year’s. While I looked at winter coats in J.C. Penney, he crawled under racks until I firmly pulled him up to try pint-sized coats on him. “Mom,” he whined. “I want to go home.” “So do I,” I wearily thought, but what I said was “just hang on a few more minutes, and we’ll get ice cream before we leave the mall.”

After paying for the coat, we headed toward Baskin Robbins and a chocolate kiddie cone. To my horror, Baskin Robbins was closed for renovation! I looked helplessly at my son, for whom this knowledge could possibly cause a meltdown, only to discover that his eyes were glued to five white fur balls playing in the pet shop window. “Can we just go in and look?” Spencer begged. Eager to pacify him (and to head off trouble about no ice cream cone), I agreed. “Just for a minute,” I said. Fifteen minutes later, I was asking, “Do you take Mastercard?” and we were heading to the car with one of the fluffy white American Eskimo pups, complete with collar, chew toys, and a bag of doggy treats.

Although Ping Pong, as we later dubbed the high-energy puppy, became a beloved member of our family, the story of how we acquired her has been the subject of much laughter and head-shaking, especially from my husband, who says he will never forget seeing our white van as we pulled in the driveway with a furry puppy waving a paw at him (via our son’s hand) from the car window.

The author of this narrative planned the sequence of events before she began writing. Her sequence of events would be something like this:

- Took son to several stores (hardware, grocery)
- Mall was last stop
- Tried on coats in Penneys
- Promised ice cream after coat
- Baskin Robbins closed
- Son begged to go in pet shop to look
- Fifteen minutes later we bought puppy
- Husband remembered puppy waving at him from car window

If you carefully plan your narrative, you will not get any of your events out of order. Furthermore, in order to write a chronological sequence of events, you will need to make use of transitions and prepositions that indicate time passing.

Point of View: First Person

Narratives are generally told in either first person (*I*) or third person (*he, she, it, they*) point of view. It is important that your point of view be consistent—that you use it throughout your entire narrative. Remember that point of view is simply who is telling the story. Therefore, all events in the story should be told from one character’s perspective. The following narrative is written in first person point of view; in other words, the author is telling the story as it happened to him.

I, like most children, had to learn many life lessons the same way: trial and error. I learned an important lesson about wildlife at the age of ten while swimming with some of my buddies in a creek in the Ozark Mountains. On those long, hot summer days on break from school, my friends and I used to love using a rope tied to a sycamore tree to swing out and splash into the cool waters of Crooked Creek.

One Sunday afternoon, after going to a church picnic and baptizing event held on the banks near our swimming hole, my friends and I attempted to show off for the girls by showing them how we swung out into the water like Tarzan on a vine. After the girls got tired of watching us boys make fools of ourselves, they started walking back to their vehicles to ride back home with their parents. Instead of walking along the gravel road like everyone else, I got the bright idea of taking a shortcut across a cow pasture in an attempt to arrive at the place where about 50 church members had parked their cars and pickup trucks.

As I hurried along a well-traveled cow path, one of my feet sank right through a rotten log lying across the trail. My stepping pace quickly became an all-out fast-motion dash for my life as hundreds of mad yellow jackets chased the red-headed kid who had just wrecked the frenzied insects' wooden home inside that hollow log. The wide-eyed church members witnessed more than just a solemn baptism service that day as I ran and peeled off every stitch of my clothes I had on after yellow jackets started flying up my shorts and stinging me in all sorts of places that they had no business going to. To this day, fellow church members say that was the fastest naked kid that they had ever seen flash across the field.

The intimate nature of a first person narrative pulls the reader into the story, causing him or her to care what happens to the writer.

Point of View: Third Person

A third person narrative, although it lacks the intimacy of first person, can still be effective. The following is a narrative that is written in third person point of view; in other words, the author is telling the story as it happened through the eyes of someone else.

A mother's instinct to protect her children can override any other rational thought. As Laura Richardson left the board meeting, she heard the loud, piercing wail of the sirens. Having grown up in Tornado Alley, she was familiar with the warning as well as the destruction that could follow. Now she clenched her husband's hand and uttered two words: "The children."

Even though her mother was with the children, she felt an urgency to be where they were. Her husband argued reason—they should stay put in the basement of the building they were in. However, she moved toward the car, determined to get to their home and the children. Her anxiety rose as they waded through shin-deep water in the downpour and fought the wind, now blowing as if to prevent their reaching the car. The lightning was so constant it might as well have been mid-day.

As they tried to exit the parking lot, they discovered they could not leave their usual way—the two crepe myrtles that had stood sentry on either side of the south exit for twenty years had been blown down and were blocking the way. As they turned and cut across the lot to the east entrance, she noted there were no other vehicles on the streets, a fact she pointed out to her husband as he conscientiously stopped at every street stop sign and nonworking stoplight.

Getting closer to their home, they found that the drive became almost impossible as they dodged trees fallen across the street. Now on their street, they saw neighbors' houses lifted off foundations, power lines broken and lying dangerously across lawns, and water pushing up the sewer covers. Peering intently, Laura thought she could see the top of their chimney where it should be, but struggled to keep down the scream rising in her throat as her husband, no longer being so cautious, did a fast U-turn to approach the house from the other side. Finally arriving in their driveway, they saw the house intact, although the magnolia tree next to the family room was lying across the patio. However, the greatest thrill of all was seeing their children and her mother looking out the door, gazing at the scene before them but otherwise unscathed. She rushed to enfold them in her arms.

Perhaps it had been foolish to leave their place of safety, knowing the damage that could be done, but the mother's instinct had told her to get to her children who might be in danger. Luckily, the car was pummeled with only small branches and leaf clusters, and the tree across the patio was the only damage to their home. The storm's edge had

reached them; houses on one side of their house had been damaged; those on the other side were untouched. The storm had moved through; now it was clean-up time.

A third person narrative like this does not draw in the reader quite as closely as a first person narrative, but it is still effective. Based on your chosen topic, you can decide whether a first or a third person narrative would be more effective. Be careful to stay consistent within each paragraph, not shifting from one point of view to the next.

Vivid Language: Specific Words and Factual and Sensory Details

Using vivid and interesting language is important in all types of writing. However, it is especially important in narrative writing, in which your goal is to enable readers to picture people and events in their minds. There are three kinds of vivid language that will help you re-create experiences in words: specific words, factual and sensory details, and action-oriented verbs. The first two types, specific words and factual and sensory details, are discussed in this reading.

Specific Words

You will create more vivid mental images for your reader if you choose specific words over more general ones. For example, the word *dance* is a relatively general term that includes many different kinds of dancing. So to help your reader picture the scene more clearly, substitute a more specific word, such as *waltz* or *moonwalk*. Instead of writing *magazine*, write *Reader's Digest*. Instead of writing *martial art*, write *karate*. And so on. The more precise your word choice, the sharper the picture becomes in the mind's eye of your readers.

Factual and Sensory Details

Like specific words, factual and sensory details will create more vivid mental images for your reader. **Factual details** offer information such as names, quantities, dates, and dimensions (height, length, width, weight). So in describing your own or someone else's actions, you might want to specify when and where these actions take place as well as how long they lasted. **Sensory details** provide information about what something looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels like. When you write narratives, include information about the sights, sounds, and other sensations of the scenes you are re-creating in words. Use adjectives, words that describe nouns (for example, *eighty*, *green*, *towering*, and *sensitive*), to provide these factual and sensory details.

One special type of factual detail in narratives is dialogue. **Dialogue** consists of the exact statements of the participants, enclosed in quotation marks. Consider including the exact words spoken by the people in your story because dialogue assists readers in picturing exactly what happened.

Vivid Language: Action-Oriented Verbs

In narratives, especially, you will want to use action-packed verbs to describe the events and the participants' behaviors. So, instead of writing *Bob entered the room*, write *Bob strolled into the room*, which provides more of a mental picture of *how* he entered. Also, choose verbs that offer the most precise explanation of what happened. For example, instead of writing that Joe *spoke*, you might want to say that Joe *shouted* or *whispered*. The more specific the verb used, the easier it is for the reader to picture what happened. Read the following passage and notice how the writer included vivid language to re-create the scene.

Waking in the middle of the night to some unknown sound, I sat upright in the bed and tried to clear my head. I felt an overwhelming sense that something was wrong;

something had bubbled across the waters of my subconscious, disturbing my serene sleep.

Just then I heard a crash toward the front door of my apartment. Shaking my wife awake beside me, I asked, “Did you hear that?” Just then I heard another crash followed by loud cursing in a male voice I did not recognize.

Fear gripped me as I sprang out of bed and began looking for the baseball bat I kept by the bookshelf. Thus armed, I yelled from the door of our bedroom, “Who is it?” My answer was more cursing and the sound of a door slamming. Hoping that our intruder had fled, I walked gingerly into the hallway and reached for the light switch.

After looking out my front door and seeing an obviously inebriated man staggering down the hall of our apartment building, I put together what had happened. Obviously we had neglected to lock our door, and our reveling neighbor had entered the wrong apartment by mistake, too drunk to read the number on the door. I breathed a sigh of relief as I locked the door, thankful we had been spared a visit from Jack the Ripper.

Were you able to picture this scene in your mind as you were reading? It is the author's use of vivid language that allows you to do that. He uses specific words, factual details, and action verbs.

Lesson 7.2: Chronological Narrative Sequence

Lesson 7.2 Introduction

Of all the modes for writing, narratives tend to be among the easiest to organize. As a matter of fact, narratives naturally organize themselves because the events are almost always presented in chronological, or time, order. Of course, writers can move around in time as they tell their stories. In a flashback, for instance, a writer can take readers back to the past for a while before returning to the present to move the story forward again. However, the events in most narrative essays are simply told in the order in which they occurred. Preparing the outline, then, is usually just a matter of listing the important events in order, from beginning to end.

Selecting the Right Details for a Narrative

To write an interesting narrative essay you must select the right details to include. You cannot include everything that happened or every little detail because reading the finished product would be too tedious for your readers, and your point could get lost in irrelevant information. Therefore, you will have to examine your prewriting and decide which pieces of information are essential to your narrative. You will, of course, need to include all of the major, important events, so make sure you circle or identify those events in your prewriting. Then you will need to think about the minor events in the story, evaluating each one in terms of its relationship to the main idea you want to express. If a minor event does not directly relate to your main idea, you will probably want to leave it out because providing unnecessary information slows down your story and makes it less interesting. Finally, you will need to consider the details of the events you will include and omit information that is not essential to the story.

To decide what information is essential to your narrative, you will need to consider the story's parts, or structure. A story is based on a conflict, a struggle within a person or among two or more people who believe they have different goals. So you will need to include information that establishes the nature of that conflict. You will tell about the actions, statements, and behaviors that explain why the conflict is occurring. Then you will need to tell about the struggle that results from this conflict. What do the people involved do and say and think as they engage in the

struggle? Finally, you will need to explain how the struggle turned out. How was the conflict finally resolved? Thinking of your story in terms of these parts will help you select the best details. If you question whether you should provide some piece of information, ask yourself if that information helps develop the conflict, the struggle, or the final outcome. If it does not, you may need to leave that information out.

Organizing Details and Using Transitions

To help the reader understand the time frame of the events, writers include transitional words and phrases. The following list includes common time-related transitions:

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| first, second, third | next | as |
| before | soon | when |
| now | in the beginning | until |
| then | once | later |
| after | today | eventually |
| while | previously | last |
| finally | often | meanwhile |
| over time | during | |
| in the end | in, on, or by (followed by a date) | |

In addition, writers include information about the passage of time, usually by using short phrases such as *in a few hours* or *after two weeks* or specific dates. When writing a narrative essay, you will usually begin a new paragraph every time there is a change of scene or a movement forward in time.

Notice how the writer of the following passage uses time-related transitions (underlined) to help the reader follow the events in the story.

When my children were little, there was a pet shop in the mall near our house that had puppies of several kinds, kittens of various colors, as well as certain exotic pets such as ball pythons, ferrets, and even hedgehogs. I learned the hard way never to take a child to a pet shop.

That afternoon my young son, Spencer, had been forced to endure many stores as I worked through my “to do” list. First, we had gone to the hardware store for light bulbs, and then to the grocery store for the milk, butter, and produce that were now in the cooler in the back of my van. The mall was our last stop because we needed to find my son a new coat since he had definitely outgrown last year’s. While I looked at winter coats in J.C. Penney, he crawled under racks until I firmly pulled him up to try pint-sized coats on him. “Mom,” he whined. “I want to go home.” “So do I,” I wearily thought, but what I said was “just hang on a few more minutes, and we’ll get ice cream before we leave the mall.”

After paying for the coat, we headed toward Baskin Robbins and a chocolate kiddie cone. To my horror, Baskin Robbins was closed for renovation! I looked helplessly at my son, for whom this knowledge could possibly cause a meltdown, only to discover that his eyes were glued to five white fur balls playing in the pet shop window. “Can we just go in and

look?” Spencer begged. Eager to pacify him (and to head off trouble about no ice cream cone), I agreed. “Just for a minute,” I said. Fifteen minutes later, I was asking, “Do you take Mastercard?” and we were heading to the car with one of the fluffy white American Eskimo pups, complete with collar, chew toys, and a bag of doggy treats.

Although Ping Pong, as we later dubbed the high-energy puppy, became a beloved member of our family, the story of how we acquired her has been the subject of much laughter and head-shaking, especially from my husband, who says he will never forget seeing our white van as we pulled in the driveway with a furry puppy waving a paw at him (via our son’s hand) from the car window.

Lesson 7.3 Narrative Writing

Lesson 7.3 Introduction

Like other kinds of essays, narrative essays are built on thesis statements and paragraphs with topic sentences. The narrative mode can express its thesis, or the author’s main point, and its topic sentences indirectly, though it will help in your writing process if you are able to state your own narrative purpose clearly and concisely.

The narrative mode encourages description and can be great for creativity. However, when composing in this mode, make sure to stick to a plan so your writing stays organized and on point. For example, remember that although placement of topic sentences can vary within paragraphs, verb tense must remain consistent throughout.

Narrative Paragraphs: Writing a Topic Sentence

In a paragraph, the topic sentence, which is usually the first sentence in the paragraph, expresses the point, or the purpose, of the paragraph. However, in a standalone narrative paragraph, the topic sentence can occur at the beginning of the paragraph, at the end, or even somewhere in between. It can even be implied or suggested, rather than explicitly stated. Look at the following example, in which the purpose is stated in the opening sentence:

Sometimes we need to follow our hunches. Just last February, northern Arkansas was struck by an ice storm so powerful that hundreds of utility poles snapped. The night before the storm, as my family and I watched the news, the meteorologist predicted a possible ice storm. He cautioned viewers to locate flashlights and batteries or candles and matches in the case of a power outage. My husband located a flashlight to put beside our bed, just in case. That night, as I prepared for bed, I had an overwhelming urge to fill both bathtubs with water. “Probably silly,” I thought as I turned on the water and began filling the oversized Jacuzzi tub in the upstairs bathroom. Since our water comes from a well, if we do not have electricity to run the pump, we have no water. However, in the past, any time we had been without electricity, it was short-lived; we really had not experienced any real inconvenience. Sure enough, I awoke in the middle of the night to the swishing sound of the ice as it fell. By morning, our worst fears were realized: literally everything outside was heavily coated in ice, and we had no electricity and, hence, no water. My family was so grateful that I had filled the bathtubs with water. From those two tubs, we managed to have enough water to last us through the six days that we were without electricity.

In the previous example, the topic sentence is in the usual place: the very first sentence. However, with a narrative, sometimes the topic sentence, or the statement of purpose, does not occur until the end. Read the following passage, in which the author builds up to the topic sentence:

After my divorce, I moved back to my hometown. Somehow I felt better able to cope in the place where I had begun my life's journey. I had two very small children, one still a baby and the other a toddler. Virtually every conversation was punctuated with hurt: "How could he leave us?" And underneath it all, there was the anger, seething underneath the surface, yet always ready to bubble forth at inopportune times. One Thursday evening, sitting on my parents' deck with my mother, having yet another conversation that attempted to analyze my ex-husband's motives, I heard laughter. Balancing the sleeping baby on my arm, I followed the sound of the laughter. My toddler son and my father were playing in the yard. My father had bought my son one of those bottles of bubble mix with a wand, and they were having a grand time blowing bubbles that the wind carried all over the yard. Every time my son blew a bubble, Oreo, my black and white cocker spaniel, chased it across the yard. Of course, each time that the dog "caught" one, it popped in his face, sending my son into peals of uncontrollable laughter. The silver laughter penetrated and softened my heart, restoring balance, at least for the moment. Sometimes the answers to the questions are less important than the fact that all we really want or need is right in front of us.

See how effective it can be to build up to the topic sentence? You be the judge: With each narrative paragraph that you write, ask yourself whether it would be more effective to begin with your topic sentence or to end with it.

Occasionally the topic sentence can even be **implied**. A topic sentence that is implied is not stated but is still understood by the reader. If you imply rather than state your thesis, make sure you give your reader enough information about the context of your story to be able to understand your point. Think about what your reader knows and doesn't know. When you use an implied topic sentence, you make the point without stating it explicitly. Sometimes implying your topic sentence can be effective.

Narrative: Using a Consistent Verb Tense

Everything you know about narrative paragraphs and narrative structure carries over into narrative essays. In other words, you still need to make sure that

- You make a clear point (this time with your thesis).
- You are writing in chronological order.
- Your point of view is consistent.

In addition, when you are writing a chronological sequence of events, you need to be careful to keep your verb tenses consistent. If you begin in present tense, continue in present tense; if you begin in past tense, continue in past tense. Look at the following example, with all of the verbs underlined. Every verb is in past tense with the exception of the verb in the thesis statement, which is in present tense because it is not part of the story but is, rather, asserting a universal truth.

A mother's instinct to protect her children can override any other rational thought. As Laura Richardson left the board meeting, she heard the loud, piercing wail of the sirens. Having grown up in Tornado Alley, she was familiar with the warning as well as the destruction that could follow. Now she clenched her husband's hand and uttered two words: "The children."

Even though her mother was with the children, she felt an urgency to be where they were. Her husband argued reason—they should stay put in the basement of the building they were in. However, she moved toward the car, determined to get to their home and the children. Her anxiety rose as they waded through shin-deep water in the downpour

and fought the wind, now blowing as if to prevent their reaching the car. The lightning was so constant it might as well have been mid-day.

As they tried to exit the parking lot, they discovered they could not leave their usual way—the two crepe myrtles that had stood sentry on either side of the south exit for twenty years had been blown down and were blocking the way. As they turned and cut across the lot to the east entrance, she noted there were no other vehicles on the streets, a fact she pointed out to her husband as he conscientiously stopped at every street stop sign and nonworking stoplight.

See how the writer is consistent to tell the entire story in past tense?

Now look at the following narrative paragraph, which is written in present tense. The verbs are underlined for you. The topic sentence is the last sentence of this paragraph and is also in present tense.

On most week days, I get up before it is light, before my alarm clock goes off. Stumbling into the kitchen, I grope for the light, tripping over the calico cat that has curled against my feet, catching myself with a hand to the center island before I fall. “Sadie, go away,” I say to the cat gruffly, although I reach down to scratch her ears even as I admonish her for always being underfoot. I turn on the coffee pot that I got ready the night before and listen to the drip-drip of the first cup of coffee brewing. Wilson, my little apricot-colored poodle with the goofy underbite, stretches awake from his perch on the top of the couch and joins me as I fill my first cup of coffee and pad out onto the front porch of my rural home. The sun is just beginning to rise in a glorious medley of colors as I settle into my porch swing with coffee mug and pooch close at hand. It is midsummer, and my flower pots lining the porch greet me with their beautiful blooms: purple petunias, pink begonias, and red geraniums. As I settle into the peace of my morning ritual, I breathe a prayer, thanking my God for the serenity of my front porch. That hour settles my spirit before I begin the hectic pace of another commute to the city and another day amid the moneymakers of the world.

Steps in Narrative Writing

The steps in narrative writing can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Prewrite to generate ideas and determine a main idea.**
- 2. Select relevant details, including only events and information that are essential to understanding the main idea, and create an outline of the major events in chronological order.**
- 3. As you write, include time-related transitional words and information.** Also, use vivid language, including specific words, factual and sensory details, and action-oriented verbs. Try to include vivid language, too, to help the reader form a clear mental image of or better understand the thing being described.

MODULE 8

READING I: ENGAGING WITH TEXTS

Introduction

Have you ever faithfully tackled your reading assignment, only to fail a quiz over that same reading assignment in class the next day? Many students have had that unfortunate experience. You may even feel embarrassed, wondering whether your instructor might think you were irresponsible and did not read the assignment. What happened in class the next day? Why couldn't you remember what you had read?

Throughout your college career, you will be required to read critically: textbooks, research materials, and professional essays. Often you will be required to read something critically and then respond to a writing prompt. Although reading text critically takes longer than simply scanning or skimming it, doing so actually saves time because you are more likely to remember what you have read, and you will probably not have to reread assigned material when you write about it or are tested over it.

Lesson 8.1: Engaging as a Reader

Lesson 8.1 Introduction

In addition to giving us topic ideas, reading also provides us with information we can include in our own compositions. From our reading, we glean facts, examples, direct quotations, and other kinds of information that help us develop and support our own thoughts about a subject.

Furthermore, reading exposes us to others' thoughts about important topics and leads us to reflect more upon those topics. As a result, reading helps us form or confirm our own thoughts and beliefs. In other words, reading encourages us to think critically by holding what we know up to scrutiny and then deciding if our opinions are still valid.

You do not have to agree with everything you read. Critical thinking involves considering what a writer has to say and then applying your own powers of logic and observation to decide if those ideas are valid.

Active Reading

How can you get the most out of your reading to make sure that you will reap all of its benefits for your writing skills? First of all, you must learn to become an active reader. **Active reading** is the process of interacting with a text in ways that improve comprehension and retention of the information. What do active readers do?

- Active readers do more than just run their eyes over the text in front of them; they interact with the text and think as they read.
- Active readers read with a pen or pencil in their hand, marking key words or ideas or jotting notes in the margins.

- Active readers reread the text if necessary and consciously try to connect the text's information to their own experiences and beliefs.

The techniques that active readers use are essential to understanding and remembering ideas and information, especially those in more challenging reading selections.

Preview the Text

The first step in reading any selection involves previewing, or surveying, the text. To *preview* means to obtain a preliminary sample of something. When you preview a reading selection, you skim, or glance, over it to try to get a sense of the piece's content and organization. You are not looking for specific details or information; instead, you skim a reading selection to get an idea of the author's subject, main point, overall focus, or purpose.

Here are some tips for previewing a text:

- To get this sense of the selection's "big picture," you should read the title of the selection, which will usually state the subject and sometimes even indicate the main point.
- Then try to find the thesis statement, or main point, of the selection. The thesis, which is the idea the author wants you to know or to believe by the time you have finished reading, usually appears somewhere near the beginning of the selection, often in the first paragraph.
- Also, glance over the headings in the selection, which function as "mini- titles" for the different sections. If there are no headings to guide you, read the first sentences of the paragraphs to get some idea of the topics they will address.
- Read the titles of any visual aids, such as graphs or charts, that are included with the text.
- Read over any introductory material—such as a brief summary paragraph—which may offer clues about the selection's main point.

Your goal in previewing the text is to get an overview of the text's topics, main idea, and overall organization. This overview will allow you to assemble a rough mental framework of the whole selection. Then, as you read more thoroughly later on, you will be able to fit the specific ideas and information into this framework as you go. You will have a better understanding of how the specific details relate to one another. As a result, your comprehension while reading will increase.

Formulate Questions and Read for Answers

Another proven active reading technique involves formulating questions and then reading for the answers to these questions. Completing this step helps to keep readers focused on finding certain kinds of information in a text, so it often improves concentration and, therefore, comprehension.

To formulate questions, simply turn the title, headings, or topic sentences of a selection into questions before you read the text. For example, if the title of a selection is "The Benefits of Exercise," you could turn it into "*What are* the benefits of exercise?" Then, as you read, you can search for the answers to that question. If the heading is "Walking versus Jogging," you could turn it into "How are jogging and walking alike and different?" or "Which is better: walking or jogging?" If you own the text you are reading, actually write your questions in the margins. Or you can take notes on a separate sheet of paper by writing your questions and leaving a blank space for each of the answers, which you will fill in later as you read.

Critical Reading

In addition to reading actively, you will also need to read critically in order to get the most out of what you read. Critical reading does not mean reading to criticize or find fault with a text. Instead, critical reading is the process of determining whether or not a text is valid and then deciding whether or not you agree with the ideas presented.

The ultimate goal of critical reading is critical thinking, an important skill in all areas of life, not just your academic courses. Critical thinkers do not believe everything they hear or read. Instead, they approach new ideas and information with a healthy skepticism. They have learned how to analyze texts and ideas not only to understand them better but also to decide whether they should accept those ideas, reject them, or think about them further. College students, in particular, are expected to read critically. Professors assign textbook chapters, journal articles, and other readings not just to have you memorize facts but also to encourage you to think about the texts so that you can expand and refine your ideas.

Critical Reading Begins With Active Reading

Critical reading, of course, begins with active reading. In order to evaluate an author's ideas or information, you need to completely understand him or her, and practicing the active reading techniques will increase your comprehension of the material. After actively reading a text, a critical reader thinks in-depth about what he or she has read. Thinking critically about a reading selection involves all of the following:

- Evaluating the evidence given in support of the thesis and main idea: Does it seem to be adequate? Does it seem to be accurate?
- Scrutinizing the author's conclusions: Do they arise logically from the evidence presented? Does the author exhibit any bias—in other words, does he or she obviously have certain opinions or prejudices?
- Comparing the ideas and information with your own experiences and observations
- Agreeing or disagreeing with the author after doing all of the above

To assist critical reading and thinking, you can engage in these activities:

- As you read, you can annotate, or write brief comments in the margin of the text. These comments can include your reactions to specific points or details and your questions about those points and details. They can take the form of words or phrases (such as *true*, *seems exaggerated*, and so on) or even symbols (such as writing an exclamation point next to a sentence that surprises you or writing a question mark in the margin when you are confused). Annotation is a valuable skill for critical thinking because it can become a kind of dialogue between you and the author as the author tries to convince you to accept his or her ideas.
- You can also answer the questions that may follow a text. In textbooks, in particular, authors provide a list of questions that help you focus on the most important information or even begin to apply the information to your own life. Even if your instructor does not assign these questions, think about how you would answer them.
- Finally, you can discuss the text with others. Participate in class discussions about reading selections and suggest to your classmates that you discuss texts more informally as well.

By talking about what you read with others, you will confirm your understanding of the text. Also, you will get the opportunity to compare your reactions with those of other critical readers. These conversations will help all of you decide if the text is valid.

Lesson 8.2: Writing While Reading

Lesson 8.2 Introduction

Part of reading critically involves picking out key points and highlighting or underlining them in the text, but it also involves understanding those key concepts well enough to summarize them *in your own words*. If you cannot translate an idea into your own words, you don't really understand that idea. The true measure of your comprehension of what you read is how well you can restate it in words that are your own. This is why making annotations and personal comments on the text can help you discover levels of meaning that without them, may have been misunderstood or gone unexamined.

Determining What to Mark

You will not be able to summarize the key points in a reading using your own words unless you can identify those points. So, how do you determine what the key points of a reading are? The answer to that question is that, ideally, you should read an entire article—from beginning to end—before you highlight certain passages or annotate the text in any way. Simply reading through the text will give you a general understanding of its content. After this initial reading, go back and reread the article, a paragraph at a time, highlighting or annotating text after you have read each paragraph.

If time does not allow for an initial read-through of the assigned material, you can mark text as you go, but do so only after you complete a paragraph. That way, you will be better able to decide what is important enough to mark. Students' biggest problem in highlighting or marking text is their tendency to mark too much. If you have marked almost everything on a page, you might as well have marked nothing, as the main ideas are still not set apart from the rest of the text.

The first paragraph, and sometimes the first several paragraphs, of a reading often simply introduce the topic and critical opinion of the reading. Try to determine what that is, and summarize it in your own words in the margin. Then, when you get into the meat of the reading, look for the topic sentence of each paragraph. The topic sentence of a paragraph often occurs at the beginning of the paragraph, so that is a good place to look. However, finish the paragraph before you decide what to mark. Move through the reading a paragraph at a time, going back to mark the main points by highlighting or underlining. You should also mark the definitions, details, and examples that support the main ideas by “coding” them in some way, perhaps by putting the abbreviation “Def.” for definition or “Ex.” for example in the margin. After marking key points and supporting details and examples, summarize key points in your own words in the margins.

Some readings will give you clues to help you identify main points by providing headings or by boldfacing or italicizing key terms or concepts. It is always a good idea to make note of headings in a text, as these will communicate the general topic of a section of a longer reading segment. Boldface print and italics draw the eye and usually signal something important.

Here are a few rules of thumb about how to approach a reading:

- First read the entire work through without marking anything.
- Try to state the author's main idea or thesis in your own words.
- Go back over the reading a paragraph at a time, looking for and marking key concepts.
- Pay careful attention to any headings and to any boldfaced or italicized words.
- Mark the topic sentence of each paragraph (the sentence that states the main point, the topic sentence, is often, but not always, the first sentence of the paragraph).

- If you encounter an unfamiliar word, look up its meaning in the dictionary and insert a synonym for it in the text.
- Mark any definitions or examples with a “code”—the abbreviation “Ex.” or “Def.” Insert your code in the margin beside the definitions and examples.
- Summarize in your own words the main point(s) of each paragraph in the margin. If you quote the author of the material directly, put quotations marks around the word or phrase you borrow.

Underline and Highlight Key Words and Phrases

A tried-and-true technique for active reading is underlining and/or highlighting key words and phrases in a text with your pen or highlighter marker. This method is valuable for two reasons. First, it encourages you to look for important information while you are reading, which helps to keep you focused on the main points or information. Second, it makes a review of the information more efficient because you can scan the important words you have already identified rather than rereading the entire text.

What do you highlight or underline in a text? The following is a list of information that is usually worth marking:

- **Any words or phrases in distinctive typeface.** If an author has put key terms in bold print or color, highlight them to make them stand out even more.
- **The answers to the questions you formulated from headings or topic sentences.** Read with the question in mind, and every time you discover an answer (or part of the answer), highlight it.
- **Words or phrases referring to major details that develop the idea stated in each paragraph’s topic sentence.** Look for and underline or highlight the main reasons, examples, or other kinds of details provided to explain the topic sentence’s point.

The key to effective highlighting is to avoid overdoing it. Highlighting whole sentences or paragraphs is pointless, for the major ideas will not stand out when you go back to the text again later. Instead, you will end up unnecessarily rereading long sections of the text. Also, highlighting whole passages will not help you focus on finding the most essential information. Therefore, concentrate on marking only those words that will help you quickly piece together the general gist, or essence, of the text when you are reviewing it later.

Take Notes on the Text

Effective active reading involves taking notes. Taking notes means recording in writing the major information and ideas in a text. You might choose to make these notes in the margins of the text itself (which is called *annotating*), in a notebook, or on separate sheets of paper.

Regardless of where you write them, notes offer two important benefits. First of all, good notes often increase your comprehension of the text. Taking notes requires you to think more about what you are reading, so you wind up understanding it better. Secondly, writing down information and ideas helps you remember them better. For many people, taking the extra time to hand-write the main points helps implant the points in their memory more securely.

Good notes always begin with highlighting or underlining main ideas or key terms. When you write notes, they might take one or more of the following forms:

- **A list of the main ideas in all of the paragraphs.** Put them in your own words and condense them whenever possible. Do not try to include all of the details, just the most important points.

- **A summary of the chapter or article.** In your own words, write a paragraph or two to tell about the main ideas of the selection.
- **An outline.** Outlines not only list the major and minor details of a reading selection, they also reveal the relationships among those details. You can use a Roman numeral outline, but the notes are usually for your eyes only, so you could also adopt or create a more informal system. No matter what kind of outline you use, though, make sure that it clearly demonstrates the general and specific relationships among the ideas.

Example of Taking Notes on a Text

The passage that follows is the first part of an article entitled “Shop ‘til We Drop?” Notice how the reader has used some of the active reading techniques.

Shop ‘til We Drop?

- 1 We *shop*, therefore we are. This is not exactly the American credo, but it comes close to being the American pastime. Even infants and toddlers quickly absorb the consumer spirit through television and trips to the supermarket (“I want that” is a common refrain). As we age, consumption becomes an engine of envy, because in America the idea is that everyone should have everything—which means that hardly anyone ever has enough. The notion that wants and needs have reached a limit of material and environmental absurdity, though preached fervently by some social activists and intellectuals, barely influences ordinary Americans. They continue to flock to shopping malls, automobile dealers, cruise ships, and health clubs. There are always, it seems, new wants and needs to be satisfied. *system of belief*
- 2 Although consumerism now defines all wealthy societies, it’s still practiced most religiously in its country of origin. Indeed, Americans have rarely so indulged the urge to splurge as in the past decade. Look at the numbers. In 2002, consumer spending accounted for 70 percent of U.S. national income (gross domestic product), which is a modern American record, and a much higher figure than in any other advanced nation. In Japan and France, consumer spending in 2002 was only 55 percent of GDP; in Italy and Spain, it was 60 percent. These rates are typical elsewhere. Even in the United States, consumer spending was only 67 percent of GDP as recently as 1994. Three added percentage points of GDP may seem trivial, but in today’s dollars they amount to an extra \$325 billion annually. *Consumption is a way of life in America*

What are The Effects of Spending ?

- 3 This spending spree has, in some ways, been a godsend. Without it, the U.S. and world economies would recently have fared much worse. During the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis, the irrepressible buying of American consumers cushioned the shock to countries that, suddenly unable to borrow abroad, had to curb their domestic spending. Roughly half of U.S. imports consist of consumer goods, automobiles, and food (oil, other raw materials, and industrial goods make up the balance). By selling Americans more shoes, toys, clothes, and electronic gadgets, Asian countries partially contained higher unemployment. U.S. trade deficits exploded. From 1996 to 2000, the deficit of the current account (a broad measure of trade) grew from \$177 billion to \$411 billion. *① Positive effect: it helps other countries*
- 4 Later, the buying binge sustained the U.S. economy despite an onslaught of bad news that, by all logic, should have been devastating: the popping of the stock market “bubble” of the 1990s; rising unemployment (as dot-com firms went bankrupt and business investment—led by telecommunications spending—declined); 9/11; and a string of corporate scandals (Enron, WorldCom, Tyco). *② Positive effect: it helps our economy*

But American consumers barely paused, and responded to falling interest rates by prolonging their binge. Car and light-truck sales of 17.1 million units in 2001 gave the automobile industry its second-best year ever, after 2000. The fourth- and fifth-best years were 2002 (16.8 million units) and 2003 (an estimated 16.6 million units). Strong home sales buoyed appliance, furniture, and carpet production.

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Lesson 8.3: Engaging as a Writer

Lesson 8.3 Introduction

As a college student, you will be asked to read and respond to readings that vary in length and complexity. These readings might be found in your textbooks, in scholarly journals, in popular periodicals, or on the Web, to name only a few sources. As you engage the reading as a writer, keep the following in mind:

- Reading critically involves first reading the piece of writing all the way through without marking anything in order to grasp an overall sense of the author's topic and purpose.
- Reading critically also requires reading through the material a paragraph at a time, highlighting major points and writing summaries in the margins using your own words.

In responding to a writing prompt based on a reading, you should convert the question asked into a statement, which will result in a workable thesis and assist you in brainstorming for a thesis statement.

Keeping a Reading Journal

A reading journal is a notebook in which you record your responses to what you read. This can be a very valuable tool for improving reading comprehension, for stimulating critical thinking, and for generating ideas for your own papers. Responding in writing also helps to clarify what you have learned about the topic and to identify what you still need to find out. Often, you do not really know exactly what you think about a topic until you sit down and try to put your ideas into words. The act of finding language for your thoughts helps you understand what you know and what you believe about the topic, especially those with which you are unfamiliar.

A reading journal can contain a number of different kinds of reactions, but the following are all particularly effective:

- A summary of what you learned
- Your feelings about the ideas or information
- The reasons why you agree or disagree with the author
- An explanation of how your own experiences either support or disprove the information
- Questions you have about the information
- A comparison of the information with other authors' writings on the topic

Example of a Reading Journal

For an example of a reading journal, read the following passage and then read one student's reading journal entry about it.

Click the link to read "[When Doodling Turns Deadly . . .](#)" by Jessica Reaves.

Here is one student's response to "When Doodling Turns Deadly ...":

Jessica Reaves' essay "When Doodling Turns Deadly ..." describes an incident in which a sixth grader was suspended for drawing pictures of two teachers with arrows stuck in their heads. She says that "paranoia" caused teachers and school administrators to overreact, and she argues that doodling like this provides a harmless outlet for teenagers' emotions and frustrations. She describes her own doodles, which weren't nice but weren't threatening either. But the doodles of others might be, especially nowadays.

Jessica Reaves doesn't think that kids have changed all that much, but she herself points out that not very long ago, two Columbine High School students killed thirteen people in a shooting spree on the school's campus. Maybe most kids aren't more "villainous" now than kids in the 1980s were, but there's no doubt that a few kids are much more dangerous. I don't know if we should blame violent TV shows and video games, easier access to guns, or some other cause of the problem. Whatever the reason, no one can deny that there have been some terrible incidents of violence among young people since the 1990s. After all, the 2007 shooting rampage at Virginia Tech was the deadliest (at a school) in U.S. history. I agree with Jessica Reaves that we shouldn't get hysterical, but I don't think you can blame teachers for getting worried when they see violent drawings of themselves. Jessica Reaves thinks that the sixth-grade doodler should be rewarded for dealing with her frustration in a peaceful and non-destructive manner. Yet the author would probably also want teachers and school officials to remain vigilant in order to stop violence before it starts. She would probably want to know why no one did anything if this particular student did turn out to be a ticking time bomb who finally did something awful. So it seems to me that the answer is at neither one extreme (suspending the sixth-grade doodler) or the other (rewarding her), but somewhere in the middle.

When you write, you continue to think, which leads to new insights. As a result, compositions are a common college assignment, for instructors know that writing helps students learn more. Use the power of writing, then, to get more out of what you read.

MODULE 9

MODES II: COMPARISON/CONTRAST MODE

Introduction

When you *compare* two things, you examine the similarities between them. When you *contrast* two things, you examine the differences between them. Comparison, contrast, or a combination of both is useful for developing ideas in compositions. Presenting a study of how two people, places, things, or ideas are alike or different is a good way to help your readers understand something about the two subjects.

Lesson 9.1: Comparison/Contrast Mode

Lesson 9.1 Introduction

Comparison and contrast are ways of understanding something in relation to its similarities to or differences from something else. They can also be useful methods for persuading readers to favor or choose one thing over another. To write an effective comparison/contrast essay, after you determine your purpose, you will need to determine your points of comparison, decide on the best order for presenting those parts, and develop each point with descriptive details and examples.

Analogy

On a smaller scale, you can help your reader understand an idea by offering a brief comparison called an *analogy*. An analogy explains one subject in terms of another subject that the reader already understands. The following is an example of an analogy:

We at the Getty Foundation have already written [several blog posts](#) on Keeping It Modern projects, and you may wonder why these grants focus on supporting conservation *planning*, as opposed to the conservation itself. I'll use an analogy with the medical profession to explain. Medical teams do all required tests *before* the surgeon picks up the scalpel. Planning is no different for art and architecture that needs to be restored. You first need to understand the history of the design, how the structure was built and what materials were used, then take stock of damage and identify underlying causes, before lifting a hammer.

In this analogy, the author compares conservation planning to surgery preparation. These comparisons help readers see his point about the importance of "supporting conservation planning." When you can relate a new subject to something your readers already know about, you can increase their understanding of the new subject.

Determining the Main Idea and Points of Comparison and Writing a Thesis Statement

Statement

To write an effective comparison/contrast essay, it is important, first of all, to decide *why* you are comparing and/or contrasting your two subjects. Do you want readers to understand one of the subjects by seeing how it resembles something with which they are already familiar? Do you want to show that the two subjects are more different than readers think they are? Do you want to prove that one of the subjects is better than or preferable to the other subject? Your answers to these questions will lead you to determine your purpose, which will affect how you formulate your thesis statement. For example, the following thesis statement focuses on how two subjects are very different:

The married lifestyle is much different from the single lifestyle.

This thesis statement suggests that an informative and relatively objective comparison will follow. If you want to persuade your reader that one lifestyle is better than the other, though, you would need to change the thesis statement.

The married lifestyle *is better than* the single lifestyle.

After you write a working thesis statement, decide which features of the two subjects would be most appropriate to discuss to prove your main point. In proving the previous thesis statement, you would probably need to examine the different aspects of the two lifestyles, such as amount of companionship, degree of independence, and level of financial security.

After deciding on the right points of comparison, you will need to make sure that you examine both subjects in terms of those points. Therefore, in an essay about the single lifestyle and married lifestyle, you would need to discuss the typical income and budget of a single person, and then you would need to devote equal attention to the typical income and budget of a married person. You would not compare the budget of a single person to the higher degree of companionship in a marital relationship. Doing so would be “comparing apples and oranges,” as the saying goes, and you would not truly be contrasting the two subjects. To avoid this type of faulty comparison, it is important to outline your ideas.

Lesson 8.2: Organizing a Comparison/Contrast Essay

Lesson 9.2 Introduction

Organization is especially important in comparison/contrast essays. When you are juggling two different subjects and examining several features of each of those subjects, your reader can easily become lost if your composition is not clearly organized. Thus, after you have chosen your points of comparison, you must give careful thought to how you will arrange your discussion of these points to help your reader follow your ideas. The two major patterns to choose from when organizing the points of a comparison/contrast essay are the whole-by-whole pattern and the point-by-point pattern.

The Whole-by-Whole Pattern of Organization

The whole-by-whole pattern for writing a comparison/contrast essay first looks at all of the points of comparison for one whole subject and then turns to a discussion of those same points of comparison for the other subject. An outline of this pattern looks like this:

I. Comparison of Subject A and Subject B

A. Subject A

1. Point of comparison #1
2. Point of comparison #2
3. Point of comparison #3

B. Subject B

1. Point of comparison #1
2. Point of comparison #2
3. Point of comparison #3

The advantages of using this pattern are mostly for the writer because he or she only has to concentrate on one subject at a time. However, it often asks more of readers, who are burdened with the task of remembering what was said about the first subject as they read about the second subject. Often this pattern also requires readers to make necessary connections or distinctions between the two subjects on their own.

The Point-by-Point Pattern of Organization

In a point-by-point organization pattern for writing a comparison/contrast essay, the writer alternates back and forth between his or her two subjects, arranging the composition according to the points of comparison. An outline of this pattern looks like this:

I. Comparison of Subject A and Subject B

A. Point of comparison #1

1. Subject A
2. Subject B

B. Point of comparison #2

1. Subject A
2. Subject B

C. Point of comparison #3

1. Subject A
2. Subject B

This pattern usually makes it easier for the reader to see the similarities and/or differences between two subjects. Also, it allows the writer to make clearer, more explicit connections for the reader about the two subjects. However, it does require the writer, who is switching back and forth from one subject to the other, to be more attentive to thought progression.

For example, if you are going on vacation and you are trying to choose your accommodations, you may narrow your search down to two possibilities: The Pink Flamingo Hotel and the Green Gecko Resort. You compare and contrast them based on price, amenities, and proximity to local attractions. Thus, your plan looks like this:

I. Price

A. Pink Flamingo—\$129 per night

B. Green Gecko—\$200 per night

II. Amenities

A. Pink Flamingo—pool, fitness center, Jacuzzi tubs in every room, beach view

B. Green Gecko—two pools, fitness center, Jacuzzi tubs in every room, beach view, complimentary breakfast

III. Proximity to Local Attractions

A. Pink Flamingo—one block from water park, five restaurants within walking distance

B. Green Gecko—three blocks from water park, next door to bumper boats and go-kart track, three restaurants within walking distance, fishing pier less than a block away

With a point-by-point organization, you mention a particular point, and then you discuss each subject according to that point. Then you move to the next point and do the same thing. Read the following paragraph developed from the previous outline:

Although the Pink Flamingo and the Green Gecko Resort share some similarities, there are some key differences to consider. For example, the Pink Flamingo is the clear winner on price as it comes in at \$129 per night, whereas the Green Gecko is a whopping \$200 per night during the height of the season. Furthermore, the Pink Flamingo boasts several amenities, such as a pool, a fitness center, Jacuzzi tubs in every room, and a beach view. However, the Green Gecko has all of these amenities plus a complimentary breakfast every day and a kiddie pool for the little ones. Finally, the proximity to attractions is a point to consider. The Pink Flamingo is only one block from a major water park and is in close proximity of five restaurants. Although the Green Gecko is farther away from the water park and does not have quite as many restaurants in its vicinity, it boasts several other close attractions, such as bumper boats, a go-kart track, and a fishing pier.

Using Appropriate Transitions in Comparison and Contrast Writing

In addition to dividing information into distinct paragraphs, the writer can also prevent the reader from getting lost by using clear transitions to signal similarities, differences, or the movement from one subject to another. The following lists include many of the common comparison and contrast transitional words:

Comparison transitions

also

similarly

similar to

| | | |
|----------|--------------------|---------------------|
| too | in like manner | in the same way |
| likewise | just like, just as | along the same line |

Contrast transitions

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| however | nevertheless | in contrast |
| but | on the one hand/on the other hand | conversely |
| yet | unlike | even though |
| although | rather | still |
| instead | on the contrary | nonetheless |
| in opposition | actually | whereas |
| in spite of | despite | in reality |
| just the opposite | while | as opposed to |
| though | unfortunately | |

Lesson 9.3: Comparison/Contrast Writing**Lesson 9.3 Introduction**

In a world with many options, making decisions can be difficult. Whether considering which movie to watch or which class to take, comparing and contrasting your options can help you come to a decision. We use comparison and contrast throughout our lives: As citizens, for example, we compare and contrast political candidates to decide who best represents us.

In writing, the comparison/contrast mode gives shape to these thought processes, often providing deeper insight into issues, options, and ideas. Organizing comparisons and contrasts into sentences, paragraphs, and essays can provide clarity and even help us better understand our preferences, personalities, and perceptions.

As you write, remember that comparison/contrast essays should do the following:

- They make clear what they are comparing or contrasting.
- They focus on similarities, differences, or both.
- They follow a strict organization, either whole-by-whole or point-by-point.

Compare/Contrast Paragraphs: Writing a Topic Sentence

Like the thesis statement for a comparison/contrast essay, the topic sentence for a comparison/contrast paragraph should identify the two items you are discussing and make clear that your focus is on comparing (discussing similarities), contrasting (discussing differences), or both comparing and contrasting. Also, you should express a critical opinion that shows the reason you are comparing/contrasting. Thus, if you are comparing name-brand groceries to store-brand groceries, your topic sentence might be the following:

Store-brand groceries are usually a better deal than name-brand groceries because, when comparing several pantry staples, one finds that while store-brand groceries are much cheaper, their quality is often just as good as that of name brands. **(Store-brand groceries and name-brand groceries are the two items being compared and contrasted, with an emphasis on comparison; the critical opinion is that store-brands are just as good, so they are the better deal.)**

This topic sentence makes it clear that your focus is comparison: By showing the similarities between store-brand products and name-brand products, you will demonstrate that store-brand products are equal in quality to the corresponding name-brand items, and you will have made the point that it is better to purchase the less expensive store-brands.

If you were contrasting frozen yogurt and ice cream, your topic sentence might be the following:

Although similar in taste and texture, frozen yogurt is much healthier than ice cream. **(The two items being compared and contrasted, with an emphasis on contrast, are frozen yogurt and ice cream. The critical opinion is that frozen yogurt is healthier than ice cream.)**

This topic sentence shows that your focus is contrast: You are going to demonstrate the differences between frozen yogurt and ice cream, showing that frozen yogurt is the healthier dessert choice.

If you were focusing on both comparing and contrasting two hotels, your thesis might be the following:

Although differing in price, amenities, and proximity to local attractions, the Pink Flamingo Hotel and the Green Gecko Resort both have several things to offer guests. **(The two items being compared and contrasted are the Pink Flamingo Hotel and the Green Gecko Resort. The critical opinion expresses that the two are different, yet both have advantages.)**

This topic sentence shows that your focus is equally comparison and contrast. Although this topic sentence makes no judgment call and does not proclaim either hotel the better choice, it would be all right to do so, depending on your purpose in comparing and contrasting.

Developing the Points in a Comparison/Contrast Essay

Because comparison/contrast essays examine the features of two subjects to show how they are alike and/or different, you will often use descriptive details and examples to develop each point of comparison. For example, if you were to write an essay about riding a motorcycle versus driving a car, you would want to add specific descriptive details when you compare sensory stimulation. You would want to mention the wind in your hair, the smells, and the sounds. If you were to compare the relative sense of freedom to be had on or in each vehicle, you might want to illustrate that by providing examples of specific rides from your experience. These kinds of details help the reader understand each point better.

Steps in Writing Comparison/Contrast Essays

When preparing to write a comparison/contrast essay, keep these three steps in mind to help you stay focused and communicate your points of comparison to your audience:

1. Determine a main idea and points of comparison. Decide on the purpose of your comparison, and then select relevant points of comparison. Make sure that you apply these points to both subjects.

2. Choose an organizing pattern for the points of comparison. Use either a whole-by-whole or point-by-point pattern for arranging ideas, and include transitions to help your reader follow these ideas.

3. Develop each point of comparison. Use descriptions, examples, or any other kind of details to explain each point.

MODULE 10

READING II: RESEARCH

Introduction

Why incorporate research into your essays? The obvious answer is that research can enhance your argument; it can help prove your point. If you quote a statistic from a **reputable** and **credible** source proving that people with college degrees earn three times as much as people without college degrees over the course of their lifetime, you are much more convincing than if you just make the general statement that a college degree helps one's earning potential. Likewise, a quote from noted philanthropist Bill Gates on the importance of giving back to the community is apt to impact your readers more than if you simply make the statement that people should help those less fortunate.

However, there are several questions to keep in mind when you are incorporating research material into your writing.

- Are your sources reputable and credible?
- Have you evaluated your reputable sources to choose which to incorporate into your paper?
- Should you quote, paraphrase, or summarize?
- Have you been careful not to plagiarize?
- Have you cited your sources correctly in the text of your paper?
- Have you cited your sources correctly in your Works Cited (MLA style) page?

Lesson 10.1: How to Do Research

Lesson 10.1 Introduction

As you write essays of your own, you will often need to find and include information from other sources. This information, which is known as source material, can take the form of facts, statistics, examples, expert testimony, or the observations of others. It can come from books, newspapers, magazines, websites, or other kinds of sources. Source material will help develop or prove your ideas and opinions on a subject. Because it adds additional support, it will help you make a more convincing case.

Research and the Writing Process

When you are deciding whether or not you need information from other sources to support your ideas, you can use the first three steps of the writing process as both guides and stepping stones. In step 1, the prewriting stage, for example, as you generate ideas for your composition, you will probably get a sense of not only what you *do* know about a topic but also what you *do not* know and need to find out. At this stage of the process, after you have decided upon a tentative main idea statement, you can probably jot down a list of information that you will have to acquire through research. You can turn this into a "shopping list" to take to the library or to a computer and then check off each item once you have found it.

In step 2 of the writing process, when you are organizing your ideas, do not forget to account for source material in your outline. Under the appropriate outline heading, list the facts or other kinds of information that you plan to use in that particular paragraph or section. And think again about each point that you want to make so that you can decide if any additional source material might help you make that point clearer for your readers.

Finally, in step 3, take a careful look at the paragraphs you have written. Are there ideas that could be made clearer or supported more strongly with facts, statistics, examples, observations, or expert opinions? Evaluate your layers of development, especially in shorter paragraphs, and decide whether you should find more information to bolster your point.

To find source material, you will have to conduct research, usually in a library or on the Internet. This section will help you develop your skills in researching, managing information, and incorporating source materials into your own writing.

Types of Sources: Library Sources

The three main types of source material are printed sources found in the library, online or electronic sources, and nonprint sources.

Library Sources

When you are searching for information about a topic, the library is the obvious place to go. The two main types of library sources are books and periodicals.

Books. There are usually two main types of books in libraries. The general collection, which contains works of fiction as well as nonfiction books like biographies, includes all of the books that can be checked out by those with a library card. In most college libraries, these books will be organized according to the Library of Congress subject headings system, which assigns a letter and number (the call number) to each book so that you can locate it on the shelves. The library's card catalog—which will consist of either printed cards organized in drawers or an electronic database searchable by computer—allows you to look up books by subject, author, or title and then write down the call numbers of the books that you want to examine.

The other type of book is the reference work, which provides factual information about a wide variety of topics. Reference works include general and specialized encyclopedias, statistical sources, dictionaries, and many other books that usually cannot be checked out. They, too, are arranged by call number, and they are usually shelved in a particular section of the library.

Periodicals. The periodicals include magazines, journals, and newspapers that are published periodically—such as every day, once a month, or twice a year. They contain articles on a variety of different subjects. To find articles about your topic, you locate that topic in a printed index such as *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. Alternately, you can use one of many different computerized indexes that allow you to search by subject, author, or title.

Spend some time familiarizing yourself with the locations and the methods of retrieval for the different types of sources in your library. Then, when you need information, you will know where and how to find it.

Types of Sources: Online and Nonprint Sources

Online Sources

The Internet offers a wealth of information on just about any topic you can name. By using a search engine such as Google or Yahoo!, you can type in a search term, and you will see lists of websites that may offer information about it. You can also use a search engine to access the specific websites of organizations, government agencies, and businesses.

In addition, you can find many publications online. For example, newspapers like the *New York Times* and *USA Today* post their content online every day. Magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* also post some or all of their articles online. You can access these sites by typing in a specific URL, or website address, such as www.usatoday.com or www.nytimes.com, into your Internet browser program, or you can find them by using a search engine.

You can also subscribe to electronic libraries or databases that allow you to search for information from a wide variety of electronic texts. Some of these, such as Highbeam Research, require you to pay an annual fee for access to the content. Other databases, especially those available through your local or campus library, may provide access to the same kind of information at no charge.

Nonprint Sources

The library and the Internet are the obvious places to go when you need information. However, do not overlook a third valuable resource: nonprint sources.

People who are experts on the subject you are researching are an especially useful source of information. You can set up an interview with one of these individuals and then prepare a list of questions to ask the person. With your interviewee's permission, tape-record your interview so that you will be able to extract direct quotations to use in your paper to support your ideas.

Television shows, radio programs, and films are other good nonprint resources. Often you can obtain a transcript of a television or radio program by contacting the station or network that aired the program.

Do not overlook works of art, either. You may find it useful to use a painting, sculpture, photograph, or musical composition as a source.

The Importance of Credibility

The first step in strengthening your research skills is to learn where information is located and how to access it. However, once you find it, you must then evaluate the information to make sure that it is *credible*, or believable and trustworthy. If you do not use credible sources, then you will weaken your support for your own ideas. Information posted on Internet websites, in particular, should be carefully examined for its worthiness and accuracy. The following are some questions to ask yourself when you are considering a source's credibility:

1. Is the information current and up-to-date? When was the book or article published? When was the website posted or updated? You will want to include only the latest information, so avoid facts and statistics that seem too old.

2. Who wrote or posted the information? Is an author identified? What are the author's credentials? Does he or she seem qualified to be considered an authority on the topic? If not, the information may not be credible. Be careful when using Internet websites, in particular, since anyone can create a website and post information or opinions on it.

3. Do the ideas and information agree with those in material that you have found in other reputable sources? Beware of outlandish claims that are contrary to everything else you have read about a topic.

4. How objective does the information seem? Does the author provide information about his or her sources, and are those sources reputable? If the author seeks to persuade you, could that person have manipulated the facts or data to support his or her position? Could the information actually be a form of advertising?

Lesson 10.2: Original Use of Sources: Summary, Quotation, Paraphrase

Lesson 10.2 Introduction

After you have located several possible sources, read each source carefully, highlighting key points, marking powerful quotations, and writing summary notes in the margins.

After you have gathered reputable sources, evaluated them carefully, and eliminated those you will not be using, you need to reread them in order to determine what material you will cite in your paper. You may need to modify or fine-tune your argumentative thesis as you determine your support; the steps seem to happen simultaneously as you discover what material you need to build a strong argument.

As you read and mark your sources, consider carefully what you should quote directly, what you should paraphrase, and what you should summarize. Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Quote a source only when it is effective to do so.
- Paraphrase anything that can easily be expressed in your own words.
- Summarize longer passages when you want to present main ideas rather than focus on individual details.

Methods for Recording Research

If you do not use an organized system to keep up with the source material you collect during research, you run the risk of not being able to find what you need when you begin composing. Therefore, as you search for facts, quotations, and other material to incorporate into your writing, you will need to develop a way to collect and manage the information that you find. There are several methods for taking notes, each with its advantages and disadvantages.

The Photocopy/Highlight Method

Many students photocopy or print copies of entire articles, and then they underline or highlight the information that they plan to use to develop a paragraph or essay. The advantages of this method include:

- **Time.** It takes less time to print pages or run copies than to write down the information that you need.
- **Convenience.** Having the entire source available later during the composition stage can be beneficial, for you may need to refer to it again.
- **Accuracy.** Because you have access to the original sentence or passage, you are less likely to make a mistake when using the information to develop the ideas in your own paper.

However, this is perhaps the most disorganized of the three note-taking methods because each time that you need a particular fact or detail, you will have to shuffle through a pile of articles in search of that piece of information. Thus, searching for that information might slow down your composition process.

The Note Card Method

This method involves writing specific facts, quotations, and other kinds of information on note cards and then labeling each card by the topic or by the corresponding section of the composition's outline. Although it is a much more organized method than photocopying because the cards can be shuffled to follow the order of your outline, it can be more time-consuming. It also requires the careful transfer of information in order to prevent inaccuracies.

A Combination Method

You may want to consider using a system that combines the photocopy/highlight and note card methods so that you will obtain the advantages of both of these methods. To combine them, follow these steps:

1. Photocopy or print the passage, the page, or the entire article that contains the information you will need to include in your own paragraph or essay.
2. Underline or highlight the specific facts or details that you need.
3. With scissors, cut out this specific passage and paste it to a note card.
4. On the note card, write the topic of the information or—even better—write down the section of the outline to which the information corresponds. Also, do not forget to include bibliographic information (author, title, publication, publication date, page numbers, and so on) for the original source.
5. Before you begin writing, follow the topics of your outline to put your note cards into the order you will need for your paper.

Drafting with Source Material

After you have completed your research, you will be ready to write a first draft of your composition. However, do not make the mistake of simply stringing together all of the information that you found in your sources and then deciding that your paper is complete. Instead, think of source material as *layers of development*. A layer of development provides more specific information about a general idea in the sentence that came before it. In compositions that do not include source material, these layers often take the form of specific details or examples from the writer's observations and experiences. In compositions that do include source materials, layers of development can also be in the form of data or statistics, expert opinion, specific facts, or direct quotations.

If source material is used as layers of development, then it stands to reason that the writer still needs to complete all of the steps in the writing process in order to complete a composition containing information from other sources. From generating ideas and an outline to writing a rough draft, the steps for writing a paper that includes source material are the same as those for writing any other kind of composition. The difference, however, is that as the writer is composing the paragraphs of the body in an essay with source material, he or she keeps the stack of note cards containing source material close at hand. Then, during composition, information from the cards is integrated with the other material to develop each paragraph.

Another way to understand how source material should be used in a composition is to remember that every sentence in a paper functions in one of three ways. A sentence states a writer's idea or observation, states an idea or information obtained from another source, or offers the writer's reaction to that information from another source. The paper's thesis statement and topic sentences should be of the first type. In addition, some of the development for topic sentences should be of the first type. However, development of topic sentences can also be of the second or third type.

What Is Plagiarism?

As you prepare to incorporate source material as layers of development in your composition, you will need to understand what the term plagiarism means. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else's ideas or words without giving proper credit to that individual and/or clearly acknowledging the original source.

Intentional plagiarism, the most blatant form, occurs when a writer knowingly transfers someone else's sentences or paragraphs into his or her own paper without providing any information about where the material came from. Word processing and the Internet allow writers to copy and paste others' words into their documents, so computers have made it easier for people to plagiarize.

However, a writer can also be guilty of unintentional plagiarism. This occurs when he or she does not properly indicate the point at which borrowed material begins or ends or when he or she fails to provide source information. For example, if a writer does not express someone else's thoughts in his or her own words and ends up using too much of the wording of the original source, plagiarism can result. Likewise, a writer who forgets to acknowledge a source will be inadvertently plagiarizing.

What are the consequences of plagiarism? The practice of using someone else's words as your own is illegal and unethical. It is a lot like lying; you may not go to jail for telling a lie or plagiarizing a passage, but you will cast serious doubt upon your own character and credibility if you commit either one of these moral transgressions. Plagiarizing will undermine your own ideas and arguments because if you are found to have "stolen" the ideas of others, readers will view you as an untrustworthy source of information. What is more, most academic institutions are now imposing serious penalties for students who cheat by plagiarizing, so make sure that you always give credit where credit is due.

Summarizing

Summarizing is an important skill that you will use for incorporating source material when developing the ideas in your paragraphs and essays. In particular, you will use summaries of other sources to support your ideas in research projects such as term papers.

When you summarize a reading selection, you briefly restate, in your own words, its most important ideas. A summary usually focuses on the most general points, which include the overall main idea and some of the major supporting details. As a result, a summary is much shorter than the original material. A paragraph can usually be summarized in a sentence or two, and an entire article can often be summarized in a paragraph.

To write a summary, follow these three steps:

1. Using active reading techniques, read and reread the original material until you understand it.
2. Identify the main idea and major supporting points. In particular, underline all of the topic sentences. You might also want to create an outline or map that diagrams the general and

specific relationships among sentences (in a paragraph) or paragraphs (in an article or chapter).

3. Using your own words, write sentences that state the author's main idea along with the most important major details. Your paraphrase should be accurate; it should not add anything that did not appear in the original or omit anything important that is contained in the original. It should also be objective. In other words, do not offer your own reactions or opinions; just restate the author's points without commenting on them. If you use a phrase from the original, enclose it in quotation marks to indicate that it is the author's words, not yours.

For an example of a summary, first read the following passage from an original source and then read the summary.

Original Source:

According to the research firm Mintel International, eleven new home antibacterial products appeared on the market in 2004, more than twice the number [that appeared] in 2003. The makers of antibacterial products are fond of the word *germs*. It is purposefully vague. Do they mean bacteria? Viruses? Both? Neither? The idea is simply to suggest contamination. These products are as much about cooties as they are about viruses or bacteria.

However, the fantasy of a germ-free home is not only absurd, but it is also largely pointless. The few hundred bacteria on a countertop, doorknob, or spoon pose no threat. The bacteria that cause food poisoning, the only significant rational bacterial worry in the average home, need to multiply into the thousands or millions before they can overwhelm your immune system and cause symptoms.

Not surprisingly, a study by Dr. Elaine Larson at the Columbia School of Nursing called into question the usefulness of antibacterial products for the home. In New York, 224 households, each with at least one preschooler, were randomly assigned to two groups. One group used antibacterial cleaning, laundry, and hand-washing products. The other used ordinary products.

For forty-eight weeks, the groups were monitored for seven symptoms of colds, flu, and food poisoning, and found to be essentially the same. According to research conducted by University of Arizona microbiologist Dr. Charles Gerba, an active adult touches an average of 300 surfaces every thirty minutes. You cannot win at this. You will become obsessive-compulsive. Just wash your hands with soap and water a few times a day, and leave it at that. (Roach 2004)

Summary:

According to Mary Roach, author of the *New York Times* article "Germs, Germs Everywhere," the antibacterial product industry is booming in spite of the fact that these products do not do much good. Advertisements for these products promise that they will kill "germs," but the bacteria in the average home are not really dangerous. One study found that the use of antibacterial products does not seem to prevent colds, flu, or food poisoning. Another study found that since adults touch so many surfaces, no one could be able to wipe them all clean. Therefore, the author recommends that people simply wash their hands several times a day and forget about trying to sterilize their homes.

Note that this summary provides only the author's main points and leaves out specific supporting details. It is also objective because it provides only the author's ideas and not the reader's reactions to or opinions about them.

Reference

Roach, Mary. 2004. "Germs, Germs Everywhere." *New York Times*, November 9, 2004.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/09/health/germs-germs-everywhere-are-you-worried-get-over-it.html>.

Quoting and Paraphrasing

To properly integrate source material into your essays, you will need to decide whether to use a summary, a direct quotation, or a paraphrase. Then you will appropriately document each summary, direct quotation, or paraphrase with a citation in the text along with a corresponding entry on a Works Cited page.

Direct Quotations and Paraphrases

When you incorporate source material into your own writing, you can use either direct quotations—material taken **verbatim** (word for word) from the reading—or paraphrases. A *direct quotation* provides the exact wording of the original source, so it is enclosed in quotation marks.

Jeffery Sheler writes, "Prayer has become familiar terrain in modern America. It is woven into the daily rhythms of life, its ethos embedded in the public and private experiences of millions. Indeed, a recent Roper poll found that nearly half of all Americans said that they pray or meditate every day."

Directly quoted material can be a word, a phrase, an entire sentence, or several sentences in succession, if the reading you are responding to is a lengthy one. As a general rule, these direct quotations should not stand alone. You should use a **signal phrase** or **tag** (a phrase that links a quotation to its source) to alert your reader to the fact that you are borrowing an author's exact word or words to communicate his or her ideas. Your signal phrase might be *Thoreau states* or *According to Thoreau*, followed by the exact words of the author enclosed in quotation marks. Alternatively, you might simply insert quoted matter into your sentence; this method of quoting directly is best suited to very brief passages of only several words. Regardless of how you weave direct quotations into your writing, you will need to document the source of those quotations.

A *paraphrase* rewords the information in the original source, so it is not enclosed in quotation marks.

According to Jeffery Sheler, praying is a regular part of modern American life, both public and private. As a matter of fact, half of our country's citizens claim to pray or meditate on a daily basis.

Is it better to use more direct quotations or more paraphrases when you integrate source material? In general, it is actually better to use more paraphrases for two reasons.

1. Paraphrasing allows you to include only the essential information. Although it is true that you can remove parts of quotations and indicate the omission with ellipsis dots (...), a paraphrase allows you to incorporate only the pertinent facts or ideas into your work, without including any unnecessary words.

2. Paraphrases are usually easier to read. Because paraphrases are in the same wording and style as the rest of your paper, they tend to flow better with the rest of the text. Plus, readers do not have to do the extra mental work required to shift from your voice to a different voice, as they do when they read direct quotations.

One final note about direct quotations: Use them sparingly. Your teachers are interested in how well you are able to demonstrate your understanding of a reading using your own language—not someone else's. Directly quoting from a source is a good strategy to support ideas that you have put in your own words, but you should not overuse the strategy. Quote directly only when a particular word or phrase used by the author is particularly powerful or when paraphrasing or summarizing a passage will lessen its impact.

Reference

Sheler, Jeffery L. 2004. "The Power of Prayer," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 20, 2004.

Lesson 10.3: MLA Format and Style Citations

Lesson 10.3 Introduction

You have learned how to incorporate direct quotations and paraphrases from other sources in your own writing. Now you are ready to learn how to properly acknowledge—or document—the source material that you include in your writing in support of your ideas. There are several different systems of documentation, including MLA (Modern Language Association) style, APA (American Psychological Association) style, and the Chicago Manual of Style system. We will focus on MLA style, the system used most often for papers in the humanities.

MLA Style

MLA style has two main components: (1) citations in the text, enclosed in parentheses, that provide the author's name and the page number (for print sources) of the original source, along with (2) a Works Cited list that provides complete bibliographic information for all of the sources cited in the paper.

There are two primary types of sources: print and online. You will need to know how to cite a source in the text of your paper as well as how to list a source on your bibliography page (in MLA style called a Works Cited page).

Any time that you refer to your research within the text of your paper, you must cite your source.

Print Sources

List the author's last name and the page number on which the borrowed matter is located in parentheses with the period after the citation. In the example that follows, a direct quotation is used:

"For the first several days Jason seemed like a stranger. But, eventually he settled into his duties as father, brother, teacher, and friend to three dozen boys" (Stovall 91).

If you identify the source of your borrowed matter in your sentence, you only need to cite the page number on which that matter is located in your citation.

Stovall states that Jason "eventually settled into his duties as father, brother, teacher, and friend to three dozen boys" (91).

For paraphrases, cite the author and page number without using quotation marks.

Although Jason was awkward around the boys at first, he adjusted into the role of parent and mentor quickly (Stovall 91).

Print Sources: More Than One Author

For print sources by two or three authors, list all of the authors' last names, followed by the page number, as in the following examples:

"Never fight an enemy that is already defeated" (Duplantis and Copeland 17).

"Many Americans are suffering from sleep disorders and don't know it" (Johnson, Ngai, and Rubio 214).

To cite sources by four or more authors, give the first author's last name followed by the Latin abbreviation *et al.*, which means "and others."

"Amy Tan's novels just get better and better" (Hoffman et al. 27).

Online Sources

Follow the same guidelines for online sources as for print sources with the exception that you need not supply a specific page number, as in the following examples:

"Justice too long delayed is justice denied" (King).

"A cowboy never really takes off his boots" (Hudson and Campbell).

"When people mature they often gain a new appreciation for family interference" (Jacobs, Yoder, and Ford).

"Most people want to live happily ever after" (Disney et al.).

To distinguish source material from your own ideas, make sure to clearly identify source material at both its beginning and its end. In the case of a direct quotation, a quotation mark will indicate the beginning of the material, and a closing quotation mark followed by a parenthetical citation will indicate the end. Paraphrases are often introduced with the author's name to indicate where the source material begins. In that case, the author's name is not repeated in the citation.

Reference

Stovall, Jim. 2001. *The Ultimate Gift*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Distribution.

Quotation Marks

There are three primary instances in which you will need to use quotation marks: to indicate the exact words of a speaker, to quote directly from a published work, and to indicate the title of a shorter work, such as an article, a poem, or a short story.

Quotation marks are used to indicate the exact words of a speaker that are recorded in print. Note that the quotation marks enclose the exact words of the speaker. Note, too, that quotation marks always come in pairs and that end punctuation, when it is part of the direct quotation, is always inside the last set of quotation marks. When they are not part of a direct quotation, question marks and exclamation points are outside the final set of quotation marks.

Quotation marks are also used to indicate the exact words borrowed from a published work of some sort, such as a professional essay or a newspaper or journal article. Examine the sentences that follow:

Martin Luther King said, "Justice too long delayed is justice denied."

Sherry Turkle, in "How Computers Change the Way We Think," an article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, states, "The tools we use to think change the ways in which we think."

Richard Feynman, a Nobel prize-winning scientist, declared, "If we want to solve a problem that we have never solved before, we must leave the door to the unknown ajar."

In the preceding examples, the quoted matter is reproduced **verbatim**—that is, word for word, punctuation mark for punctuation mark. No words or phrases have been left out, and the quoted passage has not been altered in any way.

However, sometimes a writer may want to quote a word or a phrase rather than an entire sentence, as in the following examples:

The speaker in Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" remarks that the owner of the woods lives in the "village" (line 2).

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou states that as a small child, the store that her grandmother and uncle ran in Stamps, Arkansas, was her "favorite place to be" (16).

It is fine to quote only what you wish from a sentence or a passage. However, if you leave out a significant part of the passage you may need to use an ellipsis (three dots) to indicate that words are omitted.

Quotation marks are also used to indicate titles of articles in newspapers and journals, titles of short stories, and titles of poems. In MLA style, they are not used for titles of books, magazines, newspapers, movies, plays, operas, paintings, or television shows, which are all italicized.

Special Circumstances for Quotation Marks

Students often have questions about how to use quotation marks and end punctuation with longer quotations and with quotations within quotations.

Direct quotations of more than four typewritten lines are formatted differently than shorter quotations. Called **block quotations**, they are indented five spaces on the left (tabbed over) and are typed without quotation marks. Furthermore, the period signaling the end of the quoted matter goes before the parenthetical documentation. (With shorter quotations, the period goes after the citation.) The following is an example of a block quotation extracted from Edgar Allen Poe's essay "The Philosophy of Composition":

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or authorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent. (Poe)

In this example, note that quotation marks have been omitted: They are unnecessary because the quoted material is in block format, which is a signal to the reader that the material is a direct quote. Also note the placement of the period in the last sentence.

In your college-level writing, you may also encounter a situation where you must record a quotation within a quotation. If you are dealing with a block quotation, simply put standard quotation marks around the quotation within the quotation. For shorter quotations, insert single quotation marks around the quotation within the quotation, as in the following example, which contains a direct quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail":

In his famous epistle from Birmingham City Jail, King wrote, "Was not Jesus an extremist for love? 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that spitefully use you'" (360).

In the preceding example, note that there are double quotation marks around the entire quotation and single quotation marks around what is quoted within the quotation. Note also that there is no space between the single quotation mark and the double quotation mark that concludes the quoted passage.

Reference

Poe, Edgar Allen. 1914. "The Philosophy of Composition." In *The Oxford Book of American Essays*, edited by Brander Matthews. New York: Oxford University Press.
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/40196/40196-h/40196-h.htm#page_099.

The Works Cited Page

For every source you cite in your paper, you will need to have a corresponding entry in your Works Cited page. Writing in MLA style requires you to format your entries in a certain way, depending on the nature of the source. In the following section, you will find model entries for some of the sources students commonly use.

Scholarly Journals

For scholarly journals, give the volume and the issue number. After the title of the journal, separate the volume and issue number with a period and enclose the date in parentheses.

Dean, Tamara. "Blowdown: When a Tornado Tears Through a Beloved Landscape, Is It Possible to Just Let Nature Heal Itself?" *American Scholar* 79.4 (2010): 58–66. Print.

Articles in Magazines Published Weekly or Monthly

If a magazine is published monthly or weekly, it will have a specific date. Be sure to state the date after the title of the journal.

Bartolomeo, Joey. "Father Knows Glitz." *People* 1 Nov. 2010: 64–71. Print.

Also, be aware that your sources are always set in hanging indention. This means that when each entry wraps, the subsequent lines are indented five spaces. Most word-processing programs can be set in hanging indention.

Books

Here is the basic pattern for a book entry in the Works Cited page:

Author's last name, first name. *Title*. City of Publication: Publisher, Date. Print.

Stovall, Jim. *The Ultimate Gift*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Distribution, 2001. Print.

NOTE: If more than one city of publication is given, cite the first one listed. If more than one date of publication is given, cite the most recent.

A Book by Two or Three Authors

Always begin with the author whose name appears first on the title page, inverted, and then give the other authors' names in regular order.

Gaetz, Lynne, and Suneeti Phadke. *The Writer's World*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2009. Print.

A Book by Four or More Authors

List the first author's name (inverted), followed by et al. You may also list all of the authors, inverting the first author's name. Note that if you choose to do this, you will need to list all of the authors for your in-text citations as well on your Works Cited page.

More Than One Work by the Same Author

When you have used more than one work by the same author, alphabetize the titles and then put the author's name with the first title. Subsequent titles are preceded by three dashes and a period.

Magazine and Scholarly Journal Articles Retrieved From a College Database

For magazine and scholarly journal articles accessed through online college databases, such as EBSCOhost or ProQuest, use basic rules but add the name of the database, the medium, and the date you retrieved the article.

Zakaria, Fareed. "How Will Obama Handle RyanCare?" *Time* 18 Apr. 2011: 29–30.
Academic Search Elite. Web. 22 May 2011.

Magazines Published Online

After the author and the title of the article, give the sponsor or publisher of the site, the date of the article, the medium, and the date you accessed it.

Cowper-Coles, Sherard. "Why Talking to the Taliban is the Only Option." *Newsweek.com*.
The Newsweek/Daily Beast Company, 29 May 2011: n. pag. Web. 31 May 2011.

Works Cited Page: Other Essentials

Here are a few final guidelines for constructing your Works Cited page:

- Begin a new page in your document for your Works Cited page.
- Title this page *Works Cited*; center this title left to right; do not underline, italicize, or use boldface print.
- Alphabetize your sources by the last name of the first author given, or, if a work has no author listed, by the first word of the title.
- Do not number your entries.
- Double space both within and between entries.

- Indent the second and all subsequent lines of an entry with the hanging indent feature in your word-processing program.
- Paginate your Works Cited page in the upper right-hand corner.

MODULE 11

MODES III: ARGUMENTATIVE MODE

Introduction

There will be many occasions when you will need to convince a reader to do something or to change his or her belief about something. You may need to write an academic research paper arguing that online learning is as effective as traditional classroom-based learning. You may have to write a memo or report to convince your boss to implement a certain change at work. Or you may want to write a letter for your newspaper's editorial page to convince citizens to vote for a particular candidate for public office or to oppose a proposed change for your community. This type of writing is termed argumentative because you are *arguing* a certain position.

Lesson 11.1: The Argumentative Mode

Lesson 11.1 Introduction

Arguing for or against something involves offering convincing reasons in support of your position. To write an effective argumentative essay, first you need to consider your audience's needs and goals and write a persuasive thesis statement. You will also need to select relevant reasons and acknowledge opposing arguments, and develop your reasons with sufficient logical or emotional evidence.

Thinking About Your Audience

Many of the other modes of development usually focus either on the writer and his or her thoughts and experiences (narration, description) or on the subject itself (comparison/contrast, cause/effect, definition). Argumentative writing, in contrast, focuses on the *reader*. Because the whole purpose of persuasive writing is to persuade, or convince, the reader, the whole essay revolves around the kinds of reasons and evidence that the reader will need in order to accept the idea presented in the writer's thesis statement.

Thus, the first step in planning an argumentative essay is to carefully consider the targeted reader. Whether this is one person or many, remember that arguments are not directed at people who agree with the writer. Writing an essay for those who already concur with the thesis would be a waste of time. Instead, argumentative essays are directed at readers who either disagree with the writer's viewpoint or have not yet made up their minds.

Once you have determined exactly who needs to be persuaded to accept your thesis, spend some time thinking about that reader's (or those readers') needs, goals, and potential objections. At this point, analyze your readers, at least informally. What do they probably believe right now? What do you think their goals and priorities are? To what parts of your argument will they object? Can you think of ways to overcome those objections? As you plan and write your essay, you will often return to this analysis to guide you in making decisions about *what* to include and *how* to include it.

The Persuasive Thesis Statement

You should have an idea of who your audience is if you are planning to craft an essay that will win them over and convince them of your side of the argument. In particular, your analysis of your readers will affect your choice of a thesis statement and supporting reasons. A persuasive thesis statement will let your audience know what stance you are planning to take on the argument that follows.

Persuasive thesis statements usually have several important characteristics.

1. Persuasive thesis statements clearly state the behavior or belief that they want the reader to adopt after reading the essay. And to reflect their persuasive purpose, these types of thesis statements often include words and phrases like *should*, *must*, *ought to*, and *have to*. For example, read the following thesis statements:

Every healthy American should become an organ donor.

This university's administration must figure out a way to provide more parking for students.

The residents of this community ought to oppose the construction of a new Walmart.

Each of the previous statements clearly states the change in belief or behavior that the writer is advocating.

2. Persuasive thesis statements are also assertive. They do not include tentative or hedging words and expressions like "I believe that" or "*maybe* you should." They take a stand, and they confidently ask the reader to accept that stand as true and valid.

3. Persuasive thesis statements often include the agent of the action. In other words, they state exactly who should make or bring about this change. In the previous statements, healthy Americans, the university's administration, and the residents of a certain community are the ones being asked to alter either a belief or a behavior.

4. Persuasive thesis statements ask the reader to make changes that are logical and reasonable. Again, a consideration of your audience will guide your composition of your thesis statement. Although you might want them to make a very big change, you must consider whether you should initially argue for that big change or for some intermediate, shorter-term change that will, you hope, ultimately lead to the bigger change. For instance, will readers who believe the American tax system is currently just fine think it is reasonable for you to ask them to support eliminating the current system altogether and creating a completely new one from scratch? Probably not. No matter how eloquent and well-reasoned your argument is, you likely will not be able to convince them, so you might have to adjust your thesis statement to argue an idea that is more within the realm of possibility for them. You could argue instead that the current tax system needs to be reformed in certain ways.

Once you have a thesis statement, you are ready to prepare an argument. You prepare an argument by choosing effective support. The goal of a persuasive paper is to present an argument that is difficult to refute because it is so carefully thought out. Thus, your argument needs to progress logically. In order to present an effective argument, you need to do the following:

- **Consider the other side of the story.** This is called the *counterargument*. If the counterargument is glaring, it may be necessary to refute opposing beliefs before you present your own position.
- **Present facts that are difficult to refute, such as statistics and statements by authorities.** While examples are good, research can nail an argument.

- **Arrange your support in a logical manner to prove your case.** It is often a good idea to save your strongest point for last.

Lesson 11.2: Supporting Evidence and Counterarguments

Lesson 11.2 Introduction

Just as consideration of your reader determines your thesis statement, your analysis of your audience should guide your choice of supporting points. Your analysis of your readers will also help you to determine how to refute those readers' objections to your ideas. Most readers will resist if they feel you are *forcing* them to agree with you. Instead, intelligent readers will seek out arguments supported by reasons and facts. It is important for you, as the writer, to consider what types of proof your audience may be looking for—and what they may already believe—when building support for your thesis.

Effective Supporting Reasons

Often, there are many different reasons in support of a particular opinion. However, not all of these reasons may be relevant to your target audience. Therefore, in the planning stages of writing your essay, you will need to decide which reasons most closely match your readers' priorities and goals.

For example, if you intend to argue to drivers that they should give up driving their cars to and from work and instead use mass transportation (such as the bus, subway, or train), you would need to consider these readers' priorities. Typical employed people are concerned about time, money, safety, convenience, and stress reduction. Thus, they will respond to reasons that relate to time saved, financial benefits, accident statistics, ease of use, and the elimination of hassles. These readers may be less likely to be convinced by reasons that are unrelated to their main concerns, such as environmental issues, so you could leave those points out.

You can present many kinds of facts that are difficult to refute. While a personal example can be effective, people are more easily swayed by statistics and statements by authorities that are based in research. Examine the following paragraph, which contains several types of support:

No one should even entertain the idea of not wearing a seatbelt. According to "Safety Belt Statistics," compiled by James Madison University, "one out of every five drivers will be involved in a traffic crash this year." The article notes that of the "approximately 35,000 people [who] die in motor vehicles each year," half would have been saved had they only been wearing their seatbelts. This was true for Shawn Leasing, a young man who was on his way to a party the night he graduated from high school. Reasoning that he was only traveling five minutes from his home, Shawn neglected to fasten his safety belt. Taking a corner a bit too fast, he lost control of his car, hit a ditch, and rolled over. He was killed instantly as he was thrown from the vehicle, hitting a tree. Officers on the scene remarked to Shawn's devastated father that the 18-year-old would have survived the accident had he only been wearing his seatbelt. What a tragedy! Furthermore, although some people worry about being trapped inside a vehicle, unable to free themselves from their seatbelts, the truth of the matter, according to Sheri Buddy Gibson, is that "Motorists are much more likely to survive an accident when they are buckled up and remain inside their vehicle than when they are 'thrown clear.'" The facts are clear: If you want to survive an accident, wear your seatbelt.

The previous paragraph is effective because it provides convincing support: statistics from a reliable source, a compelling narrative example, and a statement by an authority.

Considering the Other Side of the Story

As you present your case, it may be necessary to consider counterarguments, viewpoints that are different from your own. If you can refute readers' objections as you argue your position, you stand a good chance of convincing them to accept your viewpoint. Look at the following example, in which the counterarguments, or possible objections, are underlined:

Parents who allow underage drinking at their homes are damaging their children. The thinking behind allowing teenagers access to alcohol is the misguided belief that "They're going to drink anyway; if they drink at home, I can control what goes on." This is not true. Studies show that the earlier a child begins drinking, the more likely he or she is to develop drinking problems. This is supported by a June 25, 2007, article from *Newsweek*, which outlines many of the risk factors to which teens who drink are susceptible simply because their brains are still developing. Another commonly accepted myth is that children who grow up in countries where they are allowed to drink learn how to drink responsibly and, therefore, avoid the drinking problems typically experienced by Americans. However, the *Newsweek* article points out that the "highest rate of cirrhosis of the liver is in France," where the legal drinking age is 16. Parents should focus on being effective role models for their children and should establish clear expectations and consequences for them. Under no circumstances should parents allow their children (and certainly no one else's children) to drink in their homes.

Note how the author of the previous paragraph refutes two possible objections while presenting clear support for her position. Even as she acknowledges these possible objections, the author begins to refute them; she introduces the first as a "misguided belief" and the second as a "commonly accepted myth." After stating these counterarguments, which are "They're going to drink anyway; if they drink at home, I can control what goes on" and "... children who grow up in countries where they are allowed to drink learn how to drink responsibly and, therefore, avoid the drinking problems typically experienced by Americans," the author then completes her refutation of each of them, using the same article from *Newsweek* to support her position.

Opposing Arguments

One special feature of argumentative essays is the acknowledgment of opposing arguments, which is also known as making *concessions*. When you make a concession, you mention one or more of your opponent's arguments, and then you go on to refute that argument by explaining how your position is stronger, more logical, or more valid. Making concessions to the opposing arguments indicates to your reader that you understand the entire issue, not just your side of it. It also allows you to expose the weaknesses in opposing arguments by explaining how they are flawed.

Argumentative essay writers do not explain an opposing argument in detail. They merely mention it and then go on to refute it. Concessions can be dealt with in one section of the essay, but they are often most effective when you match each concession to one of your supporting points and use the supporting point as a refutation of the opposing argument. For example, if you assert that using mass transportation results in time being saved, someone who disagreed with you could point out that driving a car to a destination often takes less time than taking a bus there. To refute this argument, you could point to statistics indicating how much time a driver can actually end up wasting in traffic jams on busy workdays. You could also point out that unlike driving, time spent commuting via mass transportation allows a person to do other things while riding. The following example, which includes a concession in italic type, demonstrates one way of doing this:

You might think that riding the bus would take more time than simply driving yourself to and from work. However, using mass transportation actually gives you time to get things done that would otherwise take up additional hours of your day. When you drive, all you

can do is drive. But when you ride a bus, you can pay bills, read, or even work on a laptop computer. Thus, you are utilizing the time more wisely.

If you decided to include the argument that using mass transportation reduces stress, someone who disagreed with you might point out that having to be at a bus or train stop at a certain time creates time pressures. Or he or she might say that riding in crowded buses or cars is stressful. In turn, you could counter with information about the stress caused by driving in heavy traffic every day. The following example includes both the concession (in italic type) and the response:

Drivers may argue that driving is less stressful than riding the bus. They probably do not realize, however, how much stress they put themselves through by driving back and forth to work in traffic.

Notice that both of these concessions to the opposing argument are mentioned very briefly in just one sentence. Notice also that the transitional word *however* signals the end of the concession and the beginning of the writer's argument.

Other contrast transitional words, such as *but*, *on the other hand*, *though*, and *nevertheless*, are also appropriate in signaling such a shift. Concessions themselves often begin with words and expressions such as *admittedly*, *of course*, *it is true that*, and *I concede that*.

As you develop the habit of incorporating concessions into your argumentative essays, choose your words carefully to avoid insulting or offending readers. Remember that they either disagree with you or are undecided and that they are likely to believe many of the opposing arguments you are going to refute. Therefore, when you make concessions, use language that is sensitive to your readers. Do not suggest that the opposing argument (and, thus, the people who believe it) is uninformed or ignorant. It is probably best to avoid using aggressively judgmental words such as *ridiculous* or *silly* when you mention an opposing argument. Instead, gently refute each one with logical, well-reasoned explanations of your own viewpoints.

Lesson 11.3: Write and Support an Argument

Lesson 11.3 Introduction

Argumentative essays are the mode you will use most often during your college career. Because most of your writing assignments will involve critical thinking, almost every thesis that you write will be argumentative. In fact, much of the writing that you will do in college will involve a blending of modes, but always with persuasion, or argument, at the heart of it. An effective argumentative essay does each of the following:

- It presents a critical position in the thesis, which should be debatable.
- It argues the critical position with concrete, compelling support that is arranged well and difficult to refute.

Organizing an Argumentative Essay and Using Transitions

After you decide on your thesis and the reasons you will offer in support of your argument, your next major consideration will be the order in which to present these reasons. Order of importance is the most common pattern for arranging reasons. Therefore, rank each of your reasons in importance, and then let your analysis of your readers guide you in your decision about whether to discuss them in order from most important to least important or vice versa, from least important to most important. If your readers are very busy decision-makers, consider beginning with your strongest, most important reason, the one that will be most likely to persuade them. If you are

reasonably sure that your readers will be willing to read the entire essay, giving your entire argument careful consideration, consider saving your strongest reason for last so that it will be the one they remember best after they have finished reading. Readers tend to retain the last thing they read, so you can make your essay more effective by arranging your supports so that your most powerful one is the last one you present.

Some topics lend themselves to a chronological progression, moving from least recent to most recent. For example, an essay persuading parents to set clear boundaries for their children might begin with a discussion of why boundaries are important for toddlers. The essay would logically progress into a discussion of the importance of boundaries for school-aged children and finish with the vital reasons teenagers need clearly defined boundaries.

An essay persuading people to safeguard their children from predators might begin with a discussion of what parents did to keep their children safe in the past and move chronologically into the reasons why parents must be extra vigilant where their children's safety is concerned today.

As you write, do not forget to include transitional words that help readers follow you from one point to the next. Some of the most common argumentative transitional words and phrases are:

first, second, third

one reason, another reason, and so on

most importantly

for one thing

next

lastly

finally

another

in addition

furthermore

also

Developing Your Supporting Reasons with Evidence

As you develop each reason that supports your thesis, be aware of the two kinds of evidence you can offer and plan to include the kind that is more likely to convince your reader. The first type is *logical* evidence, which includes facts, statistics, expert opinion, and examples. This type of evidence consists of the hard data and observable facts that will appeal to your readers' reason and intellect. If you want to argue for using mass transportation instead of driving to work, for instance, you can provide specific details about the cost of taking the bus versus the cost of driving. You could also provide statistics that compare the safety of bus riders to the safety of drivers.

The second type of evidence is emotional. This evidence appeals to readers' needs and feelings, such as the need for fun or friendship and the desire to be a good parent. Think of television

commercials, which attempt to sell us many products—from perfume to beer to peanut butter—by appealing to our desires to be attractive, well-liked, loving to our children, and so on. These types of arguments can also be effective in argumentative essays, too. For example, you could argue that by using mass transportation, you are increasing your own safety and thus also doing something important for your children. This particular argument appeals to readers' love and concern for their families. However, beware of basing entire academic arguments on emotional evidence. Readers of academic and professional arguments will expect the majority of your evidence to be factual and logical.

As you incorporate both logical and emotional kinds of evidence in support of your argument, make sure that you avoid *logical fallacies*, arguments that are flawed in various ways because they are based on careless thinking or on deliberate attempts to distract the reader. Some of these fallacies are based on a lack of sufficient evidence. For example, a writer may simply repeat a point over and over without ever offering any real proof in support of it. Or the writer may jump to conclusions on the basis of very little evidence. Other fallacies arise from flawed relationships. For example, a writer might claim that one thing led to another without considering the other factors that could have been at work, or he or she might carelessly compare two things that are really more different than they are alike. Still other fallacies take the form of personal attacks against those who believe the opposing arguments or try to persuade the reader based on what other people—such as celebrities—believe. Alert readers will detect such fallacies, which weaken your arguments.

Steps in Writing Argumentative Essays

When preparing to write an argumentative essay, keep these six steps in mind to help you stay focused and persuade your audience.

- 1. Consider your readers.** An analysis of your readers will affect all of the other decisions you will make as you plan and write your essay.
- 2. Write a persuasive main idea statement that takes your audience into consideration.** Write a reasonable, assertive thesis statement that clearly expresses what you want your readers to do or to believe.
- 3. Match your supporting reasons to your readers' priorities and goals.** Include only those reasons that are relevant to your readers.
- 4. Incorporate concessions.** Anticipate and acknowledge the opposing viewpoints and then go on to refute them.
- 5. Determine the best order for your reasons.** Decide whether you should arrange your reasons from most important to least important or vice versa. Include transitional words to help the readers follow you from one point to the next.
- 6. Develop each reason with either logical or emotional evidence.** Use your analysis of your readers to decide which facts, statistics, expert testimony, examples, or emotional appeals will be most effective.