Successful College Writing for GPC Students

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Successful College Writing for GPC Students

Preface

While Writing for Success is an e-textbook available online from the Saylor Foundation under a Creative Commons license, Successful College Writing for GPC Students is considerably modified from the original Saylor version. Having its genesis in a presidential initiative to bring affordable, quality textbooks to students at Georgia Perimeter College, this e-textbook represents a collaborative effort of English and Library faculty from all Georgia Perimeter College campuses (Clarkston, Dunwoody, Decatur, Newton, Alpharetta, and Online) who have worked diligently to accommodate the basic Saylor e-text to the unique and diverse needs and abilities of our students. It is still a work in progress, but we hope that it will provide students with a solid background in writing skills while allowing instructors to accommodate the text to complement their teaching styles.

Successful College Writing for GPC Students builds writing, reading, and critical thinking skills by involving students in the writing process. It combines a comprehensive grammar review with a discussion of the various stages of composition (from prewriting, constructing a thesis and outline, to writing and revising the finished essay) as well as a brief introduction to research. With its incremental approach, this e-book addresses concepts with clear, concise, and effective examples that are immediately reinforced with exercises and opportunities for students to demonstrate their mastery of the principles of quality writing.

Features

• An inter-active Table of Contents is provided. Instructors and students can easily access chapter subdivisions in the text by clicking on the desired section in the Table of Contents or by accessing the chapter links in the page thumbnails on the left side of the document.

• Print options are available. Students and instructors can use the e-text in its electronic format, or they can print the text (or designated sections of it) from the PDF file.

• Exercises are integrated in each segment. Each concept is immediately reinforced as soon as it is introduced to keep students on track.

• Exercises are designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration. This allows for peer-peer engagement, development of interpersonal skills, and promotion of critical-thinking skills.
• **Exercises that involve self-editing and collaborative writing are featured.** This feature develops and promotes student interest in the knowledge areas and content.

• **A supplemental grammar workbook is provided.** Chapter 10 contains additional exercises for students to practice grammar skills. The Learning and Tutoring Centers will be happy to assist both instructors and students with these exercises.

• **There are clear internal summaries and effective displays of information.** This contributes to ease of access to information and increases students’ ability to locate desired content.

• **Rule explanations are simplified with clear, relevant, and theme-based examples.** This feature provides context that will facilitate learning and increase knowledge retention.

• **There is an obvious structure to the chapter and segment level.** This allows for easy adaptation to existing and changing course needs or assessment outcomes.

• **Tips for effective writing and Key Takeaways are included in every chapter.** These features emphasize important elements of the material that students are studying.

• **Writing at Work sections are included in every chapter.** These suggestions encourage students to see practical, “real world” applications of the skills they are learning.

• **Links to APA and MLA documentation websites are provided.** By linking to established documentation websites, this information will be continually updated and accurate.

• **Links to professional essays are provided.** Students can view a variety of professional essays in the various rhetorical modes. Instructors should check the links before using them with students to insure that they are still viable; instructors can also provide their own supplemental materials as part of their iCollege sections. Several model student essays are included within the chapters of the text, but a comprehensive set of student examples can be found in *The Polishing Cloth*, which we recommend as a supplement to this e-text.

I would like to thank Interim President Rob Watts for spearheading this project and all the members of the English e-text committee for their efforts in making this text a reality: Kathryn Crowther, Mary Ann Cullen, Lauren Curtright, Jennifer Duncan, Barbara Hall, Mary Hamilton, Kay Harrison, Karen Holley, Muriel Lange, Ann Mallard, Kari Miller, Katherine Perry, Tracienne Ravita, Andrew Rogers, Janet Shanteau, Kirk Swenson, and Carol Warren. I would also like to recognize Patricia Gregg and the Office of Institutional
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---Dr. Rosemary D. Cox

Chair, English 1101 E-Text Committee

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Chapter 1
Introduction to Writing

1.1 Becoming a Successful Writer

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the purpose of writing.
2. Learn how to avoid writer’s block.
3. Use an appropriate voice.
4. Select the proper pronoun focus.

In her book *On Writing*, Eudora Welty maintains: “To write honestly and with all our powers is the least we can do, and the most.” But writing well is difficult. People who write for a living sometimes struggle to get their thoughts on the page; even people who generally enjoy writing have days when they would rather do anything else. For people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, writing assignments can be stressful or even intimidating. And, of course, you cannot get through college without having to write—sometimes a lot, and often at a higher level than you are used to. No magic formula will make writing quick and easy. However, you can use strategies and resources to manage writing assignments more easily. College will challenge you as a writer, but it is also a unique opportunity to grow.

Thinking and Communicating: The Purpose of Writing

One purpose of writing is to help you clarify and articulate your thoughts. Writing a list of points, both pro and con, on an issue of concern allows you to see which of your arguments are the strongest or reveals areas that need additional support. Putting ideas on paper helps you review and evaluate them, reconsider their validity and perhaps generate new concepts. Writing your thoughts down may even help you grasp them for the first time.

Another important—and practical—function of writing is to communicate ideas. For your college classes you are required to write essays, research papers and essay responses on tests. If you apply to other colleges or universities, you will have to compose letters of application, respond to specific questions, or write an autobiographical sketch. When you enter your chosen career you may have to send e-mails and write reports, proposals, grants, or other work-related documents. You must
correspond with clients, business associates, and co-workers. And on a personal level, you want to contact friends and relatives. You may even find yourself responding to a community or national issue by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Writing is an essential skill you must have in order to function in the twenty-first century, but like any skill, it is something that can be acquired and refined. Some people just naturally express themselves better than others, but everyone can learn the basic craft of writing.

**Overcoming Writer’s Block**

At some point, every writer experiences writer’s block: staring at a blank page or computer screen without being able to put down even a single line. Your mind is blank, and panic sets in because writer’s block usually happens when you are working against a deadline such as in a timed writing assignment or for a paper that is due the next day. Even though there is nothing you can do to prevent writer’s block from happening, there are several techniques you can use to help you overcome its negative effects:

**Don’t Procrastinate:** give yourself as much time as possible to complete your assignment. Budget your time so you can write the assignment in sections and still have time to edit and revise. If you are in a timed writing situation, jot down ideas in a scratch outline and work from that.

**Try Freewriting without Guilt:** just start putting ideas down on paper. You don’t need to worry about whether or not you are making spelling and grammatical errors; you shouldn’t fret over organization. Keep in mind that you can always delete what you have written once your ideas begin to flow.

**Follow Your Inspiration:** begin by writing the section of the paper you feel best able to write. If you cannot start at the beginning, write the conclusion first, or begin writing the body of the paper. If you have an outline, you will already have the ideas and organization you need to write the body paragraphs.

**Break the Writing Project into Parts:** think of the paper as a series of short sections. Sometimes you can be overwhelmed by the prospect of writing a ten-page research paper, but if you break it up into manageable pieces, the assignment does not seem so daunting.
Review the Assignment: reread the instructions for the assignment to make sure you understand what you are expected to write. Look for key words that you can research to give you insight into your topic. Often discussing the assignment with your professor can give you the clarity you need to begin writing.

Verbalize Your Ideas: discuss your ideas with a classmate, friend or family member. You can gain new insights and confidence by hearing what others have to say about your topic and sharing your misgivings with them.

Visualize a Friendly Audience: imagine you are writing the paper to a friend or someone you know well. Often the fear of rejection paralyzes your ability to start writing, so removing that obstacle should enable you to write without inhibition.

Take a Break: try working on another writing project or switch to a completely different activity. Often if you get bogged down on one subject, thinking about something else for a while might clear your brain so you can come back to the original project with a new perspective. And getting up from the computer usually unclogs any mental blocks: take a walk, wash the dishes, or play with the dog.

Change locations: try moving to another area more conducive to your writing style. Some people write best in a noisy environment while others require a place with minimal distractions. Find what works best for you.

Remember that writer’s block is only temporary—relax and start writing.

Selecting an Appropriate Voice

Whether you are writing an argumentative essay expressing your conviction that whale hunting should be abolished or a literary analysis of Kate Chopin’s novel *The Awakening*, your paper should express a distinct point of view. Your purpose should be to convince your audience that you have something worthwhile to say. Gaining their approval depends to a large degree on their perception of the writer: you need to present yourself as educated, rational, and well-informed. But in doing so, you need to be careful not to lose your own voice. You should never use a wordy, artificial
style in an attempt to impress your readers; neither should you talk down to them or apologize for
your writing.

**Choosing the Proper Pronoun Focus**

One important consideration in selecting the appropriate voice for your paper is to choose the
proper pronoun focus, and this is dependent upon the nature of the assignment. In some instances,
the first person (“I”) is acceptable: for example, if you are writing an autobiographical sketch for an
application to a university, anything other than first person would sound odd. Likewise, if you are
writing an extemporaneous essay that answers a question prompting a first person response, such as
“Explain why you do or do not vote,” again, first person would be the obvious choice. Even within the
development of an essay that takes a third person approach, if you use an example from your personal
experience to illustrate a point, you can discuss that isolated example using the first person. Most of
the same arguments apply to the use of the second person pronoun (“you”). This textbook, for
instance, utilizes the second person because of the unique relationship between the student/reader
and the instructor/writer.

But most academic writing requires you to adopt a third person focus, preferably in the plural
form (“they”). Using third person enables you to avoid boring the reader by suggesting that the topic
is of interest only to you; in other words, it broadens the audience appeal. Using third person in the
plural form also allows you to avoid making pronoun agreement errors which might occur as the
natural result of imitating spoken English which seems to favor the plural form instead of the more
grammatically correct singular: for example, most people would say, “Everyone should have their
book in class” instead of “Everyone should have his book in class,” even though the former is
technically incorrect. In addition, using third person plural eliminates the problem of sexist language
and prevents the awkward use of “his/her.” Consider the following examples for their use of pronoun
focus if they appeared in an essay about the validity of using source materials from the Internet:

**Weak Example**: As I surfed the Internet, I found a lot of articles that I couldn’t trust
because I didn’t see any authors’ names or sponsoring organizations.
Weak Example: As we surf the Internet, we frequently find articles we cannot trust because we do not find authors’ names or sponsoring organizations.

Weak Example: As one surfs the Internet, one frequently finds articles one cannot trust because one cannot find authors’ names or sponsoring organizations.

Stronger Example: Surfing the Internet for source information is unreliable because many articles do not indicate authors or sponsoring organizations.

The first example is too limited—who cares what you found on the Internet? The second example generalizes the focus better than the first, but it, too, restricts the audience. Changing the pronoun to “one” is also problematic because it is repetitious and awkward. The final example is the best to use in an essay because it emphasizes the point in an all-inclusive manner, without being redundant or sounding artificial.

EXERCISE 1

Rewrite the following sentences, changing the pronoun focus to best suit the needs of an essay written for an English 1101 class:

1. I find that walking is one of the best forms of exercise because it helps me lose weight and improve my cardiovascular system while I can enjoy being outside in the fresh air.

2. One should always pay attention to the charges on one’s credit card bills in order to identify if one’s account number has been stolen and to avoid being charged for services one did not receive.

3. We believe that we should be able to eat healthy fruits and vegetables without our having to pay exorbitant prices for organically grown food.

4. Your best chance of making a lot of money for retirement is to diversify your portfolio, investing in a variety of options instead of putting all of your funds in just one account.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Writing is an effective way to clarify, articulate, and communicate your thoughts.
- Writer’s Block does not have to stall the writing process if you employ effective techniques to overcome it.
1.2 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify purpose, audience, tone, and content.
2. Apply audience, tone, and content to a specific assignment.

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. Keep in mind that three main elements shape the content of each essay:

1. **Purpose.** The reason the writer composes the essay.
2. **Tone.** The attitude the writer conveys about the essay’s subject.
3. **Audience.** The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.

*Figure 1.1* Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content Triangle
The assignment’s purpose, audience, and tone dictate what each paragraph of the essay covers and how it will support the main point—the thesis.

**Identifying Common Academic Purposes**

The purpose for a piece of writing identifies the reason you write it by, basically, answering the question “Why?” For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theater. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform him or her of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your congressman? To persuade him to address your community’s needs.

In academic settings, the reasons for writing typically fulfill four main purposes: to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate. A **summary** shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials, using your own words; although shorter than the original piece of writing, a summary should still communicate all the key points and key support of the original document. An **analysis**, on the other hand, separates complex materials into their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. In the sciences, for example, the analysis of simple table salt would require a deconstruction of its parts—the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride: simple table salt. In an academic analysis, instead of deconstructing compounds, the essay takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

The third type of writing—**synthesis**—combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Take, for example, the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar—or any other combination of instruments—to create a new sound. The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document by considering the main points from one or more pieces of writing and linking the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document.

Finally, an **evaluation** judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations in everyday life are often not only dictated by set standards but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge such as a supervisor’s evaluation of an employee in a particular job. Academic evaluations,
likewise, communicate your opinion and its justifications about a particular document or a topic of
discussion. They are influenced by your reading of the document as well as your prior knowledge and
experience with the topic or issue. Evaluations typically require more critical thinking and a combination
of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills.

You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but also as you read
for work or pleasure, and because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as
you read. Remember that the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of your paper, helping
you make decisions about content and style.

**Tip**

When reviewing directions for assignments, look for the verbs *summarize, analyze, synthesize,*
or *evaluate.* Instructors often use these words to clearly indicate the assignment’s purpose. These words
will cue you on how to complete the assignment because you will know its exact purpose.

**EXERCISE 1**

Read the following paragraphs about four films and then identify the purpose of each paragraph: to
summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, or to evaluate.

1. This film could easily have been cut down to less than two hours. By the final scene, I noticed
that most of my fellow moviegoers were snoozing in their seats and were barely paying
attention to what was happening on screen. Although the director sticks diligently to the
book, he tries too hard to cram in all the action, which is just too ambitious for such a detail-
oriented story. If you want my advice, read the book and give the movie a miss.

2. During the opening scene, we learn that the character Laura is adopted and that she has
spent the past three years desperately trying to track down her real parents. Having
exhausted all the usual options—adoption agencies, online searches, family trees, and so
on—she is on the verge of giving up when she meets a stranger on a bus. The chance
encounter leads to a complicated chain of events that ultimately result in Laura getting her
lifelong wish. But is it really what she wants? Throughout the rest of the film, Laura discovers
that sometimes the past is best left where it belongs.
3. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vice, the director, May Lee, uses a variety of elements to gradually increase the tension. The creepy, haunting melody that subtly enhances the earlier scenes becomes ever more insistent, rising to a disturbing crescendo toward the end of the movie. The desperation of the actors, combined with the claustrophobic atmosphere and tight camera angles create a realistic firestorm, from which there is little hope of escape. Walking out of the theater at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.

4. The scene in which Campbell and his fellow prisoners assist the guards in shutting down the riot immediately strikes the viewer as unrealistic. Based on the recent reports on prison riots in both Detroit and California, it seems highly unlikely that a posse of hardened criminals will intentionally help their captors at the risk of inciting future revenge from other inmates. Instead, both news reports and psychological studies indicate that prisoners who do not actively participate in a riot will go back to their cells and avoid conflict altogether. Examples of this lack of attention to detail occur throughout the film, making it almost unbearable to watch.

5. Collaboration: Share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Writing at Work**

Thinking about the purpose of writing a report in the workplace can help focus and structure the document. A summary should provide colleagues with a factual overview of your findings without going into too much specific detail. In contrast, an evaluation should include your personal opinion, along with supporting evidence, research, or examples to back it up. Listen for words such as summarize, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate when your boss asks you to complete a report to help determine a purpose for writing.

**EXERCISE 2**

Consider the essay most recently assigned to you. Identify the most effective academic purpose for the assignment.

My assignment: ____________________________________________
Identifying the Audience

Imagine you must give a presentation to a group of executives in an office. Weeks before the big day, you spend time creating and rehearsing the presentation. You must make important, careful decisions not only about the content but also about your delivery. Will the presentation require technology to project figures and charts? Should the presentation define important words, or will the executives already know the terms? Should you wear your suit and dress shirt? The answers to these questions will help you develop an appropriate relationship with your audience, making them more receptive to your message.

Now imagine you must explain the same business concepts from your presentation to a group of high school students. Those important questions you previously answered may now require different answers. The figures and charts may be too sophisticated, and the terms will certainly require definitions. You may even reconsider your outfit and sport a more casual look. Because the audience has shifted, your presentation and delivery will shift as well to create a new relationship with the new audience.

In these two situations, the audience—the individuals who will watch and listen to the presentation—plays a role in the development of presentation. As you prepare the presentation, you visualize the audience to anticipate their expectations and reactions. What you imagine affects the information you choose to present and how you will present it. Then, during the presentation, you meet the audience in person and discover immediately how well you perform.

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers’ characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about audience has become so common that you may not even detect the audience-driven decisions.

For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send e-mails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could intercept the message.

In other words, being aware of “invisible” readers is a skill you most likely already possess and one you rely on every day. Consider the following paragraphs. Which one would the author send to her parents? Which one would she send to her best friend?
Example A
Last Saturday, I volunteered at a local hospital. The visit was fun and rewarding. I even learned how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR. Unfortunately, I think caught a cold from one of the patients. This week, I will rest in bed and drink plenty of clear fluids. I hope I am well by next Saturday to volunteer again.

Example B
OMG! You won’t believe this! My advisor forced me to do my community service hours at this hospital all weekend! We learned CPR but we did it on dummies, not even real peeps. And some kid sneezed on me and got me sick! I was so bored and sniffling all weekend; I hope I don’t have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

Most likely, you matched each paragraph to its intended audience with little hesitation. Because each paragraph reveals the author’s relationship with her intended readers, you can identify the audience fairly quickly. When writing your own essays, you must engage with your audience to build an appropriate relationship given your subject. Imagining your readers during each stage of the writing process will help you make decisions about your writing. Ultimately, the people you visualize will affect what and how you write.

Tip
While giving a speech, you may articulate an inspiring or critical message, but if you left your hair a mess and laced up mismatched shoes, your audience would not take you seriously. They may be too distracted by your appearance to listen to your words. Similarly, grammar and sentence structure serve as the appearance of a piece of writing. Polishing your work using correct grammar will impress your readers and allow them to focus on what you have to say.

Because focusing on audience will enhance your writing, your process, and your finished product, you must consider the specific traits of your audience members. Use your imagination to anticipate the readers’ demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations.
• **Demographics.** These measure important data about a group of people, such as their age range, their ethnicity, their religious beliefs, or their gender. Certain topics and assignments will require these kinds of considerations about your audience. For other topics and assignments, these measurements may not influence your writing in the end. Regardless, it is important to consider demographics when you begin to think about your purpose for writing.

• **Education.** Education considers the audience’s level of schooling. If audience members have earned a doctorate degree, for example, you may need to elevate your style and use more formal language. Or, if audience members are still in college, you could write in a more relaxed style. An audience member’s major or emphasis may also dictate your writing.

• **Prior knowledge.** This refers to what the audience already knows about your topic. If your readers have studied certain topics, they may already know some terms and concepts related to the topic. You may decide whether to define terms and explain concepts based on your audience’s prior knowledge. Although you cannot peer inside the brains of your readers to discover their knowledge, you can make reasonable assumptions. For instance, a nursing major would presumably know more about health-related topics than a business major would.

• **Expectations.** These indicate what readers will look for while reading your assignment. Readers may expect consistencies in the assignment’s appearance, such as correct grammar and traditional formatting like double-spaced lines and legible font. Readers may also have content-based expectations given the assignment’s purpose and organization. In an essay titled “The Economics of Enlightenment: The Effects of Rising Tuition,” for example, audience members may expect to read about the economic repercussions of college tuition costs.

**EXERCISE 3**

On your own sheet of paper, generate a list of characteristics under each category for each audience. This list will help you later when you read about tone and content.

1. Your classmates
   - Demographics
   - Education
   - Prior knowledge
2. Your instructor
   - Demographics
   - Education
   - Prior knowledge
   - Expectations

3. The head of your academic department
   - Demographics
   - Education
   - Prior knowledge
   - Expectations

4. Now think about your next writing assignment. Identify the purpose (you may use the same purpose listed in Exercise 1.2.2), and then identify the audience. Create a list of characteristics under each category.

   My assignment:______________________________
   My purpose:______________________________
   My audience:______________________________
   - Demographics
   - Education
   - Prior knowledge
   - Expectations

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Selecting an Appropriate Tone**

Tone identifies a speaker’s attitude toward a subject or another person. You may pick up a person’s tone of voice fairly easily in conversation. A friend who tells you about her weekend may speak excitedly about a fun skiing trip. An instructor who means business may speak in a low, slow voice to emphasize her
serious mood. Or, a coworker who needs to let off some steam after a long meeting may crack a sarcastic joke.

Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers can transmit through writing a range of attitudes, from excited and humorous to somber and critical. These emotions create connections among the audience, the author, and the subject, ultimately building a relationship between the audience and the text. To stimulate these connections, writers intimate their attitudes and feelings with useful devices, such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language. Keep in mind that the writer’s attitude should always appropriately match the audience and the purpose.

Read the following paragraph and consider the writer’s tone. How would you describe the writer’s attitude toward wildlife conservation?

Many species of plants and animals are disappearing right before our eyes. If we don’t act fast, it might be too late to save them. Human activities, including pollution, deforestation, hunting, and overpopulation, are devastating the natural environment. Without our help, many species will not survive long enough for our children to see them in the wild. Take the tiger, for example. Today, tigers occupy just seven percent of their historical range, and many local populations are already extinct. Hunted for their beautiful pelts and other body parts, the tiger population has plummeted from one hundred thousand in 1920 to just a few thousand. Contact your local wildlife conservation society today to find out how you can stop this terrible destruction.

**EXERCISE 4**

Think about the assignment and purpose you selected in Exercise 1.2.2, and the audience you selected in Exercise 1.2.3. Now, identify the tone you would use in the assignment.

My assignment: ____________________________________________

My purpose: ________________________________________________

My audience: ______________________________________________

My tone: _________________________________________________

**Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content**
Content refers to all the written substance in a document. After selecting an audience and a purpose, you must choose what information will make it to the page. Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations, but no matter the type, the information must be appropriate and interesting for the audience and purpose. An essay written for third graders that summarizes the legislative process, for example, would have to contain succinct and simple content. Content is also shaped by tone. When the tone matches the content, the audience will be more engaged, and you will build a stronger relationship with your readers. Consider that audience of third graders. You would choose simple content that the audience will easily understand, and you would express that content through an enthusiastic tone. The same considerations apply to all audiences and purposes.

**EXERCISE 5**

Match the content of the following numbered examples to the appropriate audience and purpose. On your own sheet of paper, write the correct number in the blank next to the word “content.”

1. Whereas economist Holmes contends that the financial crisis is far from over, the presidential advisor Jones points out that it is vital to catch the first wave of opportunity to increase market share. We can use elements of both experts’ visions. Let me explain how.

2. In 2000, foreign money flowed into the United States, contributing to easy credit conditions. People bought larger houses than they could afford, eventually defaulting on their loans as interest rates rose.

3. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, known by most of us as the humungous government bailout, caused mixed reactions. Although supported by many political leaders, the statute provoked outrage among grassroots groups. In their opinion, the government was actually rewarding banks for their appalling behavior.

1. **Audience:** An instructor  
   **Purpose:** To analyze the reasons behind the 2007 financial crisis  
   **Content:** ____________________________________________

2. **Audience:** Classmates
Purpose: To summarize the effects of the $700 billion government bailout

Content: ____________________________________________

3. Audience: An employer

Purpose: To synthesize two articles on preparing businesses for economic recovery

Content: ____________________________________________

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

EXERCISE 6

Using the assignment, purpose, audience, and tone from Exercise 1.2.5, generate a list of content ideas.

Remember that content consists of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations.

My assignment: ____________________________________________

My purpose: ____________________________________________

My audience: ____________________________________________

My tone: ____________________________________________

My content ideas: ____________________________________________

KEY TAKEAWAYS

• The content of each paragraph in the essay is shaped by purpose, audience, and tone.
• The four common academic purposes are to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate.
• Identifying the audience’s demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will affect how and what you write.
• Devices such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language communicate tone and create a relationship between the writer and his or her audience.
1.3 Introduction to Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises

EXERCISES

1. At some point during your career, you may be asked to write a report or to complete a presentation. Imagine that you have been asked to report on the issue of health and safety in the workplace. Using the information in Chapter 1.2, Identifying the Audience, complete an analysis of your intended audience—your fellow office workers. Consider how demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will influence your report and explain how you will tailor it to your audience accordingly.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2. Group activity. Working in a group of four or five, assign each group member the task of collecting one document each. These documents might include magazine or newspaper articles, workplace documents, academic essays, chapters from a reference book, film or book reviews, or any other type of writing. As a group, read through each document and discuss the author’s purpose for writing. Use the information you have learned in this chapter to decide whether the main purpose is to summarize, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate. Write a brief report on the purpose of each document, using supporting evidence from the text.
Chapter 2
Prewriting Techniques

2.1 Apply Prewriting Models

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Use prewriting strategies to choose a topic and narrow the focus.

If you think that a blank sheet of paper or a blinking cursor on the computer screen is a scary sight, you are not alone. Many writers, students, and employees find that beginning to write can be intimidating. When faced with a blank page, however, experienced writers remind themselves that writing, like other everyday activities, is a process. Every process, from writing to cooking, bike riding, and learning to use a new cell phone, will get significantly easier with practice.

Just as you need a recipe, ingredients, and proper tools to cook a delicious meal, you also need a plan, resources, and adequate time to create a good written composition. In other words, writing is a process that requires following steps and using strategies to accomplish your goals.

These are the five steps in the writing process:

1. Prewriting
2. Outlining the structure of ideas
3. Writing a rough draft
4. Revising
5. Editing

Effective writing can be simply described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order. This chapter will give you the chance to work on all these important aspects of writing. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, this chapter covers six: using experience and observations, freewriting, asking questions, brainstorming, and idea mapping. Using the strategies in this chapter can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

Using Experience and Observations
When selecting a topic, you may also want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

Tip

Have you seen an attention-grabbing story on your local news channel? Many current issues appear on television, in magazines, and on the Internet. These can all provide inspiration for your writing.

Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel’s courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy. After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author’s point of view by thinking about his main idea and his support. When you judge the author’s argument, you discover more about not only the author’s opinion but also your own. If this step already seems daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

Prewriting

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, you will have to find the techniques that are most effective for your writing. The following strategies can be used when initially deciding on a topic or for narrowing a topic:

1. Freewriting
2. Asking questions
3. Brainstorming
4. Idea Mapping

At this stage in the writing process, it is fine if you choose a general topic. Later you will learn more prewriting strategies that will narrow the focus of the topic.

Choosing a Topic

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also understand that choosing a good general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about but also fits the assignment’s purpose and its audience.

In the next few chapters, you will follow a writer named Mariah as she prepares a piece of writing. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.

My purpose: ____________________________________________

My audience: ____________________________________________

Tip

The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future. The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly.

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading prewriting exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) will further develop your topic and ideas. As you continue to follow the writing process, you will see how Mariah uses critical reading skills to assess her own prewriting exercises.
Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes). During the time limit, you may jot down any thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

Writing often comes easier when you have a personal connection with the topic you have chosen. Remember, to generate ideas in your freewriting, you may also think about readings that you have enjoyed or that have challenged your thinking. Doing this may lead your thoughts in interesting directions.

Quickly recording your thoughts on paper will help you discover what you have to say about a topic. When writing quickly, try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely and unselfconsciously. Once you start writing with few limitations, you may find you have more to say than you first realized. Your flow of thoughts can lead you to discover even more ideas about the topic. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

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

Tip

Some prewriting strategies can be used together. For example, you could use experience and observations to come up with a topic related to your course studies. Then you could use freewriting to describe your topic in more detail and figure out what you have to say about it.
Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It’s too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it’s too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News.

Newspapers I don’t read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my e-mail. Email could be considered mass media too these days. I used to go to the video store a few times a week before I started school, but now the only way I know what movies are current is to listen for the Oscar nominations. We have cable but we can’t afford the movie channels, so I sometimes look at older movies late at night. UGH. A few of them get played again and again until you’re sick of them. My husband thinks I’m crazy, but sometimes there are old black-and-white ones from the 1930s and 40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use color on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a house, if we ever can, I’ll use lots of color.

Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me—or my husband. I’m harder than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us!
Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise? When faced with a writing assignment, you might ask yourself, “How do I begin?” You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

When Mariah reread her freewriting notes, she found she had rambled and her thoughts were disjointed. She realized that the topic that interested her most was the one she started with, the media. She then decided to explore that topic by asking herself questions about it. Her purpose was to refine media into a topic she felt comfortable writing about. To see how asking questions can help you choose a topic, take a look at the following chart that Mariah completed to record her questions and answers. She asked herself the questions that reporters and journalists use to gather information for their stories. The questions are often called the 5WH questions, after their initial letters.
Tip

Prewriting is very purpose driven; it does not follow a set of hard-and-fast rules. The purpose of prewriting is to find and explore ideas so that you will be prepared to write. A prewriting technique like asking questions can help you both find a topic and explore it. The key to effective prewriting is to use the techniques that work best for your thinking process. Freewriting may not seem to fit your thinking process, but keep an open mind. It may work better than you think. Perhaps brainstorming a list of topics might better fit your personal style. Mariah found freewriting and asking questions to be fruitful strategies to use. In your own prewriting, use the 5WH questions in any way that benefits your planning.
EXERCISE 2

Choose a general topic idea from the prewriting you completed in Exercise 2.1.1. Then read each question and use your own paper to answer the 5WH questions. As with Mariah when she explored her writing topic for more detail, it is fine if you do not know all the answers. If you do not know an answer, use your own opinion to speculate, or guess. You may also use factual information from books or articles you previously read on your topic. Later in the chapter, you will read about additional ways (like searching the Internet) to answer your questions and explore your guesses.

5WH Questions

1. Who?

2. What?

3. Where?

4. When?

5. Why?

6. How?

Now that you have completed some of the prewriting exercises, you may feel less anxious about starting a paper from scratch. With some ideas down on paper (or saved on a computer), writers are often more comfortable continuing the writing process. After identifying a good general topic, you, too, are ready to continue the process.
EXERCISE 3

Write your general topic on your own sheet of paper, under where you recorded your purpose and audience. Choose it from among the topics you listed or explored during the prewriting you have done so far. Make sure it is one you feel comfortable with and feel capable of writing about.

My general topic: ____________________________________________

Tip

You may find that you need to adjust your topic as you move through the writing stages (and as you complete the exercises in this chapter). If the topic you have chosen is not working, you can repeat the prewriting activities until you find a better one.

More Prewriting Techniques

The prewriting techniques of freewriting and asking questions helped Mariah think more about her topic, but the following prewriting strategies can help her (and you) narrow the focus of the topic:

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping

Narrowing the Focus

Narrowing the focus means breaking up the topic into subtopics, or more specific points. Generating lots of subtopics will help you eventually select the ones that fit the assignment and appeal to you and your audience.

After rereading her essay assignment, Mariah realized her general topic, mass media, is too broad for her class’s short paper requirement. Three pages are not enough to cover all the concerns in mass media today. Mariah also realized that although her readers are other communications majors who are interested in the topic, they may want to read a paper about a particular issue in mass media.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a
broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic. The following is Mariah’s brainstorming list:

Figure 2.3

![Brainstorming List](image)

From this list, Mariah could narrow her focus to a particular technology under the broad category of mass media.

**Writing at Work**

Imagine you have to write an e-mail to your current boss explaining your prior work experience, but you do not know where to start. Before you begin the e-mail, you can use the brainstorming technique to generate a list of employers, duties, and responsibilities that fall under the general topic “work experience.”

**Idea Mapping**
Idea mapping allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped. Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map, start with your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then write specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them together. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

In addition to brainstorming, Mariah tried idea mapping. Review the following idea map that Mariah created:

*Figure 2.4 Idea Map*

Notice Mariah’s largest circle contains her general topic, mass media. Then, the general topic branches into two subtopics written in two smaller circles: television and radio. The subtopic television branches into even more specific topics: cable and DVDs. From there, Mariah drew more circles and wrote more specific ideas: high definition and digital recording from cable and Blu-ray from DVDs. The radio topic led Mariah to draw connections between music, downloads versus CDs, and, finally, piracy. From this idea
map, Mariah saw she could consider narrowing the focus of her mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you first choose a broad topic and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step.

**Topic Checklist**

**Developing a Good Topic**

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is a good topic for your assignment.

- Am I interested in this topic?
- Would my audience be interested?
- Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experiences?
- Do I want to learn more about this topic?
- Is this topic specific?
- Does it fit the length of the assignment?

With your narrowed focus in mind, answer the bulleted questions in the checklist for developing a good topic. If you can answer “yes” to all the questions, write your topic on the line. If you answer “no” to any of the questions, think about another topic or adjust the one you have and try the prewriting strategies again.

My narrowed topic: ____________________________________________

**Key Takeaways**

- All writers rely on steps and strategies to begin the writing process.
- The steps in the writing process are prewriting, outlining, writing a rough draft, revising, and editing.
- Prewriting is the transfer of ideas from abstract thoughts into words, phrases, and sentences on paper.
- A good topic interests the writer, appeals to the audience, and fits the purpose of the assignment.
- Writers often choose a general topic first and then narrow the focus to a more specific topic.
2.2 End of Chapter Exercises: Prewriting Techniques

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

1. Practice prewriting strategies to choose a topic and narrow the focus.

**EXERCISES**

In Exercise 2.1.2, you chose a possible topic and explored it by answering questions about it using the 5WH questions. However, this topic may still be too broad. Here, in Exercise 2.2.1, choose and complete one of the prewriting strategies to narrow the focus. Use either brainstorming, idea mapping, or searching the Internet.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Share what you found and what interests you about the possible topic(s).

Exercise 2.2.4: Choose one or more topics (according to your instructor’s preference) from the list below and practice the prewriting technique of your choice to explore the topic fully.

Exercise 2.2.4: Choose another prewriting technique to narrow the topic.

- careers or college majors
- pets
- friends
- roommates
- homes
- plants
- cars

- cell phones
- games
- sports
- films
- books
- restaurants
- music

- politics
- art
- myths
- bosses or managers
- landmark
Chapter 3
Writing Effective Paragraphs

3.1 Creating Focused, Developed, and Coherent Paragraphs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify characteristics of a good topic sentence.
2. Identify the three parts of a developed paragraph.
3. Apply knowledge of topic sentences and parts of a developed paragraph in an assignment.

The paragraph is the main structural component of an essay as well as other forms of writing. Each paragraph of an essay adds another related main idea to support the writer’s thesis, or controlling idea. Each related main idea is supported and developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one main idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis.

Now that you have learned how to prewrite to discover a topic, narrow it, and develop a basic plan for developing an essay, you can think about the structure of a paragraph in greater detail. Composing an effective paragraph requires a method similar to building a house. You may have the finest content, or materials, but if you do not arrange them in the correct order, then the final product will not hold together very well.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. **Topic sentence.** This sentence combines a main idea with the writer’s opinion (topic + claim).
2. **Body.** The body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. **Conclusion.** The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay (see Chapter 4 “Writing Effective Thesis Statements and Outlines” for more information about thesis statements) and guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence. This section covers the major components of a paragraph and examines how to develop an effective topic sentence.

**Developing a Topic Sentence for a Focused, Unified Paragraph**
Pick up any newspaper or magazine and read the first sentence of an article. Are you fairly confident that you know what the rest of the article is about? If so, you have likely read the topic sentence. An effective topic sentence combines a main idea with the writer’s personal attitude or opinion. It serves to orient the reader and provides an indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. Read the following example.

Creating a national set of standards for math and English education will improve student learning in many states.

This topic sentence declares a favorable position for standardizing math and English education. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to provide supporting details and facts as to why standardizing math and English education might improve student learning in many states. If the purpose of the essay is actually to evaluate education in only one particular state, or to discuss math or English education specifically, then the topic sentence is misleading.

**Tip**

When writing a draft of an essay, allow a friend or colleague to read the opening line of your first paragraph. Ask your reader to predict what your paper will be about. If he or she is unable to guess your topic accurately, you should consider revising your topic sentence so that it clearly defines your purpose in writing.

**The Parts of a Topic Sentence**

Topic sentences contain both a main idea (the subject, or topic that the writer is discussing) and a claim or opinion (the writer’s specific stance on that subject). Just as a thesis statement includes a claim that controls a document’s focus, a topic sentence must also contain a claim (a comment or judgment) to direct the paragraph. Different writers may use the same main idea but can steer their paragraph in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject. Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The antinausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalizing marijuana would create a higher demand for Class A and Class B drugs.
Although the main idea or topic—marijuana—is the same in all three topic sentences, the claim differs depending on the writer’s viewpoint.

**EXERCISE 1**

Circle the main idea and underline the claim (comment or opinion) in each of the following topic sentences.

1. Exercising three times a week is the only way to maintain good physical health.
2. Sexism and racism are still rampant in today’s workplace.
3. Raising the legal driving age to twenty-one would decrease road traffic accidents.
4. Owning a business is the only way to achieve financial success.
5. Dog owners should be prohibited from taking their pets on public beaches.

**Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence**

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. **A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.**

   A student was asked to write about a specific incident that involved firefighters. Consider the following topic sentences:

   **Weak example:** People rarely give firefighters the credit they deserve for such a physically and emotionally demanding job.

   (This topic sentence is not specific about the incident.)

   **Stronger example:** During the October riots, Unit 3B went beyond the call of duty.

   (This topic sentence is more specific and indicates that the paragraph will contain information about a particular incident involving a specific unit.)

2. **A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion.**

   **Weak example:** In this paper, I am going to discuss the rising suicide rate among young professionals.

   (This topic sentence merely announces a topic, but it does not present an opinion or comment about the topic.)
Stronger example: The rising suicide rate among young professionals is a cause for immediate concern.

(This topic sentence presents the writer’s opinion on the subject of rising suicide rates among young professionals.)

3. A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

Weak example: In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types.

(This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but both are buried beneath the confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary. These obstacles make it difficult for the reader to follow.)

Stronger example: Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline.

(This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow.)

4. A good topic sentence does not include supporting details.

Weak example: Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don’t allow the same team to win year after year.

(This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.)

Stronger example: Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons.

(This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph.)

5. A good topic sentence engages the reader by using interesting, specific vocabulary.

Weak example: The military deserves better equipment.

(This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but the language is bland and unexciting.)

Stronger example. The appalling lack of resources provided to the military is outrageous and requires our immediate attention.
(This topic sentence reiterates the same idea and controlling thesis, but adjectives such as *appalling* and *immediate* better engage the reader. These words also indicate the writer's tone.)

**EXERCISE 2**

From each of the following sentence pairs, choose the more effective topic sentence.

1. a. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.
   
   b. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.

2. a. The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.
   
   b. Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure.

3. a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.
   
   b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.

4. a. Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.
   
   b. This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry.

**EXERCISE 3**

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a main idea. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species

2. The cost of fuel

3. The legal drinking age

4. A controversial film or novel
**Writing at Work**

When creating a workplace document, use the “top-down” approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each paragraph with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

**The Location of Topic Sentences**

Topic sentences make the structure of a text and the writer’s basic arguments easy to locate and comprehend. In college writing, using a topic sentence in each paragraph of the essay is the standard rule, but its location varies depending upon the nature of the assignment. In expository and argumentative essays, placing the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph makes it easier for readers to follow the essay and for writers to stay on topic. However, the topic sentence does not always have to be the first sentence in your paragraph, even if it is the first item in your formal outline.

**Tip**

When you begin to draft your paragraphs, you should follow your outline fairly closely. After all, you spent valuable time developing those ideas. However, as you begin to express your ideas in complete sentences, it might strike you that the topic sentence might work better at the end of the paragraph or in the middle. Try it. Writing a draft, by its nature, is a good time for experimentation.

**Topic Sentence at the Beginning (General to Specific Organization)**

Read the following paragraph and try to determine which sentence serves as the topic sentence:

After reading the new TV guide this week I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated
with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We’ve had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer’s distaste for these shows through the use of the word bombard.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show Prisoner). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph.

**Topic Sentence at the End (Specific to General Organization)**

Now take a look at the following paragraph and try to determine which sentence is the topic sentence:

Last year, a cat traveled 130 miles to reach its family, who had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighborhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals’ senses are better than humans’). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence. This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

**Tip**
As you read critically throughout the writing process, keep topic sentences in mind. You may discover topic sentences that are not always located at the beginning of a paragraph. For example, fiction writers customarily use topic ideas, either expressed or implied, to move readers through their texts. In nonfiction writing, such as popular magazines, topic sentences are often used when the author thinks it is appropriate (based on the audience and the purpose, of course). A single topic sentence might even control the development of a number of paragraphs. Developing topic sentences and thinking about their placement in a paragraph will prepare you to write the rest of the paragraph.

**Topic Sentence in the Middle of the Paragraph**

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic.

Read the following example and try to determine what sentence serves as the topic sentence:

For many years, I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises. It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It’s amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the fourth sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

**Implied Topic Sentences**

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:
Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment; stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin. Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated. This technique is often used in descriptive or narrative writing. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

**Tip**

Avoid using implied topic sentences in an informational document. Readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. The clearest and most efficient way to communicate in an informational document is to position the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

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**EXERCISE 4**

Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.

The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a miniscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Developing Paragraphs with Supporting Ideas**

Learning how to develop a good topic sentence is the first step toward writing a solid paragraph. Once a writer has composed a topic sentence—a subject combined with an opinion about it—there is a guideline
for the rest of the paragraph. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting sentences that help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.
Figure 3.1 Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer

Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer

**Topic Sentence**

(main idea + personal opinion)

**Body**

Supporting Sentence

Supporting Sentence

Supporting Sentence

Supporting Sentence

Supporting Sentence

**Conclusion**

(summary of main idea + personal opinion)

Concluding Sentence
Paragraph Development: Types of Supporting Ideas

If you think of a paragraph as a hamburger, the supporting sentences are the meat inside the bun. They make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the opinion in the topic sentence. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences depending on the audience and purpose for writing. A supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

- **Reason**
  
  **Sentence:** The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.

- **Fact**
  
  **Sentence:** Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.

- **Statistic**
  
  **Sentence:** Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.

- **Quotation**
  
  **Sentence:** “We will not allow this situation to continue,” stated Senator Johns.

- **Example**
  
  **Sentence:** Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Read the following example:

**Topic sentence:**

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

**Supporting sentences:**

1. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. *(statistic)*

2. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. *(fact)*

3. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. *(reason)*
4. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. (example)

5. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I’ve owned.” (quotation)

**Concluding sentence:**

Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources:

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography-autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

To read more about sources and research see Chapter 7 “Writing from Research” and Chapter 8 “Writing a Research Paper.”

**Tip**

When searching for information on the Internet, remember that some websites are more reliable than others. Websites ending in .gov or .edu are generally more reliable than websites ending in .com or .org. Wikis and blogs are not reliable sources of information because they are subject to inaccuracies.
Concluding Sentences

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the “meat” or body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the previous example:

**Topic sentence:**
There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

**Concluding sentence:**
Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Notice the use of the synonyms **advantages** and **benefits**. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using the exact same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

**Important**: You should avoid introducing any new ideas into your concluding sentence. A conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion. Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse the reader and weaken your writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.
  
  **Example**: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.

- Summarize the key points in the paragraph.
  
  **Example**: A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.

- Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.
  
  **Example**: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.
• Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.

Example: Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be morbidly obese by the year 2030 unless we take evasive action.

• Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

Example: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Exercise 5

On your own paper, write one example of each type of concluding sentence based on a topic of your choice.

Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph be? One answer to this important question may be “long enough”—long enough for you to address your points and explain your main idea. To grab attention or to present succinct supporting ideas, a paragraph can be fairly short and consist of two to three sentences. A paragraph in a complex essay about some abstract point in philosophy or archaeology can be three-quarters of a page or more in length. As long as the writer maintains close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable in college-level writing. In general, try to keep the paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than one full page of double-spaced text.

Tip

Journalistic style often calls for brief two- or three-sentence paragraphs because of how people read the news, both online and in print. Blogs and other online information sources often adopt this paragraphing style, too. Readers often skim the first paragraphs of a great many articles before settling on the handful of stories they want to read in detail.

You may find that a particular paragraph you write may be longer than one that will hold your audience’s interest. In such cases, you should divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a topic statement or some kind of transitional word or phrase at the start of the new paragraph. Transition words or phrases show the connection between the two ideas. In all cases, however, be guided
by what your instructor wants and expects to find in your draft. Many instructors will expect you to develop a mature college-level style as you progress through the semester's assignments.

EXERCISE 6

To build your sense of appropriate paragraph length, use the Internet to find examples of the following items. Copy them into a file, identify your sources, and present them to your instructor with your annotations, or notes.

- A news article written in short paragraphs. Take notes on, or annotate, your selection with your observations about the effect of combining paragraphs that develop the same topic idea. Explain how effective those paragraphs would be.
- A long paragraph from a scholarly work that you identify through an academic search engine. Annotate it with your observations about the author’s paragraphing style.

Using Transitions to Improve Paragraph Coherence

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas. Take another look at the earlier example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words is a transition word. Words such as first and second are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer’s ideas by showing that he or she
has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include *third, also, and furthermore*.

The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include *as a result, so that, since, or for this reason*. To include a summarizing transition in her concluding sentence, the writer could rewrite the final sentence as follows:

In conclusion, given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

**Table 3.1 Useful Transitional Words and Phrases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Supporting Sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>above all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aside from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the same time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Concluding Sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>after all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all in all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 7**

Using your own paper, write a paragraph on a topic of your choice. Be sure to include a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence and to use transitional words and phrases to link your ideas together.
Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

Transitional words and phrases are useful tools to incorporate into workplace documents. They guide the reader through the document, clarifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs so that the reader understands why they have been written in that particular order.

For example, when writing an instructional memo, it may be helpful to consider the following transitional words and phrases: before you begin, first, next, then, finally, after you have completed. Using these transitions as a template to write your memo will provide readers with clear, logical instructions about a particular process and the order in which steps are supposed to be completed.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A good paragraph contains three distinct components: a topic sentence, body, and concluding sentence.
- The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph combined with the writer’s attitude or opinion about the topic.
- Good topic sentences contain both a main idea and a claim or opinion, are clear and easy to follow, use engaging vocabulary, and provide an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
- Topic sentences may be placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph. In most academic essays, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence by offering facts, reasons, statistics, quotations, or examples.
- Concluding sentences summarize the key points in a paragraph and reiterate the main idea without repeating it word for word.
- Transitional words and phrases help organize ideas in a paragraph and show how these ideas relate to one another.

3.2 Writing Effective Paragraphs: End-of-Chapter Exercises

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To practice skills related to paragraph development.
1. **Select** one of the following topics or choose a topic of your choice:
   - Drilling for oil in Alaska
   - Health care reform
   - Introducing a four-day work week
   - Bringing pets to work
   - Charging airline passengers to use the in-flight bathroom

Create a topic sentence based on the topic you chose, remembering to include both a main idea and a controlling idea. Next, write an alternative topic sentence using the same main idea but a different controlling idea. Explain how each fully developed paragraph might differ in tone and content.

**Collaboration**

2. **Group activity.** Working in a small group, select a workplace document or academic essay that has a clear thesis. Examine each paragraph and identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions:
   - Is the topic sentence clearly identifiable or is it implied?
   - Does the writer use effective transitions to link his or her ideas?
   - Does the concluding sentence accurately summarize the main point of the paragraph?

As a group, identify the weakest areas of the paragraph and rewrite them. Focus on the relationship among the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Use transitions to illustrate the connection between each sentence in the paragraph.

3. **Peer activity.** Using the information you have learned in this chapter, write a paragraph about a current event. Underline the topic sentence in your paragraph. Now, rewrite the paragraph, placing the topic sentence in a different part of the paragraph. Read the two paragraphs aloud to a peer and have him or her identify the topic sentence. Discuss which paragraph is more effective and why.
Collaboration: Please share with a classmate, compare your answers, and discuss the contrasting results.
Chapter 4
Writing Effective Thesis Statements and Outlines

4.1 Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a strong, clear thesis statement with the proper elements.
2. Revise your thesis statement.

Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following his train of thought as he jumped around from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe he told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. His ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body. Just like a topic sentence guides the development of a single paragraph, the thesis statement controls the development of an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay’s destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your instructor has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea—the main idea upon which you build your thesis. Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic you have chosen to write about, you must ask yourself, “What do I want to
say about it?” Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea—points that you will demonstrate in the body of the paper. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

**Writing a Strong Thesis Statement**

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities:

**Specificity.** A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.

**Precision.** A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.

**Ability to be argued.** A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with concrete evidence.

**Ability to be demonstrated.** For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is supported by examples and details.

**Forcefulness.** A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.
Confidence. In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as *I feel* or *I believe* actually weaken the readers’ sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

Tip

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, your thesis should not contain phrases such as *in my opinion* or *I believe*. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

Using Correct Structure in the Thesis Statement

When you write a thesis statement, you should observe several conventions of form:

- **Write a simple or complex sentence**: A thesis should be written as a single, declarative sentence containing only one main (or independent) clause. The best types of sentences to use for a thesis are simple or complex: compound sentences convey two ideas, and a thesis can only effectively argue one main idea.

  **Weak example:** Why do some college students earn undergraduate degrees online?
  
  This is a question—and a thesis must be a *declarative sentence*, an *answer* to a question.

  **Weak example:** Some students enjoy the convenience of getting an undergraduate degree online; however, students receive a better education in the traditional college setting.

  **Weak example:** Some students enjoy the convenience of getting an undergraduate degree online, but students receive a better education in the traditional college setting.

  Both of the above examples are weak because they are compound sentences. You would have to address both issues in the same paper—giving both equal emphasis—creating a multiple focus and a confusing argument.

  **Stronger example:** Even though getting an undergraduate degree online may be convenient, students receive a better education in the traditional college setting.

  This example is a better thesis statement because as a complex sentence, it subordinates one of the ideas: even though arguments from both sides of the issue are
present, the writer’s opinion on the subject is still very clear—the point of view is embodied in the main clause.

**Strongest example:** Even though getting an undergraduate degree online may be convenient, students receive a better education in the traditional college setting because of the benefits of the campus environment and the opportunity for personal interaction.

The above thesis statement carries over all of the advantages of the complex sentence while giving you a clear direction for the development of the paper because it contains the reasons to support your argument. This example places the categories of development (the reasons) in a prepositional phrase, keeping this thesis a single sentence; you could also have included the reasons in a separate sentence, keeping the main part of the thesis more concise.

When you develop a thesis statement like this one, remember that you must discuss all of the elements in the same order that they appear in the thesis. A thesis statement is like a contract with the reader; you are committed to developing all the ideas that you include within it.

- **Make sure your thesis has a clear judgment:** All thesis statements must express a point of view. Statements of fact or broad generalities do not function as effective thesis statements, and you should always avoid fragments and overused, figurative, or vague terms.

**Weak example:** Some students prefer to earn a college degree online.

This example is weak because it does not express a point of view. Because this thesis is simply a statement of fact, your paper would have nothing to argue.

**Weak example:** Earning an undergraduate degree online.

This sentence fragment says nothing about the subject.

**Weak example:** An online degree is like instant mashed potatoes.

Using a simile here may be creative and whimsical, but it does not clearly convey your point.

**Weak example:** Online degrees are really good.

Why are they good? How are they good? What exactly do you mean by “good”? This thesis is too vague.

- **Express your thesis using clear, parallel grammatical structure:** Keep the elements of your thesis statement balanced by utilizing parallel form.

**Weak example:** Earning an undergraduate degree in the traditional college setting is better than an online degree because of the campus environment and people can interact.
While the above thesis statement contains key concepts and expresses a judgment, it is awkward and weak because the elements are not expressed in equal terms (i.e. they are not parallel). The problems with parallel structure have been corrected in the following example:

**Corrected example:** Earning an undergraduate degree in the traditional college setting is better than earning a degree online because of the campus environment and the opportunity for personal interaction.

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**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

Topics
- Texting while driving
- The legal drinking age in the United States
- Steroid use among professional athletes
- School uniforms
- Genetic modification of food crops

**Avoiding Common Pitfalls with Thesis Statements**

Now that you have read about what makes a thesis statement effective and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis:

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.

  **Weak thesis statement:** My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

- A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.

  **Weak thesis statement:** Religious radicals across America are trying to legislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.
A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

Weak thesis statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

Weak thesis statement: The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

EXERCISE 2

Read the following thesis statements. On a separate piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the nineteenth century.
4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Atlanta.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. Because many children’s toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children’s toys are safe.
7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent’s worst nightmare.

Writing at Work

Often in your career, you will need to ask your boss for something through an e-mail. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your e-mail request. While your e-mail will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your boss know
what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request.

**Thesis Statement Revision**

Your thesis statement probably begins as a working thesis, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing. Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it guides and matches what you want to express in the body of the paper.

**Tip**

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your final thesis statement.

**Ways to Revise Your Thesis**

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

1. Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as *people, everything, society, or life*, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

**Working thesis**: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.

**Revised thesis**: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like *people* and *work hard*, you can better focus your research and gain more direction in your writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

**Working thesis**: The welfare system is a joke.
**Revised thesis:** The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

*A joke* means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, you can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for joke and more accurately defines your stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

3. Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs are forms of the verb *to be*, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

**Working thesis:** Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.

**Revised thesis:** The Kansas City legislature cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, “Why are they not paid enough?” But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. You should ask yourself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered “enough”?
- What is the problem?
- What are the results

4. Omit any general claims that are hard to support.

**Working thesis:** Today’s teenage girls are too sexualized.

**Revised thesis:** Teenage girls who are captivated by the sexual images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a woman’s worth depends on her sensuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behavior.
It is true that some young women in today’s society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. Many girls have strict parents, dress appropriately, and do not engage in sexual activity while in middle school and high school. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

- Which teenage girls?
- What constitutes “too” sexualized?
- Why are they behaving that way?
- Where does this behavior show up?
- What are the repercussions?

**EXERCISE 3**

In Exercise 4.1.1, you wrote a thesis statement for five different topics. Now, on a separate sheet of paper, write down one of those thesis statements. Identify any weaknesses in this sentence and revise the statement to reflect the elements of a strong thesis statement. Make sure it is specific, precise, arguable, demonstrable, forceful, and confident.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Writing at Work**

In your career you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and tell the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revision to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. You can use the techniques from this chapter to revise that thesis.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Proper essays require a thesis statement to provide a specific focus and suggest how the essay will be organized.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself.
A strong thesis is specific, precise, forceful, confident, and can be demonstrated.

A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.

A weak thesis is simply a declaration of your topic or contains an obvious fact that cannot be argued.

Depending on your topic, it may or may not be appropriate to use first person point of view.

Make sure you express your thesis as a simple or complex sentence in clear, grammatically parallel sentence structure, avoiding questions, fragments, figurative language, or vague terms.

Revise your thesis by ensuring all words are specific, all ideas are exact, and all verbs express action.

**4.2 Outlining**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify the steps in constructing an outline.
2. Construct a topic outline and a sentence outline.

Your prewriting activities and readings have helped you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you found, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. But only when you start to organize your ideas will you be able to translate your raw insights into a form that will communicate meaning to your audience.

**Tip**

Longer papers require more reading and planning than shorter papers do. Most writers discover that the more they know about a topic, the more they can write about it with intelligence and interest.

**Organizing Ideas**

When you write, you need to organize your ideas in an order that makes sense. The writing you complete in all your courses exposes how analytically and critically your mind works. In some courses, the only direct contact you may have with your instructor is through the assignments you write for the course. You can make a good impression by spending time ordering your ideas. Order refers to your choice of what to present first, second, third, and so on in your writing. The order you pick closely relates to your purpose...
for writing that particular assignment. You may organize different parts of your essay in different ways so that your purpose stands out clearly and all parts of the paper work together to consistently develop your main point.

**Methods of Organizing Your Writing**

The three common methods of organizing writing are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance, discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. You need to keep these methods of organization in mind as you plan how to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support to create “flesh” and “muscle” for your assignment.

When you write, your goal is not only to complete an assignment but also to write for a specific purpose—perhaps to inform, to explain, to persuade, or for a combination of these purposes. Your purpose for writing should always be in the back of your mind, because it will help you decide which pieces of information belong together and how you will order them. In other words, choose the order that will most effectively fit your purpose and support your main point.

Table 4.1 "Order versus Purpose" shows the connection between order and purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronological</strong></td>
<td>To explain the history of an event or a topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To tell a story or relate an experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To explain how to do or make something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To explain the steps in a process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spatial</strong></td>
<td>To help readers visualize something as you want them to see it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To create a main impression using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order of Importance</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To persuade or convince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Writing an Outline

For an essay question on a test or a brief oral presentation in class, all you may need to prepare is a short, informal outline in which you jot down key ideas in the order you will present them. This kind of outline reminds you to stay focused in a stressful situation and to include all the good ideas that help you explain or prove your point. For a longer assignment, like an essay or a research paper, many college instructors require students to submit a formal outline before writing a major paper as a way to be sure you are on the right track and are working in an organized manner. A formal outline is a detailed guide that shows how all your supporting ideas relate to each other. It helps you distinguish between ideas that are of equal importance and ones that are of lesser importance. You build your paper based on the framework created by the outline.

### Tip

Instructors may also require you to submit an outline with your final draft to check the direction of the assignment and the logic of your final draft. If you are required to submit an outline with the final draft of a paper, remember to revise the outline to reflect any changes you made while writing the paper.

There are two types of formal outlines: the **topic outline** and the **sentence outline**. You format both types of formal outlines in the same way.

- Place your thesis statement at the top of the outline. Some outline styles will also include the Introduction in the outline as Roman numeral I.
- Use Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
- Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to divide your main points into parts.
- Use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) to subdivide the As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts.
- Some outline styles end with the final Roman numeral expressing your idea for your conclusion.
Here is what the skeleton of a traditional formal outline looks like. The indentions help clarify how the ideas are related.

I. Introduction
   Thesis statement
II. Main point 1 → becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1
   A. Supporting detail → becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1
      1. Sub-point
      2. Sub-point
   B. Supporting detail
      1. Sub-point
      2. Sub-point
   C. Supporting detail
      1. Sub-point
      2. Sub-point
III. Main point 2 → becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2
   A. Supporting detail
   B. Supporting detail
   C. Supporting detail
IV. Main point 3 → becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3
   A. Supporting detail
   B. Supporting detail
   C. Supporting detail
V. Conclusion

In an outline, any supporting detail can be developed with sub-points. For simplicity, the above model shows them only under the first main point.

**Tip**
Common sense dictates that nothing can be subdivided into less than two parts. When you are constructing a formal outline, you must, therefore, always have at least two divisions for every section of the outline: the thesis should be divided into at least two Roman numerals; each Roman numeral needs at least an A. and a B.; each A. and B. needs at least a 1. and a 2., and so on. These subdivisions of the topic are commonly known as “levels” or “degrees.” An outline that has Roman numerals, capital letter subdivisions, and Arabic numeral subdivisions is taken to the third level or degree.

Tip

Make sure that you use the proper outline symbols—each number or letter represents a specific level or degree. Be careful to use the correct form (I., A., 1., a., (1), etc.) because it matters if the letter is capitalized or in lower case, or if it is followed by a period or encased within parentheses. Likewise, it is important to use proper indentations because each indentation denotes a more specific division of ideas. Formal outlines utilize symbols in the following descending order:

I.
   A.
      1.
         a.
         b.
            (1)
            (2)
               (a)
               (b)
      2.
   B.
II.

Constructing Topic Outlines
A topic outline uses single words or short phrases to express the idea in each level of the outline. Words and phrases keep the outline short and easier to comprehend. All the headings, however, must be written in parallel structure: in other words, each level should match its corresponding level logically and grammatically.

**Tip**

When a topic outline is parallel, each level (or degree) should be the same—all noun phrases, or gerund phrases, or infinitive phrases, etc. Similarly, in a sentence outline, the sentence at each level should have an equal grammatical structure. Making the outline logically and grammatically parallel prevents the writer from wandering away from the focus of the topic, but flexibility is important: parallel structure should not prevent the clear expression of ideas.

Here is the topic outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing. Her purpose is to inform, and her audience is a general audience of her fellow college students. Notice how Mariah begins with her thesis statement. She then arranges her main points and supporting details in outline form.
Checklist

Writing an Effective Topic Outline

This checklist can help you write an effective topic outline for your assignment. It will also help you discover where you may need to do additional reading or prewriting.

- Do I have a controlling idea that guides the development of the entire piece of writing?
• Do I have three or more main points that I want to make in this piece of writing? Does each main point connect to my controlling idea?
• Is my outline in the best order—chronological order, spatial order, or order of importance—for me to present my main points? Will this order help me get my main point across?
• Do I have supporting details that will help me inform, explain, or prove my main points?
• Do I need to add more support? If so, where?
• Do I need to make any adjustments in my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

**Writing at Work**

Word processing programs generally have an automatic numbering feature that can be used to prepare outlines. This feature automatically sets indents and lets you use the tab key to arrange information just as you would in an outline. Although in business this style might be acceptable, in college your instructor might have different requirements. Teach yourself how to customize the levels of outline numbering in your word-processing program to fit your instructor’s preferences.

**EXERCISE 1**

Using the thesis statement you wrote in Exercise 4.1.3, construct a topic outline for your essay. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and Arabic numerals and capital letters.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your outlines. Point out areas of interest in your classmate’s outline and what you would like to learn more about.

**Constructing Sentence Outlines**

A sentence outline is the same as a topic outline except every level of the outline is written as a complete sentence instead of words or phrases. Complete sentences create clarity and can advance you one step closer to a draft in the writing process. Like a topic outline, each level needs to be logically and grammatically parallel; it is also important to write only one, simple sentence for each level. Avoid
compound sentences. If you have more than one idea to express, create additional outline levels or more sub-points. Here is the sentence outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing.

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

II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.
   A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.
      1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
      2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.
   B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.
      2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.
   C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.
      1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
      2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read—by borrowing books from libraries.

III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.
   A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.
      1. Compact digital cameras are light but have fewer megapixels.
      2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large and heavy but can be used for many functions.
      3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.
   B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing "megapixel war."
   C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.

IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.
   A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 4K?
   B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
   C. Does every home really need a media center?

V. Conclusion
   * The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse.
   Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.
Tip

Let your outline be a guide to paragraph breaks in your essay. In a short essay, the information contained in each Roman numeral will usually become a paragraph in your final paper. Nevertheless, if you have numerous sub-points and details, each capital letter subdivision could become a separate paragraph.

Writing at Work

PowerPoint presentations, used both in schools and in the workplace, are organized in a way very similar to formal outlines. PowerPoint presentations often contain information in the form of talking points that the presenter develops with more details and examples than are contained on the PowerPoint slide.

Exercise 2

Expand the topic outline you prepared in Exercise 4.2.1, making it a sentence outline. In this outline, be sure to include multiple supporting points for your main topic even if your topic outline does not contain them. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and Arabic numerals and capital letters.

Key Takeaways

- Writers must put their ideas in order so the assignment makes sense. The most common orders are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance.
- After gathering and evaluating the information you found for your essay, the next step is to write a working, or preliminary, thesis statement.
- The working thesis statement expresses the main idea that you want to develop in the entire piece of writing. It can be modified as you continue the writing process.
- Effective writers prepare a formal outline to organize their main ideas and supporting details in the order they will be presented.
- A topic outline uses words and phrases to express the ideas.
- A sentence outline uses complete sentences to express the ideas.
The writer’s thesis statement begins the outline; in some styles, the outline may also include ideas for the introduction and conclusion.

### 4.3 Writing Effective Thesis Statements and Outlines: End-of-Chapter Exercises

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Practice skills in writing thesis statements and outlines.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

#### EXERCISES

1. On a separate sheet of paper, choose one of the examples of a proper thesis statement from this chapter (one that interests you) and form three supporting points for that statement. After you have formed your three points, write a topic sentence for each body paragraph. Make sure that your topic sentences can be backed up with examples and details.

2. **Group activity.** Choose one of the topics from Exercise 4.1.1 and form a yes-or-no question about that topic. Then, take a survey of the people in your class to find out how they feel about the subject. Using the majority vote, ask those people to write on slips of paper the reasons for their opinion. Using the data you collect, form a thesis statement based on your classmates’ perspectives on the topic and their reasons.

3. On a separate sheet of paper, using the given thesis statement as a guide, arrange the following sentences into an outline. Make sure that you use correct outline form and that all ideas logically relate. HINT: This is a third-level outline, and one capital letter subdivision has four items. Also remember to put the thesis statement at the top of your outline. *(NOTE: The example outline follows the end-of-chapter exercises in Chapter 5.)*

Thesis: Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation and skillful cooking technique.

**LIST OF IDEAS:**

- The cook must have adequate utensils.
- Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation.
- Newly cracked pepper and sea salt add extra zest to the egg batter.
- The cook must fry the egg batter with care.
- Making the perfect egg omelet requires skill cooking technique.
The cook must select fresh ingredients.

A plastic spatula prevents the cook from scratching the frying pan.

Fresh eggs make a fluffier omelet than eggs that have aged.

The egg batter must be poured into the frying pan as soon as the oil is hot.

The milk and seasonings must be whisked into the egg batter before the eggs go flat.

The omelet must be turned in the pan only once as soon as the batter sets on top.

Sweet milk blends into the egg batter more evenly than sour milk.

A heavy, Teflon-coated frying pan gives even heat and prevents burning.

Fresh vegetable oil is necessary to avoid giving the omelet a greasy flavor and texture.

The eggs must be beaten with a whisk until they are fluffy.

The cook must prepare the egg batter quickly.
Chapter 5
Drafting and Revising the Essay

5.1 Drafting the Essay

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify drafting strategies that improve writing.
2. Use drafting strategies to prepare the first draft of an essay.

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

Getting Started: Strategies for Drafting

Your objective at this stage of the writing process is to draft a standard five-paragraph essay. A five-paragraph essay contains an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can start on paper and then type it before you revise. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking. In this lesson, Mariah does all her work on the computer, but you may use pen and paper or the computer to write a rough draft.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

What makes the writing process so beneficial to writers is that it encourages alternatives to standard practices while motivating you to develop your best ideas. For instance, the following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in the writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.** You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be
Wordy and may lose your reader’s interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than the length of an entire double-spaced page.

- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.** As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.

- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multipage report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write.

- **Be reasonable with your goals.** If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.

- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, for example, you will present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can. Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

**Tip**

You may want to identify your purpose and audience on an index card that you clip to your paper (or keep next to your computer). On that card, you may want to write notes to yourself—perhaps about what that audience might not know or what it needs to know—so that you will be sure to address those issues when
you write. It may be a good idea to also state exactly what you want to explain to that audience, or to inform them of, or to persuade them about.

**Writing at Work**

Many of the documents you produce at work target a particular audience for a particular purpose. You may find that it is highly advantageous to know as much as you can about your target audience and to prepare your message to reach that audience, even if the audience is a coworker or your boss. Menu language is a common example. Descriptions like “organic romaine” and “free-range chicken” are intended to appeal to a certain type of customer though perhaps not to the same customer who craves a thick steak. Similarly, mail-order companies research the demographics of the people who buy their merchandise. Successful vendors customize product descriptions in catalogs to appeal to their buyers’ tastes. For example, the product descriptions in a skateboarder catalog will differ from the descriptions in a clothing catalog for mature adults.

**EXERCISE 1**

Using the topic for the essay that you outlined in Exercise 4.2.2, describe your purpose and your audience as specifically as you can. Use your own sheet of paper to record your responses. Then keep these responses near you during future stages of the writing process.

My purpose: ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My audience: ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Setting Goals for Your First Draft**

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

Writing at Work

Workplace writing in certain environments is done by teams of writers who collaborate on the planning, writing, and revising of documents, such as long reports, technical manuals, and the results of scientific research. Collaborators do not need to be in the same room, the same building, or even the same city. Much collaboration is conducted over the Internet. In a perfect collaboration, each contributor has the right to add, edit, and delete text. Strong communication skills, in addition to strong writing skills, are important in this kind of writing situation because disagreements over style, content, process, emphasis, and other issues may arise. The collaborative software, or document management systems, that groups use to work on common projects is sometimes called groupware or workgroup support systems. The reviewing tool on some word-processing programs also gives you access to a collaborative tool that many smaller workgroups use when they exchange documents. You can also use it to leave comments to yourself.

Tip

If you invest some time now to investigate how the reviewing tool in your word processor works, you will be able to use it with confidence during the revision stage of the writing process. Then, when you start to revise, set your reviewing tool to track any changes you make, so you will be able to tinker with text and commit only those final changes you want to keep.

Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft

If you have been using the information in this chapter step by step to help you develop an assignment, you already have both a formal topic outline and a formal sentence outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- An introduction that piques the audience’s interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.
- A thesis statement that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.
• A topic sentence in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement.

• Supporting sentences in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.

• A conclusion that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

These elements follow the standard five-paragraph essay format, which you probably first encountered in high school. This basic format is valid for most essays you will write in college, even much longer ones.

The Bowtie Method

There are many ways to think about the writing process as a whole. One way to imagine your essay is to see it like a bowtie. In the illustration below (Figure 5.1 “Bowtie Method”), you will find a visual representation of this metaphor. The left side of the bow is the introduction, which begins with a hook and ends with the thesis statement. In the center, you will find the body paragraphs, which grow with strength as the paper progresses, and each paragraph contains a supported topic sentence. On the right side, you will find the conclusion. Your conclusion should reword your thesis and then wrap up the paper with a summation, clinch, or challenge. In the end, your paper should present itself as a neat package, like a bowtie.
Starting Your First Draft

Now we are finally ready to look over Mariah’s shoulder as she begins to write her essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. As she does, you should have in front of you your outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote earlier in this lesson on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and Mariah in the proper mind-set to start. The following is Mariah’s thesis statement.

Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.
Here are the notes that Mariah wrote to herself to characterize her purpose and audience.

**Purpose:** My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumers don’t understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.

**Audience:** My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I’m writing about. I’ll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they’re more with it electronically than my grandparents’ VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won’t have to explain every last detail.

Mariah chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised. Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point.

**Tip**

Remember Mariah’s other options. She could have started directly with any of the body paragraphs. You will learn more about writing attention-getting introductions and effective conclusions later in this chapter.

With her thesis statement and her purpose and audience notes in front of her, Mariah then looked at her sentence outline. She chose to use that outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is the portion of her outline for the first body paragraph. The Roman numeral II identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label sub-points.
II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.
   A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.
      1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
      2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.
   B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.
      2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.
   C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.
      1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
      2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries.

Mariah then began to expand the ideas in her outline into a paragraph. Notice how the outline helped her guarantee that all her sentences in the body of the paragraph develop the topic sentence.
E-book readers are changing the way people read, or so e-book developers hope. The main selling point for these handheld devices, which are sort of the size of a paperback book, is that they make books easy to access and carry. Electronic versions of printed books can be downloaded online for a few bucks or directly from your cell phone. These devices can store hundreds of books in memory and, with text-to-speech features, can even read the texts. The market for e-books and e-book readers keeps expanding as a lot of companies enter it. Online and traditional booksellers have been the first to market e-book readers to the public, but computer companies, especially the ones already involved in cell phone, online music, and notepad computer technology, will also enter the market. The problem for consumers, however, is which device to choose.

Incompatibility is the norm. E-books can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore, use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restrict the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a real book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?

**Tip**

If you write your first draft on the computer, consider creating a new file folder for each course with a set of subfolders inside the course folders for each assignment you are given. Label the folders clearly with the course names, and label each assignment folder and word processing document with a title that you will easily recognize. The assignment name is a good choice for the document. Then use that subfolder to store all the drafts you create. When you start each new draft, do not just write over the last one. Instead, save the draft with a new tag after the title—draft 1, draft 2, and so on—so that you will have a complete history of drafts in case your instructor wishes you to submit them. In your documents, observe any formatting requirements—for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters—that your instructor requires.
Study how Mariah made the transition from her sentence outline to her first draft. First, copy her outline onto your own sheet of paper. Leave a few spaces between each part of the outline. Then copy sentences from Mariah’s paragraph to align each sentence with its corresponding entry in her outline.

**Continuing the First Draft**

Mariah continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. She had supporting details but no numbered sub-points in her outline, so she had to consult her prewriting notes for specific information to include.

**Tip**

If you decide to take a break between finishing your first body paragraph and starting the next one, do not start writing immediately when you return to your work. Put yourself back in context and in the mood by rereading what you have already written. This is what Mariah did. If she had stopped writing in the middle of writing the paragraph, she could have jotted down some quick notes to herself about what she would write next.

Preceding each body paragraph that Mariah wrote is the appropriate section of her sentence outline. Notice how she expanded Roman numeral III from her outline into a first draft of the second body paragraph. As you read, ask yourself how closely she stayed on purpose and how well she paid attention to the needs of her audience.
Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras in amateur photographers’ gadget bags. My father took hundreds of slides when his children were growing up, but he had more and more trouble getting them developed. So, he decided to go modern. But, what kind of camera should he buy? The small compact digital cameras could slip right in his pocket, but if he tried to print a photograph larger than an 8 x 10, the quality would be poor. When he investigated buying a single lens reflex camera, or SLR, he discovered that they were as versatile as his old film camera, also an SLR, but they were big and bulky. Then he discovered yet a third type, which combined the smaller size of the compact digital cameras with the zoom lenses available for SLRs. His first thought was to buy one of those, but then he realized he had a lot of decisions to make. How many megapixels should the camera be? Five? Ten? What is the advantage of each? Then came the size of the zoom lens. He knew that 3x was too small, but what about 25x? Could he hold a lens that long without causing camera shake? He read hundreds of photography magazines and buying guides, and he still wasn’t sure he was right.

Mariah then began her third and final body paragraph using Roman numeral IV from her outline.
IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.
   A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 720p?
   B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
   C. Does every home really need a media center?

Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 720p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions. The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show decent blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints. Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need.

**EXERCISE 3**

Reread body paragraphs two and three of the essay that Mariah is writing. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.
1. In body paragraph two, Mariah decided to develop her paragraph as a nonfiction narrative. Do you agree with her decision? Explain. How else could she have chosen to develop the paragraph? Why is that better?

2. Compare the writing styles of paragraphs two and three. What evidence do you have that Mariah was getting tired or running out of steam? What advice would you give her? Why?

3. Choose one of these two body paragraphs. Write a version of your own that you think better fits Mariah’s audience and purpose.

Writing a Title

A writer’s best choice for a title is one that alludes to the main point of the entire essay. Like the headline in a newspaper or the big, bold title in a magazine, an essay’s title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

Following her outline carefully, Mariah crafted each paragraph of her essay. Moving step by step in the writing process, Mariah finished the draft and even included a brief concluding paragraph which you will read later. She then decided, as the final touch for her writing session, to add an engaging title.

**Thesis Statement:** Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

**Working Title:** Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?

Writing Your Own First Draft

Now you may begin your own first draft, if you have not already done so. Follow the suggestions and the guidelines presented in this section.
• Make the writing process work for you. Use any and all of the strategies that help you move forward in the writing process.

• Always be aware of your purpose for writing and the needs of your audience. Cater to those needs in every sensible way.

• Remember to include all the key structural parts of an essay: a thesis statement that is part of your introductory paragraph, three or more body paragraphs as described in your outline, and a concluding paragraph. Then add an engaging title to draw in readers.

• Write paragraphs of an appropriate length for your writing assignment. Paragraphs in college-level writing can be a page long, as long as they cover the main topics in your outline.

• Use your topic outline or your sentence outline to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas. Each main idea, indicated by a Roman numeral in your outline, becomes the topic of a new paragraph. Develop it with the supporting details and the sub-points of those details that you included in your outline.

• Generally speaking, write your introduction and conclusion last, after you have fleshed out the body paragraphs.

5.2 Writing Body Paragraphs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Select primary support related to your thesis.

2. Support your topic sentences.

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement. The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to
argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

**Tip**

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it.

**Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support**

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.

- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.

- **Be detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

**Pre-write to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement**

Recall that when you pre-write you essentially make a list of examples or reasons why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting,
you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

**EXERCISE 1**

Choose one of the following working thesis statements. On a separate sheet of paper, write for at least five minutes using one of the prewriting techniques you learned in Chapter 2, “Pre-Writing Techniques.”

1. Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.
2. Students cheat for many different reasons.
3. Drug use among teens and young adults is a problem.
4. The most important change that should occur at my college or university is _______________________.

**Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement**

After you have prewritten about your working thesis statement, you may have generated a lot of information, which may be edited out later. Remember that your primary support must be relevant to your thesis. Remind yourself of your main argument, and delete any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body paragraphs. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

**EXERCISE 2**

Refer to the previous exercise and select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis statement. Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points, and you will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for the body paragraphs.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research:
1. **Facts.** Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence “The most populated state in the United States is California” is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.

2. **Judgments.** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.

3. **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.

4. **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child’s social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

**Writing at Work**

In any job where you devise a plan, you will need to support the steps that you lay out. This is an area in which you would incorporate primary support into your writing. Choosing only the most specific and relevant information to expand upon the steps will ensure that your plan appears well-thought-out and precise.

**Tip**

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field.
Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations. Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements:

- topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)

As you read in Chapter 3 "Writing Effective Paragraphs," topic sentences indicate the location and main points of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body paragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement. Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.

Tip

Unless your teacher instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body paragraphs in your essay. A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for exams and essay assignments.

Consider the following thesis statement:

Author J. D. Salinger relied primarily on his personal life and belief system as the foundation for the themes in the majority of his works.

The following topic sentence is a primary support point for the thesis. The topic sentence states exactly what the controlling idea of the paragraph is. Later, you will see the writer immediately provide support for the sentence.
In Exercise 5.2.2, you chose three of your most convincing points to support the thesis statement you selected from the list. Take each point and incorporate it into a topic sentence for each body paragraph.

Supporting point 1: ____________________________________________

Topic sentence: ____________________________________________

Supporting point 2: ____________________________________________

Topic sentence: ____________________________________________

Supporting point 3: ____________________________________________

Topic sentence: ____________________________________________

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Primary Support Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence. The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement:

Salingar, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced themes in many of his works.
Thesis statement: Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.

Supporting point 1: Dogs can scare cyclists and pedestrians.

Supporting details:
1. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the road.
2. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.
3. People who are walking at night freeze in fear.

Supporting point 2: Loose dogs are traffic hazards.

Supporting details:
1. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.
2. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.
3. Children crossing dogs across busy streets create danger.

Supporting point 3: Unleashed dogs damage gardens.

Supporting details:
1. They step on flowers and vegetables.
2. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.
3. They mess up lawns by digging holes.

The following paragraph contains supporting detail sentences for the primary support sentence (the topic sentence), which is underlined.
Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live." His short story "A Perfect Day for a Bananafish" details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short story, "For Esme - with Love and Squalor," is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger's only novel, The Catcher in the Rye, he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

EXERCISE 4

Using the three topic sentences you composed for the thesis statement in Exercise 5.2.3, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis statement: ________________________________

Primary supporting point 1: ________________________________

Supporting details: ________________________________

Primary supporting point 2: ________________________________

Supporting details: ________________________________

Primary supporting point 3: ________________________________

Supporting details: ________________________________
Tip
You have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways. You can state it at the beginning of the body paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph, or you do not have to write it at all. This is called an implied topic sentence. An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want to clearly identify the sentences that support your thesis.

Tip
Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Your body paragraphs should closely follow the path set forth by your thesis statement.
- Strong body paragraphs contain evidence that supports your thesis.
- Primary support comprises the most important points you use to support your thesis.
- Strong primary support is specific, detailed, and relevant to the thesis.
- Prewriting helps you determine your most compelling primary support.
- Evidence includes facts, judgments, testimony, and personal observation.
- Reliable sources may include newspapers, magazines, academic journals, books, encyclopedias, and firsthand testimony.
- A topic sentence presents one point of your thesis statement while the information in the rest of the paragraph supports that point.
- A body paragraph comprises a topic sentence plus supporting details.

**5.3 Organizing Your Writing**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
The method of organization you choose for your essay is just as important as its content. Without a clear organizational pattern, your reader could become confused and lose interest. The way you structure your essay helps your readers draw connections between the body and the thesis, and the structure also keeps you focused as you plan and write the essay. Choosing your organizational pattern before you outline ensures that each body paragraph works to support and develop your thesis. This section covers three ways to organize body paragraphs:

1. **Chronological order**
2. **Order of importance**
3. **Spatial order**

When you begin to draft your essay, your ideas may seem to flow from your mind in a seemingly random manner. Your readers, who bring to the table different backgrounds, viewpoints, and ideas, need you to clearly organize these ideas in order to help process and accept them. A solid organizational pattern gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your draft. Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. Planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research.

**Chronological Order**

Chronological arrangement has the following purposes:

- To explain the history of an event or a topic
- To tell a story or relate an experience
- To explain how to do or to make something
- To explain the steps in a process

Chronological order is mostly used in expository writing, which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process. When using chronological order, arrange the events in the order
that they actually happened, or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as first, second, then, after that, later, and finally. These transition words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis. For example, if you are writing an essay about the history of the airline industry, you would begin with its conception and detail the essential timeline events up until present day. You would follow the chain of events using words such as first, then, next, and so on.

**Writing at Work**

At some point in your career you may have to file a complaint with your human resources department. Using chronological order is a useful tool in describing the events that led up to your filing the grievance. You would logically lay out the events in the order that they occurred using the key transition words. The more logical your complaint, the more likely you will be well received and helped.

**EXERCISE 1**

Choose an accomplishment you have achieved in your life. The important moment could be in sports, schooling, or extracurricular activities. On your own sheet of paper, list the steps you took to reach your goal. Try to be as specific as possible with the steps you took. Pay attention to using transition words to focus your writing.

Keep in mind that chronological order is most appropriate for the following purposes:

- Writing essays containing heavy research
- Writing essays with the aim of listing, explaining, or narrating
- Writing essays that analyze literary works such as poems, plays, or books

**Tip**

When using chronological order, your introduction should indicate the information you will cover and in what order, and the introduction should also establish the relevance of the information. Your body paragraphs should then provide clear divisions or steps in chronology. You can divide your paragraphs by time (such as decades, wars, or other historical events) or by the same structure of the work you are examining (such as a line-by-line explication of a poem).
On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that describes a process you are familiar with and can do well. Assume that your reader is unfamiliar with the procedure. Remember to use the chronological key words, such as first, second, then, and finally.

**Order of Importance**

Order of importance is best used for the following purposes:

- Persuading and convincing
- Ranking items by their importance, benefit, or significance
- Illustrating a situation, problem, or solution

Most essays move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay’s strength. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to begin with your most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading. For example, if you were supporting your thesis that homework is detrimental to the education of high school students, you would want to present your most convincing argument first, and then move on to the less important points for your case. Some key transitional words you should use with this method of organization are most importantly, almost as importantly, just as importantly, and finally.

**Writing at Work**

During your career, you may be required to work on a team that devises a strategy for a specific goal of your company, such as increasing profits. When planning your strategy you should organize your steps in order of importance. This demonstrates the ability to prioritize and plan. Using the order of importance technique also shows that you can create a resolution with logical steps for accomplishing a common goal.
On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that discusses a passion of yours. Your passion could be music, a particular sport, filmmaking, and so on. Your paragraph should be built upon the reasons why you feel so strongly. Briefly discuss your reasons in the order of least to greatest importance.

Spatial Order

Spatial order is best used for the following purposes:

- Helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- Evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
- Writing a descriptive essay

Spatial order means that you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space, for example in a bedroom. As the writer, you create a picture for your readers, and their perspective is the viewpoint from which you describe what is around you. The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals to follow from place to place. The key to using this method is to choose a specific starting point and then guide the reader to follow your eye as it moves in an orderly trajectory from your starting point.

Pay attention to the following student’s description of her bedroom and how she guides the reader through the viewing process, foot by foot.

Attached to my bedroom wall is a small wooden rack dangling with red and turquoise necklaces that shimmer as you enter. Just to the right of the rack is my window, framed by billowy white curtains. The peace of such an image is a stark contrast to my desk, which sits to the right of the window, layered in textbooks, crumpled papers, coffee cups, and an overflowing ashtray. Turning my head to the right, I see a set of two bare windows that frame the trees outside the glass like a 3D painting. Below the windows is an oak chest from which blankets and scarves are protruding. Against the wall opposite the billowy curtains is an antique dresser, on top of which sits a jewelry box and a few picture frames. A tall mirror attached to the dresser takes up most of the wall, which is the color of lavender.
The paragraph incorporates two objectives you have learned in this chapter: using an implied topic sentence and applying spatial order. Often in a descriptive essay, the two work together.

The following are possible transition words to include when using spatial order:

- Just to the left or just to the right
- Behind
- Between
- On the left or on the right
- Across from
- A little further down
- To the south, to the east, and so on
- A few yards away
- Turning left or turning right

**EXERCISE 4**

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph using spatial order that describes your commute to work, school, or another location you visit often.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- The way you organize your body paragraphs ensures you and your readers stay focused on and draw connections to your thesis statement.
- A strong organizational pattern allows you to articulate, analyze, and clarify your thoughts.
- Planning the organizational structure for your essay before you begin to search for supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and directed research.
- Chronological order is most commonly used in expository writing. It is useful for explaining the history of your subject, for telling a story, or for explaining a process.
Order of importance is most appropriate in a persuasion paper as well as for essays in which you rank things, people, or events by their significance.

Spatial order describes things as they are arranged in space and is best for helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it; it creates a dominant impression.

5.4 Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the importance of strong introductory and concluding paragraphs.
2. Learn to engage the reader immediately with the introductory paragraph.
3. Practice concluding your essays in a more memorable way.

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis).

Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement. An introduction serves the following purposes:

1. Establishes your voice and tone, or your attitude, toward the subject
2. Introduces the general topic of the essay
3. States the thesis that will be supported in the body paragraphs

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader’s mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay.

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers’ interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving smoothly and logically from your introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be achieved using a funnel technique, as illustrated in the diagram in Figure 5.2 "Funnel Technique".
EXERCISE 1

On a separate sheet of paper, jot down a few general remarks that you can make about the topic for which you formed a thesis in Exercise 4.1.3.

Immediately capturing your readers’ interest increases the chances of having them read what you are about to discuss. You can garner curiosity for your essay in a number of ways. Try to get your readers personally involved by doing any of the following:

- Appealing to their emotions
- Using logic
• Beginning with a provocative question or opinion
• Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
• Raising a question or series of questions
• Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
• Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
• Opening with a striking image
• Including a personal anecdote

Tip

Remember that your diction, or word choice, while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your discussion. Choose words that create images or express action.

Earlier in this chapter you have followed Mariah as she has moved through the writing process. In this section, Mariah writes her introduction and conclusion for the same essay. Mariah incorporates some of the introductory elements into her introductory paragraph, which she previously outlined in Chapter Four. Her thesis statement is underlined.

Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch Dynasty? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has revolutionized the way people entertain themselves. In today’s rapidly evolving world of digital technology, consumers are bombarded with endless options for how they do most everything—from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average person to become baffled. Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing.

Tip
If you have trouble coming up with a provocative statement for your opening, it is a good idea to use a relevant, attention-grabbing quote about your topic. Use a search engine to find statements made by historical or significant figures about your subject.

**Writing at Work**

In your job field, you may be required to write a speech for an event, such as an awards banquet or a dedication ceremony. The introduction of a speech is similar to an essay because you have a limited amount of space to attract your audience’s attention. Using the same techniques, such as a provocative quote or an interesting statistic, is an effective way to engage your listeners. Using the funnel approach also introduces your audience to your topic and then presents your main idea in a logical manner.

**EXERCISE 2**

Reread each sentence in Mariah’s introductory paragraph. Indicate which techniques she used and comment on how each sentence is designed to attract her readers’ interest.

**Writing a Conclusion**

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

A conclusion that does not correspond to the rest of your essay, has loose ends, or is unorganized can unsettle your readers and raise doubts about the entire essay. However, if you have worked hard to write the introduction and body, your conclusion can often be the most logical part to compose.

**The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion**

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay. In order to tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating your thesis reminds your readers of the major arguments you have been trying to prove and also indicates that your essay is drawing to a close. A strong conclusion also reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic.
The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that in the conclusion you first paraphrase, or state in different words, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable. Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay.

**Tip**

When closing your essay, do not expressly state that you are drawing to a close. Relying on statements such as *in conclusion, it is clear that, as you can see,* or *in summation* is unnecessary and can be considered trite.

**Tip**

It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

- Introducing new material
- Contradicting your thesis
- Changing your thesis
- Using apologies or disclaimers

Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view. When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.
By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

**EXERCISE 3**

On a separate sheet of a paper, restate your thesis from Exercise 5.2.1 of this section and then make some general concluding remarks. Next, compose a final emphatic statement. Finally, incorporate what you have written into a strong conclusion paragraph for your essay.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Mariah incorporates some of these pointers into her conclusion. She has paraphrased her thesis statement in the first sentence.

> In a society fixated on the latest and smartest digital technology, a consumer can easily become confused by the countless options and specifications. The ever-changing state of digital technology challenges consumers with its updates and add-ons and expanding markets and incompatible formats and restrictions—a fact that is complicated by salesmen who want to sell them anything. In a world that is increasingly driven by instant gratification, it’s easy for people to buy the first thing they see. The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

**Tip**

Make sure your essay is balanced by not having an excessively long or short introduction or conclusion. Check that they match each other in length as closely as possible, and try to mirror the formula you used in each. Parallelism strengthens the message of your essay.
Writing at Work

On the job you will sometimes give oral presentations based on research you have conducted. A concluding statement to an oral report contains the same elements as a written conclusion. You should wrap up your presentation by restating the purpose of the presentation, reviewing its main points, and emphasizing the importance of the material you presented. A strong conclusion will leave a lasting impression on your audience.

5.5 Revising and Editing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify major areas of concern in the draft essay during revising and editing.
2. Use peer reviews and editing checklists to assist revising and editing.
3. Revise and edit the first draft of your essay and produce a final draft.

Revising and editing are the two tasks you undertake to significantly improve your essay. Both are very important elements of the writing process. You may think that a completed first draft means little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers need to improve their drafts and rely on peers during revising and editing. You may know that athletes miss catches, fumble balls, or overshoot goals. Dancers forget steps, turn too slowly, or miss beats. For both athletes and dancers, the more they practice, the stronger their performance will become. Web designers seek better images, a more clever design, or a more appealing background for their web pages. Writing has the same capacity to profit from improvement and revision.

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing separately, so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you revise, you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
• When you edit, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words. You fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You improve your writing style.

You make your essay into a polished, mature piece of writing, the end product of your best efforts.

**Tip**

How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results.

• Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.

• Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.

• Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?

• Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school’s writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

Many people hear the words *critic, critical, and criticism* and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

**Creating Unity and Coherence**

Following your outline closely offers you a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. However, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may become less than they want it to be. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense. When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

**Tip**
Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

**Creating Unity**

Sometimes writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled “Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?” But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph. Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah’s changes, and the second time with them.
EXERCISE 1

1) Answer the following two questions about Mariah’s paragraph:

1. Do you agree with Mariah’s decision to make the deletions she made? Did she cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.

2. Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2) Now start to revise the first draft of the essay you wrote at the end of Section 5.1 "Writing Your Own First Draft". Reread it to find any statements that affect the unity of your writing. Decide how best to revise.

Tip
When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

**Writing at Work**

Many companies hire copyeditors and proofreaders to help them produce the cleanest possible final drafts of large writing projects. Copyeditors are responsible for suggesting revisions and style changes; proofreaders check documents for any errors in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation that have crept in. Many times, these tasks are done on a freelance basis, with one freelancer working for a variety of clients.

**Creating Coherence**

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essays. Table 5.1 "Common Transitional Words and Phrases" groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitions That Show Sequence or Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>After</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as soon as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at last</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transitions That Show Position**

<p>| Above | Across | at the bottom |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Relative to Objects</th>
<th>At the Top</th>
<th>Behind</th>
<th>Below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beside</td>
<td>Beyond</td>
<td>Inside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near</td>
<td>next to</td>
<td>opposite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the left, to the right, to the side</td>
<td>Under</td>
<td>where</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transitions That Show a Conclusion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitions</th>
<th>Indeed</th>
<th>Hence</th>
<th>in conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in the final analysis</td>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>thus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitions</th>
<th>Consequently</th>
<th>Furthermore</th>
<th>additionally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
<td>besides the fact</td>
<td>following this idea further</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in addition</td>
<td>in the same way</td>
<td>moreover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking further</td>
<td>considering..., it is clear that</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transitions That Change a Line of Thought**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitions</th>
<th>But</th>
<th>Yet</th>
<th>however</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nevertheless</td>
<td>on the contrary</td>
<td>on the other hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transitions That Show Importance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitions</th>
<th>above all</th>
<th>Best</th>
<th>especially</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in fact</td>
<td>more important</td>
<td>most important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>Worst</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finally</th>
<th>Last</th>
<th>in conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>most of all</td>
<td>least of all</td>
<td>last of all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admittedly</th>
<th>at this point</th>
<th>certainly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Granted</td>
<td>it is true</td>
<td>generally speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in general</td>
<td>in this situation</td>
<td>no doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no one denies</td>
<td>Obviously</td>
<td>of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be sure</td>
<td>Undoubtedly</td>
<td>unquestionably</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transitions that Introduce Examples

| for instance  | for example     |

Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>first, second, third</th>
<th>generally, furthermore, finally</th>
<th>in the first place, also, last</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in the first place, furthermore, finally</td>
<td>in the first place, likewise, last</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Maria revised for unity, she next examined her paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. She looked for places where she needed to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the version that follows, she has already deleted the sentences that were off topic.

**Tip**

Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on-screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.
EXERCISE 2

1) Answer the following questions about Mariah’s revised paragraph.

1. Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.

2. What transition words or phrases did Mariah add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?

3. What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

2) Now return to the first draft of the essay you wrote in 5.1 “Writing Your Own First Draft” and revise it for coherence. Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you,
the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise. If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

**Identifying Wordiness**

Sometimes writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose. Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft. Eliminating wordiness helps all readers, because it makes your ideas clear, direct, and straightforward.

- **Sentences that begin with** *There is or There are.*
  
  **Wordy:** There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.
  
  **Revised:** The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Sentences with unnecessary modifiers.**
  
  **Wordy:** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.
  
  **Revised:** Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.

- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of, with a mind to, on the subject of, as to whether or not, more or less, as far as...is concerned,* and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.
  
  **Wordy:** As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy. A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.
  
  **Revised:** As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy. A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb to be.** Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion, because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use
strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of to be, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can.

**Wordy:** It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

**Revised:** Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

- **Sentences with constructions that can be shortened.**

**Wordy:** The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

My over-sixty uncle bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too.

**Revised:** The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

---

**EXERCISE 3**

Now return once more to the first draft of the essay you have been revising. Check it for unnecessary words. Try making your sentences as concise as they can be.

### Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate.

- **Avoid slang.** Find alternatives to bummer, kewl, and rad.

- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about “men and women” rather than “girls and guys” unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.

- **Avoid contractions.** Use do not in place of don’t, I am in place of I’m, have not in place of haven’t, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech.

- **Avoid clichés.** Overused expressions such as green with envy, face the music, better late than never, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may not appeal to your audience.

- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings.** Some examples are allusion/illusion, complement/compliment, council/counsel, concurrent/consecutive, founder/flounder, and historic/historical. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
Choose words with the connotations you want. Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word proud and the negative connotations of arrogant and conceited.

Use specific words rather than overly general words. Find synonyms for thing, people, nice, good, bad, interesting, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions Mariah made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. She has already incorporated the changes she made to improve unity and coherence.
EXERCISE 4

1) Answer the following questions about Mariah’s revised paragraph:

1. Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Mariah’s writing.

2. Do you agree with the changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?

3. What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun you have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?

2) Now return once more to your essay in progress. Read carefully for problems with word choice. Be sure that your draft is written in formal language and that your word choice is specific and appropriate.

Completing a Peer Review

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader’s feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called peer review. You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other’s essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The box that follows provides a useful framework for the peer review session.

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Writer’s name: ________________________________

Peer reviewer’s name: ________________________________
1. This essay is about____________________________________________.
2. Your main points in this essay are____________________________________________.
3. What I most liked about this essay is____________________________________________.
4. These three points struck me as your strongest:
   a. Point: ____________________________________________
      Why: ____________________________________________
   b. Point: ____________________________________________
      Why: ____________________________________________
   c. Point: ____________________________________________
      Why: ____________________________________________
   These places in your essay are not clear to me:
   a. Where: ____________________________________________
      Needs improvement because__________________________________________
   b. Where: ____________________________________________
      Needs improvement because ____________________________________________
   c. Where: ____________________________________________
      Needs improvement because ____________________________________________
      The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is
      ____________________________________________

**Writing at Work**

One of the reasons why word-processing programs build in a reviewing feature is that workgroups have become a common feature in many businesses. Writing is often collaborative, and the members of a workgroup and their supervisors often critique group members’ work and offer feedback that will lead to a better final product.
EXERCISE 5

Exchange essays with a classmate and complete a peer review of each other’s draft in progress. Remember to give positive feedback and to be courteous and polite in your responses. Focus on providing one positive comment and one question for more information to the author.

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience). It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might get feedback from more than one reader as you share different stages of your revised draft. In this situation, you may receive feedback from readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it. You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

1. Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
2. Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

EXERCISE 6

Work with two partners. Go back to Exercise 5.5.4 in this lesson and compare your responses to Activity A, about Mariah’s paragraph, with your partners’. Recall Mariah’s purpose for writing and her audience. Then, working individually, list where you agree and where you disagree about revision needs.
**Editing Your Draft**

If you have been incorporating each set of revisions as Mariah has, you have produced multiple drafts of your writing. So far, all your changes have been content changes. Perhaps with the help of peer feedback, you have made sure that you sufficiently supported your ideas. You have checked for problems with unity and coherence. You have examined your essay for word choice, revising to cut unnecessary words and to replace weak wording with specific and appropriate wording.

The next step after revising the content is editing. When you edit, you examine the surface features of your text. You examine your spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment.

**Tip**

Editing often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising. Editing and proofreading your writing helps you create a finished work that represents your best efforts. Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they *do* notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas—unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use *there*, *their*, and *they’re* correctly, but they notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document.

The last section of this book offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help you eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language. Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college’s writing lab. In the meantime, use the checklist to help you edit your writing.

**Checklist**

**Editing Your Writing**

**Grammar**
• Are some sentences actually sentence fragments?
• Are some sentences run-on sentences? How can I correct them?
• Do some sentences need conjunctions between independent clauses?
• Does every verb agree with its subject?
• Is every verb in the correct tense?
• Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
• Have I used subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns correctly?
• Have I used *who* and *whom* correctly?
• Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
• Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
• Have I used the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs?
• Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies, or is it a dangling modifier?

**Sentence Structure**

• Are all my sentences simple sentences, or do I vary my sentence structure?
• Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
• Have I created long, overpacked sentences that should be shortened for clarity?
• Do I see any mistakes in parallel structure?

**Punctuation**

• Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
• Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
• Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?
• Have I used quotation marks correctly?

**Mechanics and Usage**

• Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
• Have I used capital letters where they are needed?
• Have I written abbreviations, where allowed, correctly?
• Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as *sto/too/two*?
Tip
Be careful about relying too much on spelling checkers and grammar checkers. A spelling checker cannot recognize that you meant to write principle but wrote principal instead. A grammar checker often queries constructions that are perfectly correct. The program does not understand your meaning; it makes its check against a general set of formulas that might not apply in each instance. If you use a grammar checker, accept the suggestions that make sense, but consider why the suggestions came up.

Tip
Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to read past a mistake. Set your paper aside for at least a few hours, if not a day or more, so your mind will rest. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark. If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

Formatting
Remember to use proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included. To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Exercise 7
With the help of the checklist, edit and proofread your essay.

Key Takeaways
Revising and editing are the stages of the writing process in which you improve your work before producing a final draft.

During revising, you add, cut, move, or change information in order to improve content.

During editing, you take a second look at the words and sentences you used to express your ideas and fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.

Unity in writing means that all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense.

Coherence in writing means that the writer’s wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and between paragraphs.

Transitional words and phrases effectively make writing more coherent.

Writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words.

Effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, clichés, and overly general words.

Peer reviews, done properly, can give writers objective feedback about their writing. It is the writer’s responsibility to evaluate the results of peer reviews and incorporate only useful feedback.

Remember to budget time for careful editing and proofreading. Use all available resources, including editing checklists, peer editing, and your institution’s writing lab, to improve your editing skills.

### 5.6 Example Student Outline and Paper

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Observe proper outline form and structure in a model student paper.
2. Observe how a paper is developed from an outline in a model student paper.

The following expository outline and paper by Pere Ellis, entitled “Aquaponics: A Viable Solution to World Hunger,” clearly breaks down the argument presented in his thesis, providing specific examples in the sub-points. The paper then follows the order of the outline, stating the idea from each level and further developing and expanding the sub-points.
Aquaponics: A Viable Solution to World Hunger

by

Pere J. Ellis II

English 1101 Honors
Dr. Rosemary D. Cox
February 25, 2014
Outline

Thesis: Aquaponics is the best solution to the world hunger problem because it is simple
to manage, environmentally friendly, and yields larger food quantities than typical
farming techniques.

I. Aquaponics is a simple system that can be managed at the individual level,
commercial level, and adapted to any location.
   A. An aquaponics system can be managed by one person.
      1. The system can be created at any level to meet the individual needs.
      2. The system can be easily managed with the use of technology.
   B. An aquaponics system can be managed at a commercial level.
      1. The system can be created for small scale and large scale production.
      2. The system is capable of providing produce to the commercial market.
   C. An aquaponics system can be managed at any location.
      1. A system can be built on land not suited for growing crops.
      2. A system can be created with plants and animals from similar environments.

II. Aquaponics is an environmentally friendly system.
   A. Chemical fertilizers are not used in aquaponics.
      1. Fish excrement is the only fertilizer used in the aquaponics system.
      2. Fish excrement is filtered from the water and cycled back into the system.
   B. Pesticides are not used in aquaponics.
      1. Pesticides contaminate fish tanks and potentially harm the fish.
      2. Pesticides kill insects, which are an additional food source for the fish.

III. Aquaponics yields larger quantities of food.
   A. Aquaponics produces two types of crops.
1. Various species of plants can be grown in an aquaponics system.

2. Various species of fish can be grown in an aquaponics system.

B. Aquaponics produces greater quantities of food in a smaller area.

1. Aquaponics farms are compounded and compact ecological systems.

2. Aquaponics farms are capable of producing food year round.
Aquaponics: A Viable Solution to World Hunger

Hunger and food shortages have plagued the world over and over again. The world agricultural community has historical problems with the demand and need for more food. Technological advancements such as the bioengineering of plants have allowed them to thrive in harsher environments and produce higher yields. But these advancements have not solved the world’s food problems. One of the more recent developments is a technique known as aquaponics. Aquaponics is a farming method that utilizes a balanced ecological cycle between plants and aquatic animals, which creates surprising results. The cycle starts with transferring fresh water aquatic animal excrement to plants as source of plant nutrients. The excrement is then filtered by the plants, and the water is recycled back into the fresh water aquatic animal environment. The cycle is constantly repeated until the plants and animals are harvested. An aquaponics system is the best system for farming because it is the most easily managed and environmentally friendly system available and it is capable of producing impressive crops yields several times higher than more traditional farming systems practiced today.

Aquaponics is a versatile and simple system that can be easily managed by one person. One individual can easily set up a small scale operation to completely supplement or cheapen a food budget. By incorporating inexpensive sensors and other technological devices, an aquaponics system can be expanded beyond the management capabilities of one individual. Adapting technology to a smaller system will minimize the amount of time spent on managing an aquaponics system. Electronic devices such as timed fish feeders and automated temperature control devices reduce the amount of time spent managing a system while simultaneously increasing production.
Like individually managed aquaponics systems, a commercial system can be created on any scale. The scale of a commercial aquaponics system will be limited to the available space, workforce, and funding. Commercial systems typically provide produce to individual, local, and national markets. Most commercial aquaponics systems distribute to the local market since a typical aquaponics system is a small or medium scale operation. There are a few large scale commercial aquaponics companies capable of meeting the demands of the national market.

No matter the scale of the operation an aquaponics system can be created anywhere. An individual can build an aquaponics system in a backyard or on the rooftop of an apartment building. Several aquaponics farms have been created on land previously incapable of producing crops of any kind. Other commercial scale systems have been built in large unused industrial buildings reconstructed for use as greenhouses. In addition to being able to build an aquaponics system in any physical location, an aquaponics farm can also be adapted to many environments. The ability to adapt an aquaponics system to multiple environments comes from the variety of different plants and animals which can be grown within a single system. Identifying plants and animals that thrive in atmospheres similar to that of the aquaponics farm’s environment strengthens the production and survivability of the plants and animals in the system.

While aquaponics is a very adaptive ecological system, it is also an environmentally friendly system with no chemical additives. Unlike other farming techniques, aquaponics systems never use chemical fertilizers. This is partially because chemical fertilizers are extremely toxic to the aquatic animals in the system and there is no need for chemical fertilizers. The entire aquaponics system is a symbiotic ecosystem.
where the fish and plants rely on each other to survive. Fish excrement provides the nutrients needed for the plants to continue to grow. In turn, the plants filter and clean the water that is reintroduced back into the fish tanks. And, the cycle is repeated over and over until harvest. As with chemical fertilizers, pesticides are not used in an aquaponics system because they are harmful to both plants and animals. Additionally, insects are a natural food source for aquatic animals such as fish, which are the most common type of aquatic animal used in an aquaponics system.

While the aquaponics system is an adaptable and environmentally friendly system, its most important quality is the amount of food that can be produced. Aquaponics farms are capable of growing two different types of crops. The adaptability of the aquaponics system is partially derived from the vast combinations of plants and animals which can be cultivated and raised. There are hundreds of various fruits and vegetables that can be grown in an aquaponics system. Broadleafy and juicy fruit bearing plants tend to do very well. Besides plants, various species of fresh water fish such as catfish, trout, and tilapia also do very well in aquaponics systems. In addition to growing fish, a few aquaponics farms have been successful in raising different species of fresh water shrimp, further diversifying the aquaponics system.

Another advantage of the aquaponics system is that it requires a much smaller area than traditional farming systems. Aquaponics farms are compounded systems that can produce two different types of crops in the same amount of space that one traditional crop requires. This is accomplished in part by growing the plants much closer to each other. Typically, aquaponics systems are built in greenhouses, allowing for year round production, a smaller geographic footprint, and the production of larger crop yields.
The adaptable system of aquaponics is the best answer to solving world hunger because it produces organic and environmentally friendly high yield crops on less land than more traditional farming methods. Even though several aquaponics systems have been built in differing environments throughout the world and have done quite well, aquaponics still has not been accepted as a viable substitute for traditional farming. Perhaps this is because it is a new idea and will take a while to catch on. Nevertheless, once aquaponics is accepted as a solution, the world may finally be rid of one of its longest living problems.
5.7 Drafting and Revising the Essay: End-of-Chapter Exercises

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.
3. Work with a variety of academic and on-the-job, real-world examples.

EXERCISES

1. In this chapter, you have thought and read about the topic of mass media. Starting with the title “The Future of Information: How It Will Be Created, Transmitted, and Consumed,” narrow the focus of the topic until it is suitable for a two- to three-page paper. Then narrow your topic with the help of brainstorming, idea mapping, and searching the Internet until you select a final topic to explore. Keep a journal or diary in which you record and comment on everything you did to choose a final topic. Then record what you will do next to explore the idea and create a thesis statement.

2. Write a thesis statement and a formal sentence outline for an essay about the writing process. Include separate paragraphs for prewriting, drafting, and revising and editing. Your audience will be a general audience of educated adults who are unfamiliar with how writing is taught at the college level. Your purpose is to explain the stages of the writing process so that readers will understand its benefits.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

3. Pieces of writing in a variety of real-life and work-related situations would benefit from revising and editing. Consider the following list of real-life and work-related pieces of writing: e-mails, greeting card messages, junk mail, late-night television commercials, social networking pages, local newspapers, bulletin-board postings, and public notices. Find and submit at least two examples of writing that needs revision. Explain what changes you would make. Replace any recognizable names with pseudonyms.

4. **Group activity.** At work, an employer might someday ask you to contribute to the research base for an essay such as the one Mariah wrote or the one you wrote while working through this chapter. Choosing either her topic or your own, compile a list of at least five sources. Then, working in a group of four students, bring in printouts or PDF files of Internet sources or paper copies of non-Internet sources for the other group members to examine. In a group report, rate the reliability of each other’s sources.
5. **Group activity.** Working in a peer-review group of four, go to Section 5.3 "Drafting" and reread the draft of the first two body paragraphs of Mariah’s essay, “Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?” Review those two paragraphs using the same level of inspection given to the essay’s third paragraph in Section 5.4 "Revising and Editing". Suggest and agree on changes to improve unity and coherence, eliminate unneeded words, and refine word choice. Your purpose is to help Mariah produce two effective paragraphs for a formal college-level essay about her topic.

**Example Outline for Exercise 3 in Chapter 4.3: Writing Effective Thesis Statements and Outlines:**

**Outline**

**Thesis:** Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation and skillful cooking technique.

I. Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation.

   A. The cook must have adequate utensils.
      1. A heavy, Teflon-coated frying pan gives even heat and prevents burning.
      2. A plastic spatula prevents the cook from scratching the frying pan.
   B. The cook must select fresh ingredients.
      1. Fresh eggs make a fluffier omelet than eggs that have aged.
      2. Sweet milk blends into the egg batter more evenly than sour milk.
      3. Fresh vegetable oil is necessary to avoid giving the omelet a greasy flavor and texture.
      4. Newly cracked pepper and sea salt add extra zest to the egg batter.

II. Making the perfect egg omelet requires skillful cooking technique.

   A. The cook must prepare the egg batter quickly.
      1. The eggs must be beaten with a whisk until they are fluffy.
2. The milk and seasonings must be whisked into the egg batter before the eggs go flat.

B. The cook must fry the egg batter with care.

   1. The egg batter must be poured into the frying pan as soon as the oil is hot.

   2. The omelet must be turned in the pan only once as soon as the batter sets on top.
Rhetorical modes simply mean the ways we can effectively communicate through language. Each day people interact with others to describe a car problem, explain a solution to a science experiment, persuade a customer that a brand of security system is the best, or even reveal what has caused a particular medical issue. We speak in a manner that is purposeful to each situation, and writing is no different. While rhetorical modes can refer to both speaking and writing, in this chapter we reveal the ways in which we write, according to our purpose or intent. Your purpose for writing determines the mode you choose.

The four major categories of rhetorical modes are narration, description, exposition, and persuasion. The narrative essay tells a relevant story or relates an event. The descriptive essay uses vivid, sensory details to draw a picture in words. The writer’s purpose in expository writing is to explain or inform. Exposition is subdivided into five modes: classification, process, definition, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect. In the persuasive essay, the writer’s purpose is to persuade or convince the reader by presenting one idea against another and clearly taking a stand on one side of the issue.

Whether you are asked to write a cause/effect essay in a history class, a comparison/contrast report in biology, or a narrative email recounting the events in a situation on the job, you will be equipped to express yourself precisely and communicate clearly. Learning these rhetorical modes will also help you to become a more effective writer.

### 6.1 Narration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Determine the purpose and structure of narrative writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Understand how to write a narrative essay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Purpose of Narrative Writing**

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration. In addition, a narrative can be factual or fictional. A factual story is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded in real life. A fictional story is a made-up, or imagined, story; the writer of a fictional story can create characters and events as he or she sees fit. The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is based on a writer’s purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart
from real people and events because the writers’ intents are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories, whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

**Tip**

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else’s? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

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

**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, start brainstorming ideas for a narrative. First, decide whether you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then, freewrite for five minutes. Be sure to use all five minutes, and keep writing the entire time. Do not stop and think about what to write.

The following are some topics to consider as you get going:

1. Childhood
2. School
3. Adventure
4. Work
5. Love
6. Family
7. Friends
8. Vacation
9. Nature
10. Space
The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed in Table 6.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time". For more information about chronological order, see Chapter 5 "Drafting and Revising the Essay."

Table 6.1 Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>after/afterward</th>
<th>as soon as</th>
<th>at last</th>
<th>before</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently</td>
<td>during</td>
<td>eventually</td>
<td>meanwhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>since</td>
<td>soon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>still</td>
<td>then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Until</td>
<td>when/whenever</td>
<td>while</td>
<td>first, second, third</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are the other basic components of a narrative:

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

Writing at Work

When interviewing candidates for jobs, employers often ask about conflicts or problems a potential employee has had to overcome. They are asking for a compelling personal narrative. To prepare for this
question in a job interview, write out a scenario using the narrative mode structure. This will allow you to troubleshoot rough spots, as well as better understand your own personal history. Both processes will make your story better and your self-presentation better, too.

**EXERCISE 2**

Take your freewriting exercise from the last section and start crafting it chronologically into a rough plot summary. To read more about a summary, see Chapter 1 "Introduction to Writing." Be sure to use the time transition words and phrases listed in Table 6.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time" to sequence the events.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your rough plot summary.

**Writing a Narrative Essay**

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite about topics that are of general interest to you. For more information about freewriting, see Chapter 2 "Prewriting Techniques."

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

**Tip**

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece. See Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample narrative essay.

**EXERCISE 3**
On a separate sheet of paper, add two or three paragraphs to the plot summary you started in the last section. Describe in detail the main character and the setting of the first scene. Try to use all five senses in your descriptions.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Narration is the art of storytelling.
- Narratives can be either factual or fictional. In either case, narratives should emotionally engage the reader.
- Most narratives are composed of major events sequenced in chronological order.
- Time transition words and phrases are used to orient the reader in the sequence of a narrative.
- The four basic components to all narratives are plot, character, conflict, and theme.
- The use of sensory details is crucial to emotionally engaging the reader.
- A strong introduction is important to hook the reader. A strong conclusion should add resolution to the conflict and evoke the narrative’s theme.

### 6.2 Description

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the description essay.
2. Understand how to write a description essay.

**The Purpose of Description in Writing**

Writers use description in writing to make sure that their audience is fully immersed in the words on the page. This requires a concerted effort by the writer to describe his or her world through the use of sensory details.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, sensory details are descriptions that appeal to our sense of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Your descriptions should try to focus on the five senses because we all rely on these senses to experience the world. The use of sensory details, then, provides you the greatest possibility of relating to your audience and thus engaging them in your writing, making descriptive writing important not only during your education but also during everyday situations.

**Tip**
Avoid empty descriptors if possible. Empty descriptors are adjectives that can mean different things to different people. *Good, beautiful, terrific,* and *nice* are examples. The use of such words in descriptions can lead to misreads and confusion. A *good day,* for instance, can mean far different things depending on one’s age, personality, or tastes.

**Writing at Work**

Whether you are presenting a new product or service to a client, training new employees, or brainstorming ideas with colleagues, the use of clear, evocative detail is crucial. Make an effort to use details that express your thoughts in a way that will register with others. Sharp, concise details are always impressive.

**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, describe the following five items in a short paragraph. Use at least three of the five senses for each description.

1. Night
2. Beach
3. City
4. Dinner
5. Stranger

**The Structure of a Description Essay**

Description essays typically describe a person, a place, or an object using sensory details. The structure of a descriptive essay is more flexible than in some of the other rhetorical modes. The introduction of a description essay should set up the tone and point of the essay. The thesis should convey the writer’s overall impression of the person, place, or object described in the body paragraphs. The organization of the essay may best follow spatial order, an arrangement of ideas according to physical characteristics or appearance. Depending on what the writer describes, the organization could move from top to bottom, left to right, near to far, warm to cold, frightening to inviting, and so on. For example, if the subject were a client’s kitchen in the midst of renovation, you might start at one side of the room and move slowly across to the other end, describing appliances, cabinetry, and so on. Or you might choose to start
with older remnants of the kitchen and progress to the new installations. Maybe start with the floor and move up toward the ceiling.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, choose an organizing strategy and then execute it in a short paragraph for three of the following six items:

1. Train station
2. Your office
3. Your car
4. A coffee shop
5. Lobby of a movie theater
6. Mystery Option*

*Choose an object to describe but do not indicate it. Describe it, but preserve the mystery.

**Writing a Description Essay**

Choosing a subject is the first step in writing a description essay. Once you have chosen the person, place, or object you want to describe, your challenge is to write an effective thesis statement to guide your essay. The remainder of your essay describes your subject in a way that best expresses your thesis.

Remember, you should have a strong sense of how you will organize your essay. Choose a strategy and stick to it. Every part of your essay should use vivid sensory details. The more you can appeal to your readers’ senses, the more they will be engaged in your essay. See Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample description essay.

**EXERCISE 3**

On a separate sheet of paper, choose one of the topics that you started in Exercise 6.2.2 and expand it into a five-paragraph essay. Expanding on ideas in greater detail can be difficult. Sometimes it is helpful to look closely at each of the sentences in a summary paragraph. Those sentences can often serve as topic sentences to larger paragraphs.

Mystery Option: Here is an opportunity to collaborate. Please share with a classmate and compare your thoughts on the mystery descriptions. Did your classmate correctly guess your mystery topic? If not, how could you provide more detail to describe it and lead them to the correct conclusion?
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Description essays should describe something vividly to the reader using strong sensory details.
- Sensory details appeal to the five human senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- A description essay should start with the writer’s main impression of a person, a place, or an object.
- Use spatial order to organize your descriptive writing.
SharifRay
ProfessorX
English 1101
June 11, 2014

The King’s Tomb

The water is always so beautiful, a hypnotic shade of baby blue, with a few autumn colored leaves floating in the ripples made by the wind. This isn’t a natural body of water. No wildlife swim in the shallow waves, but this water is as full of life as any ocean. In the middle of what is fittingly called the Reflecting Pool lies the closest thing African Americans have ever had to royalty. Here lie the remains of Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King.

Nestled between the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change and the original Ebenezer Baptist Church is a beautiful white marble monument, warmly bathed in the lights circling the tomb of our late civil rights leaders. Following Dr. King’s assassination in April 1968, he was first interred at South View Cemetery, a final resting place largely reserved for African Americans during that period. It took nearly a decade before he was exhumed and placed in the beautiful ivory stone structure that he now shares with his beloved wife Coretta. The tomb, erected in 1977, sits within the south end of the Reflecting Pool. Seemingly suspended on the bright blue water, the tomb displays scriptures that only capture a small portion of the legacy left by these great leaders.

Engraved on Dr. King’s portion reads, “Free at last. Free at last, Thank God Almighty I’m free at last!” from his pivotal “I Have a Dream” speech given during the March on Washington in 1963. I can’t help but attempt to recite the mantra in my head with the
same bravado and conviction as Dr. King had when he gave the speech over fifty years ago. While the saying is a beautiful incantation, fit for a King, the cost at which that freedom was attained is still heartbreaking.

In a scene reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, who passed away in January 2006 after a prolonged illness, lies next to her slain husband. For a short period following her death Mrs. King was interred in a smaller yet equally beautiful tomb directly across from her late husband. Spectacular floral arrangements surrounded her tomb as scores of mourners came from afar to pay their respects to the First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement. In November 2006, she was laid to rest in a beautiful new tomb aside her husband. The words “And now abide Faith, Hope, Love; These Three, but the greatest of these is Love,” emblazon her final resting place. No truer instance could describe her legacy.

Auburn Avenue, shrouded in darkness, is void of people aside from the few vagrants that aimlessly roam the streets. Heat from the Eternal Flame warms my back as I stare off into space. The brilliant glow of the LED lights strategically placed around the tomb and the amber flicker of the Eternal Flame are the only lights that seem to suit this moment. Kneeling as if I’m preparing to pray, I take a moment to reflect. Through my clenched eyes I can hear the soft splashes of the water, the gas fueled roar of the Eternal Flame. The ambient noise of car horns, traffic and construction fade to nearly a whisper. I envision the March on Washington. I can feel the sting of water hoses pelting my black skin. I can hear the sharp sonics of police dogs barking. The feeling is overwhelming. My eyelashes clump together from the tears winning their battle against my eyelids. Nearby is a place of worship, a place where anyone can still feel the spirit of past congregations, a place where the walls
hold almost as much history as any Smithsonian exhibit.

Just a few feet away sits the original Ebenezer Baptist Church, a beautiful, rustic old building left largely intact from the days of Atlanta's past. Walking inside is like stepping into a time warp, instantly sending you to the heart of the Civil Rights Movement. With the exception of a few strategically placed speakers, the church is left in its pure form. Dr. King's voice echoes through wooden pews playing his famous “Drum Major” speech, given during his final sermon at Ebenezer on February 4, 1968. With closed eyes, I have difficulty telling what era I am in. Given with almost Machiavellian prediction and passion, ten minutes engulfed with his powerful words makes me feel as though I've been baptized, born again.

Surrounded with reminders of our history's darkest time, this place brings me peace. There's an aura in this place. A powerful spirit that infiltrates my conscience with thoughts of struggle, loss and freedom. The reality of this place forces my mind to reevaluate my own mortality. Even with the knowledge of how Dr. King was vilified, degraded, and executed, his death serves as a shining beacon of light. A lone ray of sun through the seemingly endless cloud of racism and intolerance. Coretta's grace, beauty and resilience in the face of unspeakable tragedy and injustice is incomparable. Her social work and philanthropy should be an influence to women of all walks of life.

The legacy that Dr. and Mrs. King leave behind is a unfulfilled one. Equality in America has improved since Dr. King’s assassination but his dream is still unrealized. There is turmoil within the King family regarding funding and management of the King Memorial, leaving the future of this serene place uncertain. Engraved on the Stone of Hope, a newly completed Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C., reads, “Out of
the Mountain of Despair, a Stone of Hope." Although we still have a mountain to climb,
The King's Tomb is surely my Stone of Hope.
6.3 Classification

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the classification essay.
2. Understand how to write a classification essay.

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. Cell phones, for example, have now become part of a broad category. They can be classified as feature phones, media phones, and smartphones. Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world. Keep both of these elements in mind when writing a classification essay.

Tip

Choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays. The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.

EXERCISE 1

On a separate sheet of paper, break the following categories into smaller classifications.

1. The United States
2. Colleges and universities
3. Beverages
4. Fashion

The Structure of a Classification Essay

The classification essay opens with an introductory paragraph that introduces the broader topic. The thesis should then explain how that topic is divided into subgroups and why. Take the following introductory paragraph, for example:

When people think of New York, they often think of only New York City. But New York is actually a diverse state with a full range of activities to do, sights to see, and cultures to explore. In order to better understand the diversity of New York state, it is helpful to break it into these five separate regions: Long Island, New York City, Western New York, Central New York, and Northern New York.
The underlined thesis explains not only the category and subcategory but also the rationale for breaking it into those categories. Through this classification essay, the writer hopes to show the readers a different way of considering the state.

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each region of New York would have its own paragraph.

The conclusion should bring all the categories and subcategories back together again to show the reader the big picture. In the previous example, the conclusion might explain how the various sights and activities of each region of New York add to its diversity and complexity.

**Tip**

To avoid settling for an overly simplistic classification, make sure you break down any given topic at least three different ways. This will help you think outside the box and perhaps even learn something entirely new about a subject.

**EXERCISE 2**

Using your classifications from Exercise 6.3.1, write a brief paragraph explaining why you chose to organize each main category in the way that you did.

**Writing a Classification Essay**

Start with an engaging opening that will adequately introduce the general topic that you will be dividing into smaller subcategories. Your thesis should come at the end of your introduction. It should include the topic, your subtopics, and the reason you are choosing to break down the topic in the way that you are. Use the following classification thesis equation:

\[
\text{topic} + \text{subtopics} + \text{rationale for the subtopics} = \text{thesis.}
\]

The organizing strategy of a classification essay is dictated by the initial topic and the subsequent subtopics. Each body paragraph is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subtopics. In a way, coming up with a strong topic pays double rewards in a classification essay. Not only do you have a good topic, but you also have a solid organizational structure within which to write. Be sure you use strong details and explanations for each subcategory paragraph that help explain and support your thesis. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points.
Finally, write a conclusion that links all the subgroups together again. The conclusion should successfully wrap up your essay by connecting it to your topic initially discussed in the introduction.

See Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample classification essay.

**EXERCISE 3**

Building on Exercise 6.3.1 and Exercise 6.3.2, write a five-paragraph classification essay about one of the four original topics. In your thesis, make sure to include the topic, subtopics, and rationale for your breakdown. And make sure that your essay is organized into paragraphs that each describes a subtopic.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- The purpose of classification is to break a subject into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts.
- Smaller subcategories help us make sense of the world, and the way in which these subcategories are created also helps us make sense of the world.
- A classification essay is organized by its subcategories.

### 6.4 Process Analysis

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the process analysis essay.
2. Understand how to write a process analysis essay.

**The Purpose of Process Analysis in Writing**

The purpose of a process analysis essay is to explain how to do something or how something works. In either case, the formula for a process analysis essay remains the same. The process is articulated into clear, definitive steps.

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process. From riding a bike as children to learning various jobs as adults, we initially needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are—and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together.

**Writing at Work**
The next time you have to explain a process to someone at work, be mindful of how clearly you articulate each step. Strong communication skills are critical for workplace satisfaction and advancement. Effective process analysis plays a critical role in developing that skill set.

**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps that you feel would be required to clearly illustrate three of the following four processes:

1. Tying a shoelace
2. Parallel parking
3. Planning a successful first date
4. Being an effective communicator

**The Structure of a Process Analysis Essay**

The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process. The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows chronological order. The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur. Body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. But if a series of simple steps is easier to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

The time transition phrases covered in the Narration and Illustration sections are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays (see Table 6.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time" and Table 6.2 "Phrases of Illustration"). Words such as *first, second, third, next,* and *finally* are helpful cues to orient reader and organize the content of essay.

**Tip**

Always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a friend or coworker read it over will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.
Choose two of the lists you created in Exercise 6.4.1 and start writing out the processes in paragraph form. Try to construct paragraphs based on the complexity of each step. For complicated steps, dedicate an entire paragraph. If less complicated steps fall in succession, group them into a single paragraph.

**Writing a Process Analysis Essay**

Choose a topic that is interesting, is relatively complex, and can be explained in a series of steps. As with other rhetorical writing modes, choose a process that you know well so that you can more easily describe the finer details about each step in the process. Your thesis statement should come at the end of your introduction, and it should state the final outcome of the process you are describing.

Body paragraphs are composed of the steps in the process. Each step should be expressed using strong details and clear examples. Use time transition phrases to help organize steps in the process and to orient readers. The conclusion should thoroughly describe the result of the process described in the body paragraphs. See the student paper below, “Keep Them in Stitches” and Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read an example of a process analysis essay.

“Keep Them in Stitches,” by Jacob Gallman-Dreiling, describes the process of finding the perfect yarn for a knitting project.
Keep Them in Stitches

by

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101 Honors
Dr. Rosemary D. Cox
24 February 2014
Outline

Thesis statement: Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn called for by the pattern.

I. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made.
   A. The knitter must determine if the recipient has any allergies or sensitivities.
      1. Wool yarn will aggravate allergies to lanolin.
      2. Acrylic yarns can be scratchy or leave splinters.
   B. The knitter must consider the type of project.
      1. Warmer items should be made with animal fibers.
      2. Lighter items should be made with cotton.
   C. The knitter must consider the care of the finished garment.
      1. Wool yarn should be hand washed with cold water.
      2. Cotton and acrylic yarns are machine washable.
   D. The knitter must determine what color the recipient prefers.
      1. Solid colors are great for sweaters and accessories like professional iPad cases.
      2. Variegated yarn makes for show-stopping pieces and can help maintain the knitter’s interest through the end of the project.

II. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the availability of the yarn.
A. Many people prefer to shop for yarn at a local yarn store.
   1. An advantage to shopping in person is the ability to touch the yarn.
   2. An advantage to shopping at the local yarn store is the knowledgeable
      staff, many of whom have been knitting for years.
   3. An advantage to shopping at the yarn store is that the staff can provide
      ready assistance and often have first-hand knowledge of the yarn the
      knitter intends to use.

B. Other people prefer to shop at one of the many online retailers.
   1. Online retailers typically have greater stock availability.
   2. Online retailers also provide tutorial videos.

III. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the type of yarn
     called for by the pattern.

A. The knitter must determine the proper yarn weight for the project.
   1. Fingering, sport, and DK weight yarns are good for smaller projects
      like socks or baby clothes.
   2. Worsted, bulky, and super bulky are great for sweaters, scarves,
      blankets, and washcloths.

B. The knitter must determine the recipient’s preferences.
   1. Some people prefer sweaters with a small gauge.
   2. Some people prefer socks with a large gauge.
Keep Them in Stitches

The popularity of knitting is cyclical, rising and falling according to the prevailing opinion of women's places in society. Though internationally a unisex hobby, knitting is perversely thought of as a woman's hobby in the United States. Knitting is currently enjoying a boost in popularity as traditionally-minded women pick up the craft while women who enjoy subverting traditional gender roles have also picked up the needles to reclaim “the lost domestic arts” and give traditionally feminine crafts the proper respect. American men are also picking up the needles in greater numbers, with men's knitting guilds and retreats nationwide. This rise in popularity has made the receiving of hand-knit items special, and many people enjoy receiving these long-lasting, painstakingly crafted items. For any knitters, the perfect gift starts by choosing the perfect yarn. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn recommended by the pattern.

In order to select the right yarn for a knitting project, the knitter must take into account the preferences of the recipient of the knitted item. The most basic choice is the composition of the yarn to be used. Natural fibers are luxurious and tend to age better. Nevertheless, the knitter must determine if the recipient has any allergies or sensitivities. Wool yarn, for example, will aggravate allergies in those sensitive to lanolin, but mohair, alpaca, cotton, or angora will not cause discomfort. Acrylic is a synthetic yarn, but it can
be scratchy or leave splinters. A second consideration is the type of project the knitter plans to complete: each project requires a specific type of yarn. For warmer items such as sweaters, blankets, or mittens, animal fibers are best. Socks, warmer-weather items, and household accessories are best served using cotton. One must also give thought to the care of the finished project. Items made from wool yarn survive best when hand washed in cold water whereas cotton and acrylic items are machine washable.

Once the type of yarn has been chosen, the knitter should consider what color yarn the recipient prefers. A solid color garment looks more professional and functions as a base piece in a wardrobe or interior design. Sweaters, iPad and tablet cases, as well as belts are well-suited to solid colors. Pieces made with variegated colors, in which the yarn has either multiple colors or shades of the same basic color, make for show pieces and accessories. Socks, gloves, scarves, and cowls are great projects for variegated yarn. Variegated yarn colors tend to keep the knitter’s interest, but multicolored yarn can be difficult to use when working on larger projects which require multiple skeins of yarn. Due to the way yarn is dyed, the color at the end of one skein may not match the color at the beginning of the next skein.

The next step in determining the right yarn for a project is availability, particularly where to purchase the yarn. Some people prefer to shop at a local store for yarn because it offers many advantages. Shopping in person allows the knitter to feel the yarn he or she intends to purchase. This can help sway the knitter’s opinion in regards to yarn choice. The staff at a local shop is often knowledgeable; many of them have been knitting for years, and they are usually ready to offer assistance with projects or yarn selection. If a knitter does not live near a yarn store, there are many online retailers who
can fulfill their orders. Online retailers typically have a larger selection of yarns and patterns available for download. Since they cannot give personal assistance, many compensate for this deficiency by providing free tutorial videos.

Finally, choosing the right yarn for a project relies on the type of yarn called for in the knitting pattern. Patterns are highly adaptable. Most things in a pattern can be substituted: yarn type, yarn weight, color, and number of stitches can all be substituted to fit the knitter’s desire, but the pattern will provide a good place to start. The yarn weight, which determines the gauge of the project, is one of the most basic substitutions. Fingering or lace weight, sport, and DK weight are lighter weight yarns typically good for smaller projects like socks or baby clothes. Those types of yarn tend to be knit on smaller needles and produce a smaller stitch. Worsted, bulky, and super-bulky yarns are chunkier, knit on larger needles, and provide beautiful, large stitches. They are well suited for sweaters, scarves, blankets, and washcloths. The preferences of the recipient must also be taken into account. Some people prefer sweaters with a small stitch, while others prefer thick, warm socks to wear around the house.

The right yarn for a knitting project is one that meets the preferences of the recipient of the project, is readily available, and matches the needs of the pattern. After the project is completed and given to the intended recipient, both the knitter and receiver can bask in the adulation the finished garment brings. These hand-knit items can be passed down for several generations, truly becoming a gift that keeps on giving.
EXERCISE 3

Choose one of the expanded lists from Exercise 6.4.2. Construct a full process analysis essay from the work you have already done. That means adding an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, time transition phrases, body paragraphs, and a solid conclusion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A process analysis essay explains how to do something, how something works, or both.
- The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the outcome of the process.
- The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows a chronological sequence.
- Time transition phrases are particularly helpful in process analysis essays to organize steps and orient reader.

6.5 Definition

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the definition essay.
2. Understand how to write a definition essay.

The Purpose of Definition in Writing

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: the purpose of the definition essay is to simply define something. But defining terms in writing is often more complicated than just consulting a dictionary. In fact, the way we define terms can have far-reaching consequences for individuals as well as collective groups.

Take, for example, a word like alcoholism. The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as marriage and climate change, has enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Think about conversations couples may have in which words like commitment, respect, or love need clarification.
Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can at first be difficult, but once a definition is established between two people or a group of people, it is easier to have productive dialogues. Definitions, then, establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse, which is why they are so important.

Tip

When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as hero, immigration, or loyalty, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay.

Writing at Work

Definitions play a critical role in all workplace environments. Take the term sexual harassment, for example. Sexual harassment is broadly defined on the federal level, but each company may have additional criteria that define it further. Knowing how your workplace defines and treats all sexual harassment allegations is important. Think, too, about how your company defines lateness, productivity, or contributions.

EXERCISE 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write about a time in your own life in which the definition of a word, or the lack of a definition, caused an argument. Your term could be something as simple as the category of an all-star in sports or how to define a good movie. Or it could be something with higher stakes and wider impact, such as a political argument. Explain how the conversation began, how the argument hinged on the definition of the word, and how the incident was finally resolved.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your responses.

The Structure of a Definition Essay

The definition essay opens with a general discussion of the term to be defined. You then state as your thesis your definition of the term.

The rest of the essay should explain the rationale for your definition. Remember that a dictionary’s definition is limiting, and you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. Instead, consider the context in which you are using the word. Context identifies the circumstances, conditions, or setting in which
something exists or occurs. Often words take on different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the ideal leader in a battlefield setting could likely be very different than a leader in an elementary school setting. If a context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be confusing or misunderstood.

The remainder of the essay should explain different aspects of the term's definition. For example, if you were defining a good leader in an elementary classroom setting, you might define such a leader according to personality traits: patience, consistency, and flexibility. Each attribute would be explained in its own paragraph.

**Tip**

For definition essays, try to think of concepts that you have a personal stake in. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has personal value and importance.

**Writing at Work**

It is a good idea to occasionally assess your role in the workplace. You can do this through the process of definition. Identify your role at work by defining not only the routine tasks but also those gray areas where your responsibilities might overlap with those of others. Coming up with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities can add value to your résumé and even increase productivity in the workplace.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, define each of the following items in your own terms. If you can, establish a context for your definition.

1. Bravery
2. Adulthood
3. Consumer culture
4. Violence
5. Art

**Writing a Definition Essay**

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to be discussed at length. Choosing a word or phrase of personal relevance often leads to a more interesting and engaging essay.
After you have chosen your word or phrase, start your essay with an introduction that establishes the relevancy of the term in the chosen specific context. Your thesis comes at the end of the introduction, and it should clearly state your definition of the term in the specific context. Establishing a functional context from the beginning will orient readers and minimize misunderstandings.

The body paragraphs should each be dedicated to explaining a different facet of your definition. Make sure to use clear examples and strong details to illustrate your points. Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis.

See Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample definition essay.

**EXERCISE 3**

Create a full definition essay from one of the items you already defined in Exercise 6.5.2. Be sure to include an interesting introduction, a clear thesis, a well-explained context, distinct body paragraphs, and a conclusion that pulls everything together.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Definitions establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse.
- Context affects the meaning and usage of words.
- The thesis of a definition essay should clearly state the writer’s definition of the term in the specific context.
- Body paragraphs should explain the various facets of the definition stated in the thesis.
- The conclusion should pull all the elements of the definition together at the end and reinforce the thesis.

### 6.6 Comparison and Contrast

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Determine the purpose and structure of comparison and contrast in writing.
2. Explain organizational methods used when comparing and contrasting.
3. Understand how to write a compare-and-contrast essay.
The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

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

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

Similarly, to focus on comparison, choose two subjects that seem at first to be unrelated. For a comparison essay, you likely would not choose two apples or two oranges because they share so many of the same properties already. Rather, you might try to compare how apples and oranges are quite similar. The more divergent the two subjects initially seem, the more interesting a comparison essay will be.

Writing at Work

Comparing and contrasting is also an evaluative tool. In order to make accurate evaluations about a given topic, you must first know the critical points of similarity and difference. Comparing and contrasting is a primary tool for many workplace assessments. You have likely compared and contrasted yourself to other colleagues. Employee advancements, pay raises, hiring, and firing are typically conducted using comparison and contrast. Comparison and contrast could be used to evaluate companies, departments, or individuals.

EXERCISE 1

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

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

EXERCISE 2

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

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

The Structure of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

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

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

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

You may organize compare-and-contrast essays in one of the following two ways:

1. According to the subjects themselves, discussing one then the other
2. According to individual points, discussing each subject in relation to each point

See Figure 6.1 "Comparison and Contrast Diagram", which diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

Figure 6.1 Comparison and Contrast Diagram
(1) Thesis (Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.)

(2) Subject 1: Organic Vegetables

(3) Subject 2: Conventional Vegetables

(4) Conclusion

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

(2) Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides

(2) Subject 1: Organic

(3) Point 2: Nutrition

(3) Subject 1: Organic

(4) Point 3: Taste

(4) Subject 1: Organic

(5) Conclusion

(5) Subject 1: Organic
The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience.

Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis. See Table 6.3 "Phrases of Comparison and Contrast" for examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Contrast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one similarity</td>
<td>one difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>another similarity</td>
<td>another difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>conversely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>in contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likewise</td>
<td>unlike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarly</td>
<td>while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a similar fashion</td>
<td>whereas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 3**

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in Exercise 6.6.1 and Exercise 6.6.2. Use the point-by-point organizing strategy for one of them, and use the subject organizing strategy for the other.

**Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay**

First choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects. Once you have decided on a topic, introduce it with an engaging opening paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of the introduction, and it should establish the subjects you will compare, contrast, or both as well as state what can be learned from doing so.
The body of the essay can be organized in one of two ways: by subject or by individual points. The organizing strategy that you choose will depend on, as always, your audience and your purpose. You may also consider your particular approach to the subjects as well as the nature of the subjects themselves; some subjects might better lend themselves to one structure or the other. Make sure to use comparison and contrast phrases to cue the reader to the ways in which you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis. See the student essay that follows, “Batman: A Hero for Any Time,” as well as Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample compare-and-contrast essay.

In “Batman: A Hero for Any Time,” Jacob Gallman-Dreiling compares the traditional portrayal of the superhero, Batman, with the modern version.
Batman: A Hero for Any Time

by

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101 Honors
Dr. Rosemary D. Cox
16 March 2014
Outline

Thesis: Although the framework of the Batman story always remains the same, the character has been re-imagined over time to suit the changing expectations of a hero through his characterization as well as that of those who surround him, both friends and foes.

I. The backstory for Batman has always remained the same.
   A. Bruce Wayne is the son of wealthy socialites.
      1. Bruce Wayne’s parents are murdered in front of him.
      2. Bruce Wayne grows up to inherit his parents’ fortune.
   B. Bruce Wayne becomes Batman to avenge the violence of his parents’ death.
      1. Batman fights crime with the help of Commissioner Gordon and others.
      2. Batman employs an arsenal of non-lethal weapons to aid him.

II. The characterization of Batman has changed to fit the changing expectations of a hero.
   A. In the Silver Age of comic books, Batman was portrayed as a sunny, pulpy character.
      1. Batman’s stories had to adhere to the guidelines of the Comics Code Authority.
         a. Characters could not use concealed weapons.
         b. Stories required “morals.”
         c. Stories could not use kidnapping or excessive violence.
d. Stories incorporated elements of science fiction.

e. Stories had limitations on the portrayal of female characters.

2. Batman’s suits often had ridiculous properties he conveniently prepared for the upcoming mission.

B. In modern portrayals, Batman is a tortured and flawed character.

   1. Batman is haunted by the death of his parents.
   2. Batman has become a skilled detective and fighter.
   3. Batman’s suit is more armor than spandex.
   4. Batman is haunted by his mistakes.
   5. Batman and Commissioner Gordon conspire to hide the truth about Harvey Dent from the people of Gotham.

III. The characterization of Batman’s associates has changed to fit the changing expectations of a hero.

A. In the Silver Age of comic books, Batman’s associates were correspondingly light-hearted.

   1. Characters like Ace the Bat-Hound, Bat-Mice, and Batwoman were created to draw in children.
   2. Issues were built around a villain-of-the-week.

B. In modern portrayals, Batman’s associates deal with real consequences and changes.

   1. Dick Grayson grows up and goes to college.
   2. Batgirl is paralyzed by the Joker.
   3. Joker is given several conflicting backstories explaining his psychosis.
4. Catwoman has changed from a harmless cat-burglar to a reformed prostitute.
Batman: A Hero for Any Time

Few ideas in this world are as timeless as that of a superhero. The ancient Greeks had Odysseus and Hercules. The British have Sherlock Holmes and Allan Quatermain. The Americans developed the modern concept of the superhero with characters like Superman and Spider-Man and created elaborate stories for the origin of their powers, much like the Greeks used when creating their heroes. While the world of superheroes was originally a white man’s club, the creation of Wonder Woman ushered in a new era of diversity. Now men, women, people of color, even those of differing sexual orientations are represented among the ranks of those who fight against evil. Though teams of superheroes like the Justice League of America and the X-Men have enduring popularity, few superheroes have captured the imagination like Batman. Created in 1939 by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, a boy orphaned by violence grows to become the Caped Crusader, avenger of the fictional of Gotham. This comic book hero has spurred film, radio, and television adaptations, has spawned action figures and video games, and has maintained an uninterrupted comic book publication, something few other superhero titles can boast. Although the framework of the Batman story always remains the same, the character has been re-imagined over time to suit the changing expectations of a hero through his characterization as well as through the portrayal of those who surround him, both friends and foes.

The basic framework of the Batman story has stayed the same since his debut in May, 1939. At the age of eight, Bruce Wayne, the son of wealthy socialites, witnesses his parents’ murder at the hands of a desperate mugger and swears to avenge their deaths by waging war on all criminals. He grows up to inherit their fortune and the family
company, using the money to fund charitable efforts and to reside in stately Wayne Manor. By night, he becomes Batman, ridding the Gotham City streets of menacing foes like the Joker, the Riddler, and Two-Face. He is aided in his fight by his sidekick Robin, Batgirl, and Commissioner Gordon, as well as his butler Alfred Pennyworth. His most enduring love interest is Selina Kyle, who is also known as the notorious cat-burglar, Catwoman. Batman eschews lethal weaponry such as guns, instead preferring to outwit his foes using his intellect to bring them to justice.

While the key details of Batman’s backstory have remained unchanged for almost seventy-five years, his characterization has changed to suit the ever-evolving expectations of a superhero. When the character debuted in the Silver Age of comics—the decades between 1950 and 1970—he was a sunny, pulpy character. He was billed as the “World’s Greatest Detective” and performed as such, while reflecting what is considered to be a more innocent time. His villains were grand, but he outsmarted them using his intelligence and science. The introduction of the Comics Code Authority in 1954 restricted not only the way that stories were presented but also the types of stories that could be presented. For instance, concealed weapons were forbidden, stories were required to have “morals,” and kidnapping and excessive violence were forbidden. As such, Batman’s stories began incorporating elements of science fiction. As the comics demonstrate, Batman famously repels aliens and an island of animatronic dinosaurs during this period. Also, female characters in the Batman stories of this time are poorly treated. The villain Catwoman had to be shelved due to regulations regarding women and violence, while the original Batwoman was brought on as a potential love interest to quiet the growing assertion of conservative culture warriors that Batman and Robin were in
fact, lovers. When this version of Batwoman was deemed unnecessary, she was written out. This period is also famous for Batman having "batsuit" with heretofore unseen special properties, such as fireproofing and thermal heating.

Modern portrayals of Batman show him as a deeply flawed, psychologically scarred hero. During the 1980s the Comics Code’s influence was waning, and writers like Frank Miller took advantage of this to tell brutal, psychological stories. Haunted by the murder of his parents, a modern Batman is dangerous and calculating. He has returned to his roots as a skilled detective and fighter, which has made him suspicious and paranoid. He is often depicted as having calculated how to defeat his allies, should the need arise, with contingency plans for everyone from Robin to Superman. Modern writers have a young Bruce Wayne train as a ninja before returning to Gotham to become Batman, so greater emphasis is placed on his stealth and fighting skills. The batsuit has reflected this change as well, shifting from a cloth/spandex suit to one that is very clearly body armor, built to withstand bullets and knives.

He is also haunted by his mistakes. After the death of Jason Todd, the second sidekick to go by the codename Robin, Batman spirals into anger and depression over not being able to prevent Jason’s death at the hands of the Joker. For the next decade, Jason’s murder haunts Batman alongside that of his parents as his greatest failure. He puts Jason’s costume on display in the Batcave as motivation. In the 2008 Christopher Nolan film The Dark Knight, Batman and Commissioner Gordon conspire to hide the truth of the popular District Attorney Harvey Dent’s descent into madness so that Gotham City will have a symbol of hope. While that decision is for the good of the city, it leads to
Bruce Wayne’s reclusion and an eight year hiatus as Batman. Such dark, psychological stories would never have been allowed during the heyday of the Comics Code Authority.

Just as the portrayal of Batman has shifted to meet the current expectations of a superhero, so too have the depictions of the characters around him, both allies and enemies. During the Silver Age, Batman’s associates are, like Batman himself, light-hearted. Characters like Ace the Bat-Hound and the Bat-Mice were introduced to bring in more young readers, though these characters were rarely seen after 1964. Issues were built around a villain-of-the-week who is purely evil and has no outside motivation. These stories also tend to be episodic with no story arcs or even character arcs. The Joker is originally a calculating murderer, but his character becomes a gleeful trickster to comply with the Code.

As readers matured, the creative forces driving the various Batman outlets were able to tell more complex, meaningful stories. Thus, in modern portrayals, Batman’s associates deal with real, lasting consequences and changes. Beginning with Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight* comic series, Batman’s friends begin their trials. Dick Grayson, the original Robin, grows up and goes to college, being replaced by the ill-fated Jason Todd. He becomes a hero in his own right, going by the codename Nightwing and becoming the leader of the Teen Titans. In the seminal 1988 graphic novel *The Killing Joke*, Batgirl is partially paralyzed by the Joker, who shoots her through her spine as part of an effort to drive her father, Commissioner Gordon, insane. This condition lasts until the DC-Universe-wide reboot in 2011, and she is now able to walk and has resumed the mantle of Batgirl. The Joker himself has been given many different backstories, all of them horrific. Filmmakers give a nod to the Joker’s varied backstories in the film *The*
Dark Knight by having the Joker give conflicting accounts of how he received his trademark scars. Catwoman is originally just a bored housewife who turns to crime, but beginning in the 1980s her story retroactively changes to her being a prostitute who turns to burglary to buy freedom for herself and her sister. Once a staunch villain of Batman, this new version of the character is portrayed more as an antihero; though she is not necessarily an upstanding citizen, the new Catwoman will join forces with Batman to fight evil when it suits her. These stories appeal to an audience craving depth and substance to their characters, far different from the Pre-Vietnam War era Batman stories.

While the key details to the Batman story never change, the way the character has been presented has changed over time, as has the way his associated characters have been presented. It is perhaps this adaptability that has allowed Batman to flourish in popularity for almost seventy-five years, with no signs of that popularity waning. As the demographic for Batman's stories matures, the power wielded by the Comics Code Authority has diminished, making darker, more meaningful stories possible. Previously one dimensional characters were given subtleties and nuances, much in the way modern film versions depict the heroes of old, from Odysseus to Sherlock Holmes. As society’s norms change, this change is reflected in the way films, stories, and comic books depict superheroes. With all the changes occurring in culture worldwide, who knows what the next generation’s Batman will be like?
Writing at Work

Many business presentations are conducted using comparison and contrast. The organizing strategies—by subject or individual points—could also be used for organizing a presentation. Keep this in mind as a way of organizing your content the next time you or a colleague have to present something at work.

EXERCISE 4

Choose one of the outlines you created in Exercise 6.6.3 and write a full compare-and-contrast essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, well-defined and detailed paragraphs, and a fitting conclusion that ties everything together.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

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

6.7 Cause and Effect

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the purpose and structure of cause and effect in writing.
2. Understand how to write a cause-and-effect essay.

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

It is often considered human nature to ask, “why?” and “how?” We want to know how our child got sick so we can better prevent it from happening in the future, or why our colleague a pay raise because we
want one as well. We want to know how much money we will save over the long term if we buy a hybrid car. These examples identify only a few of the relationships we think about in our lives, but each shows the importance of understanding cause and effect.

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate in terms of origins and results. Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult. For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to cause the sickness. That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and-effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments.

**Tip**

Use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

---

**EXERCISE 1**

Consider the causes and effects in the following thesis statements. List a cause and effect for each one on your own sheet of paper.

1. The growing childhood obesity epidemic is a result of technology.
2. Much of the wildlife is dying because of the oil spill.
3. The town continued programs that it could no longer afford, so it went bankrupt.
4. More young people became politically active as use of the Internet spread throughout society.
5. While many experts believed the rise in violence was due to the poor economy, it was really due to the summer-long heat wave.

---

**EXERCISE 2**

Write three cause-and-effect thesis statements of your own for each of the following five broad topics.
The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

The cause-and-effect essay opens with a general introduction to the topic, which then leads to a thesis that states the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.

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

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

For example, if your essay were on childhood obesity, you could start by talking about the effect of childhood obesity and then discuss the cause or you could start the same essay by talking about the cause of childhood obesity and then move to the effect.

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage. See Table 6.4 "Phrases of Causation" for examples of such terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.4 Phrases of Causation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as a result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The conclusion should wrap up the discussion and reinforce the thesis, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of the relationship that was analyzed.

**Tip**

Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

**EXERCISE 3**

Look at some of the cause-and-effect relationships from Exercise 6.7.2. Outline the links you listed. Outline one using a cause-then-effect structure. Outline the other using the effect-then-cause structure.

**Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay**

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

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause-then-effect structure or the effect-then-cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence. If you are writing about multiple causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in terms of order of importance. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least important to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis. See Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample cause-and-effect essay.

**EXERCISE 4**

Choose one of the ideas you outlined in Exercise 6.7.3 and write a full cause-and-effect essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, strong evidence and examples, and a thoughtful conclusion.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

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

6.8 Persuasion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the purpose and structure of persuasion in writing.
2. Identify bias in writing.
3. Assess various rhetorical devices.
4. Distinguish between fact and opinion.
5. Understand the importance of visuals to strengthen arguments.
6. Write a persuasive essay.

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

Tip

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we engage in. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both
sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

**The Structure of a Persuasive Essay**

The following five features make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of claim
4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

**Creating an Introduction and Thesis**

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer’s point of view.

**Tip**

Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, “The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on.” This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is low or insufficient.

**Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument**

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own, so you can spend the rest of the essay countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else’s. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.
It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience. Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and audience members will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer’s argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to the ideas. See Table 6.5 "Phrases of Concession" for some useful phrases of concession.

Table 6.5 Phrases of Concession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>although</th>
<th>granted that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of course</td>
<td>Still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though</td>
<td>Yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember the more specific your thesis, the better.

1. Foreign policy
2. Television and advertising
3. Stereotypes and prejudice
4. Gender roles and the workplace
5. Driving and cell phones

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Choose the thesis statement that most interests you and discuss why.
Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly colored clothes or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using I too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

The Use of I in Writing

The use of I in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing. Be mindful of the use of I in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

1. Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader’s attention—and usually not in a good way. The use of I is no different.

2. The insertion of I into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. I is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively
displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

Smoking is bad.
I think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, *smoking*, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of *I* and *think* replaces *smoking* as the subject, which draws attention to *I* and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate. For more information about pronoun focus in an essay see Chapter 1 “Introduction to Writing.”

**Checklist**

**Developing Sound Arguments**

Does my essay contain the following elements?

- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that is able to be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument’s limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

**Fact and Opinion**

Facts are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as true or false. For example, \(2 + 2 = 4\). This expression identifies a true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data.

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience. For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of
your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa. In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

**Tip**

The word *prove* is frequently used in the discussion of persuasive writing. Writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but proving an argument is often not possible. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, take three of the theses you formed in Exercise 6.8.1 and list the types of evidence you might use in support of that thesis.

**EXERCISE 3**

Using the evidence you provided in support of the three theses in Exercise 6.8.2, come up with at least one counterargument to each. Then write a concession statement, expressing the limits to each of your three arguments.

**Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments**

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience’s emotions. Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image
Writing at Work

When making a business presentation, you typically have limited time to get across your idea. Providing visual elements for your audience can be an effective timesaving tool. Quantitative visuals in business presentations serve the same purpose as they do in persuasive writing. They should make logical appeals by showing numerical data in a spatial design. Quantitative visuals should be pictures that might appeal to your audience’s emotions. You will find that many of the rhetorical devices used in writing are the same ones used in the workplace.

Writing a Persuasive Essay

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction. Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice. Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis. See Chapter 12 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample persuasive essay as well as the student essay that follows, “The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia’s Business Marketplace,” by Elizabeth Lamoureux. Please note that this essay uses the MLA style of documentation for which you can find guidelines at the Purdue University Online Writing Lab website: http://owl.english.purdue.edu.
The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia’s Business Marketplace

by

Elizabeth Lamoureux

English 1101 Honors
Dr. Rosemary D. Cox
April 25, 2012
Outline

Thesis: Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the workforce earlier, and can reduce the number of dropouts.

I. Technical high schools can provide the technical training that companies in Georgia need.
   A. Businesses can provide input regarding jobs needed in specific technical fields.
      1. Education can focus on these specific technical fields.
      2. Education can work with businesses to fill these positions.
   B. Businesses can provide apprenticeship programs.
      1. Apprenticeship programs can be a vital part of a student's education.
      2. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany's educational program, providing a realistic model for technical high schools in Georgia.

II. Technical high schools can prepare students to enter the workforce earlier.
   A. Students not interested in college can enter the workforce upon high school graduation.
      1. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession.
      2. Students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.
   B. Students can begin to earn a living upon graduation.
      1. Students will become independent and self-supporting at the age of eighteen when many of their peers are still dependent upon their parents.
      2. Students can make more money over the course of their lifetimes.
III. Technical high schools can reduce the number of drop outs.

A. Students would stay in school because they take courses that they enjoy.
   1. Students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest.
   2. Students will find both core and specialized classes more interesting and valuable when they can see the practical application of the subjects.

B. Students would no longer need to drop out to support their families.
   1. Students would be able to earn a living wage while still taking classes that would eventually lead to full-time employment.
   2. Students would learn financial skills through experience with money management.
The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia’s Business Marketplace

Businesses need specialized workers; young people need jobs. It seems like this would be an easy problem to solve. However, business and education are not communicating with each other. To add to this dilemma, emphasis is still put on a college education for everyone. Samuel Halperin, study director of the Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship for the W. T. Grant Foundation, co-authored two reports: “The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America” and “The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America’s Youth and Young Families.” Halperin states: “While the attention of the nation was focused on kids going to college . . . the truth is that 70 percent of our adults never earn a college degree” (cit. in Rogers). According to an article in Issues in Science and Technology, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that there will be more need for skills obtained through “community colleges, occupational training, and work experience” (Leman). As Anne C. Lewis points out, although the poor job situation is recognized as detrimental to American youth, President Bush tried to get rid of career and technical education (CTE) and “promote strictly academic programs.” Luckily, Congress did not support it (Lewis 5). The figure for U.S. teen joblessness in October 2009 was 27.6 percent, the highest since World War II (Karaim). According to Thomas E. Persing, Americans are “disregarding the 50 percent who enter college and fail to graduate . . .” Since everyone does not want or need to go to college, young people need an alternative choice, namely, technical high schools. Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the work force earlier, and can reduce the number of drop outs.
Technical high schools provide students with the technical training that companies need. By getting input from businesses on exactly what their specialized needs are, school systems could adapt their curricula to accommodate the needs of businesses. According to an article in *Issues in Science and Technology*, “employers report difficulty in recruiting workers with adequate skills.” The article goes on to say that “the shortage of available skills is affecting their ability to serve customers, and 84% of the firms say that the K-12 school system is not doing a good job preparing students for the workplace” (Lerman). Education can work with businesses to provide them with the workforce they need, and students can learn the skills they need through apprenticeship programs.

Business can be further involved by providing these apprenticeship programs, which can be a vital part of a student’s education. Currently, Robert Reich, economist and former Secretary of Labor, and Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, have spoken up for apprenticeship programs (Persing). In these programs, not only do students learn job-specific skills, but they also learn other skills for success in the workplace, such as “communication, responsibility, teamwork, allocating resources, problem solving, and finding information” (Lerman). Businesses complain that the current educational system is failing in this regard and that students enter the workforce without these skills.

The United States could learn from other countries. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany’s educational program, for example. Because such large numbers of students in a wide array of fields take advantage of these programs, the stigma of not attending college is reduced. Timothy Taylor, the Conversable Economist, explains that most German students complete this program and still have the option to pursue a postsecondary degree. Many occupations are represented in this program, including
engineering, nursing, and teaching. Apprenticeship programs can last from one to six years and provide students with a wage for learning. This allows both business and student to compete in the market place. According to Julie Rawe, “under Germany’s earn-while-you-learn system, companies are paying 1.6 million young adults to train for about 350 types of jobs. . . .”

A second important reason technical high schools should be promoted in Georgia is that they prepare students to enter the work force earlier. Students not interested in college enter the work force upon high school graduation or sooner if they have participated in an apprenticeship or other cooperative program with a business. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession and often work for the company where they trained. This ensures that students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.

Another positive factor is that jobs allow students to earn a living upon graduation or before. Even though students are considered adults at eighteen, many cannot support themselves. The jobs available to young people are primarily minimum wage jobs which do not provide them with enough resources to live independently. One recent study indicates that the income gap is widening for young people, and “In March 1997, more than one-fourth of out-of-school young adults who were working full-time were earning less than the poverty line income standard of just over $16,000 annually for a family of four” (“The Forgotten Half Revisited”). Conversely, by entering the work force earlier with the skills businesses need, young people make more money over their lifetimes. Robert I. Lerman considers the advantages:
Studies generally find that education programs with close links to the world of work improve earnings. The earnings gains are especially solid for students unlikely to attend or complete college. Cooperative education, school enterprises, and internship or apprenticeship increased employment and lowered the share of young men who are idle after high school.

Young people can obviously profit from entering the work force earlier.

One of the major benefits of promoting technical high schools in Georgia is that they reduce the number of dropouts. According to an article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the figure for dropouts for the Atlanta metro area is about thirty-four percent (McCaffrey and Badertscher A16). The statistic for Germany’s dropout rate is less than nine percent (Rawe). As Rawe maintains, students stay in school because they cannot get the job if they do not have the diploma. Beyond the strong incentive of a job, students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest. In addition to the specialized career classes, students are still required to take core classes required by traditional high schools. However, practical application of these subjects makes them more interesting and more valuable to the students.

Another reason students drop out is to support their families. By participating in a program in which they are paid a wage and then entering that job full time, they no longer need to drop out for this reason. It is necessary for many students to contribute financially to the family: by getting a job earlier, they can do this. Joining the work force early also provides students with financial skills gained through experience with money management.
The belief of most Americans that everyone needs to have a college education is outdated. The United States needs skilled employees at all levels, from the highly technical to the practical day to day services society needs to sustain its current standard of living. Germany is doing this through its apprenticeship programs which have proven to be economically successful for both businesses and workers. If the State of Georgia put technical high schools in every county, businesses would get employees with the skills they need; young people would get into good paying jobs earlier, and schools would have fewer dropouts.
Works Cited


EXERCISE 4

Choose one of the topics you have been working on throughout this section. Use the thesis, evidence, opposing argument, and concessionary statement as the basis for writing a full persuasive essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, clear explanations of all the evidence you present, and a strong conclusion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion.

- An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue, in writing, is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way.

- A thesis that expresses the opinion of the writer in more specific terms is better than one that is vague.

- It is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

- It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish through a concession statement.

- To persuade a skeptical audience, you will need to use a wide range of evidence. Scientific studies, opinions from experts, historical precedent, statistics, personal anecdotes, and current events are all types of evidence that you might use in explaining your point.

- Make sure that your word choice and writing style is appropriate for both your subject and your audience.

- You should let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and respectfully and reasonably addressing opposing ideas.

- You should be mindful of the use of I in your writing because it can make your argument sound more biased than it needs to.

- Facts are statements that can be proven using objective data.

- Opinions are personal views, or judgments, that cannot be proven.

- In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions.

- Quantitative visuals present data graphically. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience.
6.9 Rhetorical Modes: End-of-Chapter Exercises

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Practice skills relating to rhetorical modes

EXERCISES

1. The thesis statement is a fundamental element of writing regardless of what rhetorical mode you are writing in. Formulate one more thesis for each of the modes discussed in this chapter.

2. Which rhetorical mode seems most aligned with who you are as a person? That is, which mode seems most useful to you? Explain why in a paragraph.

3. Over the next week, look closely at the texts and articles you read. Document in a journal exactly what type of rhetorical mode is being used. Sometimes it might be for an entire article, but sometimes you might see different modes within one article. The more you can detect various ways of communicating ideas, the easier it will be to do yourself.
Chapter 7
Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?

7.1 The Purpose of Research Writing

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify reasons to research writing projects.
2. Outline the steps of the research writing process.

Why was the Great Wall of China built? What have scientists learned about the possibility of life on Mars? What roles did women play in the American Revolution? How does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories? Who invented the game of football, and how has it changed over the years?

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting the library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

Whether you are a scientist, an artist, a paralegal, or a parent, you probably perform research in your everyday life. When your boss, your instructor, or a family member asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, you locate relevant information, analyze your findings, and share your results. Locating, analyzing, and sharing information are key steps in the research process, and in this chapter, you will learn more about each step. By developing your research writing skills, you will prepare yourself to answer any question no matter how challenging.

**Reasons for Research**

Sometimes you perform research to satisfy your own curiosity. Once you find the answer to your questions, your search may be over or it may lead to more in-depth research about that topic or another topic. Other times, you want to communicate what you’ve learned to others. In your personal life, you might simply discuss the topic with your friends. In more formal situations, such as in business and academics, you will want to communicate what you’ve learned in writing or a presentation. A report may simply relay the information you have learned in an organized manner. A research paper presents an original thesis, or purpose statement, about a topic and develops that thesis with information gathered.
from a variety of sources. You use the facts you have learned to create a narrative or to support an argument. And you may want to show the results of your research to your friends, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines and journals. Writing a research paper is an ideal way to organize thoughts, craft narratives or make arguments based on research, and share your newfound knowledge with the world.

**EXERCISE 1**

Write a paragraph about a time when you used research in your everyday life. Did you look for the cheapest way to travel from Houston to Denver? Did you search for a way to remove gum from the bottom of your shoe? In your paragraph, explain what you wanted to research, how you performed the research, and what you learned as a result.

**Research Writing and the Academic Paper**

No matter what field of study you are interested in, you will most likely be asked to write a research paper during your academic career. For example, a student in an art history course might write a research paper about an artist’s work. Similarly, a student in a psychology course might write a research paper about current findings in childhood development.

Having to write a research paper may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and writing a long paper requires a lot of time, effort, and organization. However, writing a research paper can also be a great opportunity to explore a topic that is particularly interesting to you. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice, and the writing process helps you remember what you have learned and understand it on a deeper level.

**Research Writing at Work**

Knowing how to write a good research paper is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, or learning about challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration. You may even need to create a written report of your findings. And because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally.

**Writing at Work**
Take a few minutes to think about each of the following careers. How might each of these professionals use researching and research writing skills on the job?

- Medical laboratory technician
- Small business owner
- Information technology professional
- Freelance magazine writer

A medical laboratory technician or information technology professional might do research to learn about the latest technological developments in either of these fields. A small business owner might conduct research to learn about the latest trends in his or her industry. A freelance magazine writer may need to research a given topic to write an informed, up-to-date article.

**EXERCISE 2**

Think about the job of your dreams. How might you use research writing skills to perform that job? Create a list of ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job. How might these skills help you obtain that job?

**Steps of the Research Writing Process**

How does a research paper grow from a folder of brainstormed notes to a polished final draft? No two projects are identical, but most projects follow a series of six basic steps. These are the steps in the research writing process:

1. Choose a topic.
2. Plan and schedule time to research and write.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research and ideas.
5. Draft your paper.
6. Revise and edit your paper.

Each of these steps will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For now, though, we will take a brief look at what each step involves.

**Step 1: Choosing a Topic**
To narrow the focus of your topic, you may try freewriting exercises, such as brainstorming. You may also need to ask a specific research question—a broad, open-ended question that will guide your research—as well as propose a possible answer, or a working thesis. You may use your research question and your working thesis to create a research proposal. In a research proposal, you present your main research question, any related subquestions you plan to explore, and your working thesis.

**Step 2: Planning and Scheduling**

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your researching and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches.

During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule. See Section 7.2 "Steps in Developing a Research Proposal" in this chapter for an example of a research schedule.

**Step 3: Conducting Research**

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews. Your sources will include both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, and historical documents are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or magazine articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you will take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You will also evaluate the reliability of each source you find.

**Step 4: Organizing Research and the Writer’s Ideas**

When your research is complete, you will organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it supports your thesis, or the focus of your paper. You may decide to adjust your thesis or conduct additional research to ensure that your thesis is well supported.

**Tip**
Remember, your working thesis is not set in stone. You can and should change your working thesis throughout the research writing process if the evidence you find does not support your original thesis. Never try to force evidence to fit your argument. For example, your working thesis is “Mars cannot support life-forms.” Yet, a week into researching your topic, you find an article in the *New York Times* detailing new findings of bacteria under the Martian surface. Instead of trying to argue that bacteria are not life forms, you might instead alter your thesis to “Mars cannot support complex life-forms.”

**Step 5: Drafting Your Paper**

Now you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results in a rough draft. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your thesis or purpose statement.

When you cite your reference sources, it is important to pay close attention to standard conventions for citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, or the practice of using someone else’s words without acknowledging the source. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your paper and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

**Step 6: Revising and Editing Your Paper**

In the final step of the research writing process, you will revise and polish your paper. You might reorganize your paper’s structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper flows into the next logically and naturally. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone.

Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting. When you complete this final step, you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written paper you can be proud of!

Review the steps of the research writing process. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. In which steps of the research writing process are you allowed to change your thesis?
2. In step 2, which types of information should you include in your project schedule?
3. What might happen if you eliminated step 4 from the research writing process?
People undertake research projects throughout their academic and professional careers in order to answer specific questions, share their findings with others, increase their understanding of challenging topics, and strengthen their researching, writing, and analytical skills.

The research writing process generally comprises six steps: choosing a topic, scheduling and planning time for research and writing, conducting research, organizing research and ideas, drafting a paper, and revising and editing the paper.

7.2 Steps in Developing a Research Proposal

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the steps in developing a research proposal.
2. Choose a topic and formulate a research question and working thesis.
3. Develop a research proposal.

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although this assignment is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper.

Your first step is to choose a topic and then to develop research questions and a working thesis. Set aside adequate time for this part of the process. Fully exploring ideas will help you build a solid foundation for your paper.

Choosing a Topic

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment’s purpose and audience. (For more information about purpose and audience, see Chapter 1 “Introduction to Writing.”) Choosing a topic that interests you is also crucial. You instructor
may provide a list of suggested topics or ask that you develop a topic on your own. You may find inspiration for topic ideas in your everyday life, by browsing magazines, or looking at lists of topics in information databases such as Opposing Viewpoints and CQ Researcher Online. In any case, try to identify topics that genuinely interest you.

After identifying potential topic ideas, you will need to evaluate your ideas and choose one topic to pursue. Will you be able to find enough information about the topic? Can you develop a paper about this topic that presents and supports your original ideas? Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify it so it is more manageable? You will ask these questions during this preliminary phase of the research process.

**Identifying Potential Topics**

You may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. It is important to know how to narrow down your ideas into a concise, manageable thesis. You may also use the list as a starting point to help you identify additional, related topics. Discussing your ideas with your instructor will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Jorge, who is studying health care administration, as he prepares a research paper. You will also plan, research, and draft your own research paper. Jorge was assigned to write a research paper on current debates about healthy living for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, Jorge had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed a list of possibilities.

**Tip**

If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities. Identify reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue.
EXERCISE 1

Set a timer for five minutes. Use brainstorming or idea mapping to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Do you closely follow the media coverage of a particular website, such as Twitter? Would you like to learn more about a certain industry, such as online dating? Which social networking sites do you and your friends use? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

Narrowing Your Topic

Once you have a list of potential topics, you will need to choose one as the focus of your essay. You will also need to narrow your topic. Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as the pros and cons of sexual education in kids’ television programs or the physical
effects of the South Beach diet, are specific enough to write about without being too narrow to sustain an 
entire research paper.

A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too 
broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about 
it. Narrowing your focus is essential to making your topic manageable. To narrow your focus, explore your 
topic in writing, conduct preliminary research, and discuss both the topic and the research with others.

**Exploring Your Topic in Writing**

“How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven’t even begun researching yet?” In fact, you 
may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set 
aside some time to explore each one through freewriting. (For more information about freewriting, 
see Chapter 2 "Prewriting Techniques.") Simply taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh 
angles.

Jorge knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was 
much too broad for his assignment. He used freewriting to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his 
topic. Read Jorge’s ideas.
Conducting Preliminary Research

Another way writers may focus a topic is to conduct preliminary research. Like freewriting, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web and browsing through newspaper and magazine articles are good ways to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic on blogs and online discussion groups. Discussing your topic with others can also inspire you. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, your friends, your instructor. Librarians can help you determine if there are enough information resources available on your topic, or if there are so many that it would be wise to narrow your topic further.

Jorge’s freewriting exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of current debates about healthy living intersected with a few of his interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects.
Jorge decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

**Writing at Work**

At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor’s prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of reliable sources and take notes on your findings.

**Tip**

The reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory phase of your research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later. However, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea for your paper, be sure to check out other, more reliable sources as well to make sure the idea is worth pursuing.

**EXERCISE 2**

Review the list of topics you created in *Exercise 7.2.1* and identify two or three topics you would like to explore further. For each of these topics, spend five to ten minutes writing about the topic without stopping. Then review your writing to identify possible areas of focus.

Set aside time to conduct preliminary research about your potential topics. Then choose a topic to pursue for your research paper.

Collaboration: Please share your topic list with a classmate. Select one or two topics on his or her list that you would like to learn more about and return it to him or her. Discuss why you found the topics interesting, and learn which of your topics your classmate selected and why.

**A Plan for Research**

Your freewriting and preliminary research have helped you choose a focused, manageable topic for your research paper. To work with your topic successfully, you will need to determine what exactly you want to learn about it—and later, what you want to say about it. Before you begin conducting in-depth
research, you will further define your focus by developing a research question, a working thesis, and a research proposal.

**Formulating a Research Question**

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer.

To determine your research question, review the freewriting you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. (You may wish to use the 5WH strategy to help you formulate questions. See Chapter 2 "Prewriting Techniques" for more information about 5WH questions.) Include simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several subquestions that you will need to research to answer your main question.

Here are the research questions Jorge will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Jorge will need to research his subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.
**EXERCISE 3**

Using the topic you selected in Exercise 7.2.2, write your main research question and at least four to five subquestions. Check that your main research question is appropriately complex for your assignment.

**Constructing a Working Thesis**

A working thesis concisely states a writer’s initial answer to the main research question. It does not merely state a fact or present a subjective opinion. Instead, it expresses a debatable idea or claim that you hope to prove through additional research. Your working thesis is called a working thesis for a reason—it is subject to change. As you learn more about your topic, you may change your thinking in light of your research findings. Let your working thesis serve as a guide to your research, but do not be afraid to modify it based on what you learn.

Jorge began his research with a strong point of view based on his preliminary writing and research. Read his working thesis statement, which presents the point he will argue. Notice how it states Jorge’s tentative answer to his research question.
**Main research question:** Are low-carb diets as effective as they have sometimes been portrayed to be by the mass media?

**Working thesis statement:** Low-carb diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them.

**Tip**

One way to determine your working thesis is to consider how you would complete sentences such as *I believe* or *My opinion is*. However, keep in mind that academic writing generally does not use first-person pronouns. These statements are useful starting points, but formal research papers use an objective voice.

**EXERCISE 4**

Write a working thesis statement that presents your preliminary answer to the research question you wrote in Exercise 7.2.3. Check that your working thesis statement presents an idea or claim that could be supported or refuted by evidence from research.

**Writing at Work**

Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. This type of document is similar to a research proposal. Both documents define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.
7.3 Managing Your Research Project

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify reasons for outlining the scope and sequence of a research project.
2. Recognize the steps of the research writing process.
3. Develop a plan for managing time and resources to complete the research project on time.
4. Identify organizational tools and strategies to use in managing the project.

The prewriting you have completed so far has helped you begin to plan the content of your research paper—your topic, research questions, and preliminary thesis. It is equally important to plan out the process of researching and writing the paper. Although some types of writing assignments can be completed relatively quickly, developing a good research paper is a complex process that takes time. Breaking it into manageable steps is crucial. Review the steps outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

Steps to Writing a Research Paper

1. Choose a topic.
2. Schedule and plan time for research and writing.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research.
5. Draft your paper.
6. Revise and edit your paper.

You have already completed step 1. In this section, you will complete step 2. The remaining steps fall under two broad categories—the research phase of the project (steps 3 and 4) and the writing phase (steps 5 and 6). Both phases present challenges. Understanding the tasks involved and allowing enough time to complete each task will help you complete your research paper on time with a minimal amount of stress.

Planning Your Project

Each step of a research project requires time and attention. Careful planning helps ensure that you will keep your project running smoothly and produce your best work. Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. Think about how you will complete each step and what
project resources you will use. Resources may include anything from library databases and word-
processing software to interview subjects and writing tutors.

To develop your schedule, use a calendar and work backward from the date your final draft is due. Generally, it is wise to divide half of the available time on the research phase of the project and half on the writing phase. For example, if you have a month to work, plan for two weeks for each phase. If you have a full semester, plan to begin research early and to start writing by the middle of the term. You might think that no one really works that far ahead, but try it. You will probably be pleased with the quality of your work and with the reduction in your stress level.

As you plan, break down major steps into smaller tasks if necessary. For example, step 3, conducting research, involves locating potential sources, evaluating their usefulness and reliability, reading, and taking notes. Defining these smaller tasks makes the project more manageable by giving you concrete goals to achieve.

Jorge had six weeks to complete his research project. Working backward from a due date of May 2, he mapped out a schedule for completing his research by early April so that he would have ample time to write. Jorge chose to write his schedule in his weekly planner to help keep himself on track. Review Jorge’s schedule. Key target dates are shaded. Note that Jorge planned times to use available resources by visiting the library and writing center and by meeting with his instructor.
### EXERCISE 1

1. Working backward from the date your final draft is due, create a project schedule. You may choose to write a sequential list of tasks or record tasks on a calendar.

2. Check your schedule to be sure that you have broken each step into smaller tasks and assigned a target completion date to each key task.

3. Review your target dates to make sure they are realistic. Always allow a little more time than you think you will actually need.

**Tip**

Plan your schedule realistically, and consider other commitments that may sometimes take precedence. A business trip or family visit may mean that you are unable to work on the research project for a few days. Make the most of the time you have available. Plan for unexpected interruptions, but keep in mind that a short time away from the project may help you come back to it with renewed enthusiasm. Another strategy...
many writers find helpful is to finish each day’s work at a point when the next task is an easy one. That makes it easier to start again.

**Writing at Work**

When you create a project schedule at work, you set target dates for completing certain tasks and identify the resources you plan to use on the project. It is important to build in some flexibility. Materials may not be received on time because of a shipping delay. An employee on your team may be called away to work on a higher-priority project. Essential equipment may malfunction. You should always plan for the unexpected.

**Staying Organized**

Although setting up a schedule is easy, sticking to one is challenging. Even if you are the rare person who never procrastinates, unforeseen events may interfere with your ability to complete tasks on time. A self-imposed deadline may slip your mind despite your best intentions. Organizational tools—calendars, checklists, note cards, software, and so forth—can help you stay on track.

Throughout your project, organize both your time and your resources systematically. Review your schedule frequently and check your progress. It helps to post your schedule in a place where you will see it every day. Both personal and workplace e-mail systems usually include a calendar feature where you can record tasks, arrange to receive daily reminders, and check off completed tasks. Electronic devices such as smartphones have similar features.

Organize project documents in a binder or electronic folder, and label project documents and folders clearly. Use note cards or an electronic document to record bibliographical information for each source you plan to use in your paper. Tracking this information throughout the research process can save you hours of time when you create your references page.

**EXERCISE 2**

Revisit the schedule you created in Exercise 7.3.1. Transfer it into a format that will help you stay on track from day to day. You may wish to input it into your smartphone, write it in a weekly planner, post it by your desk, or have your e-mail account send you daily reminders. Consider setting up a buddy system with a classmate that will help you both stay on track.
**Tip**

Some people enjoy using the most up-to-date technology to help them stay organized. Other people prefer simple methods, such as crossing off items on a checklist. The key to staying organized is finding a system you like enough to use daily. The particulars of the method are not important as long as you are consistent.

**Anticipating Challenges**

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? You have identified a book that would be a great resource for your project, but it is currently checked out of the library. You planned to interview a subject matter expert on your topic, but she calls to reschedule your meeting. You have begun writing your draft, but now you realize that you will need to modify your thesis and conduct additional research. Or you have finally completed your draft when your computer crashes, and days of hard work disappear in an instant. These troubling situations are all too common. No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a glitch or setback. Managing your project effectively means anticipating potential problems, taking steps to minimize them where possible, and allowing time in your schedule to handle any setbacks. Many times a situation becomes a problem due only to lack of planning. For example, if a book is checked out of your local library, you might be able to request it from another library, which usually takes a few days. Alternatively, you might locate another, equally useful source. If you have allowed enough time for research, a brief delay will not become a major setback.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized and maintaining a take-charge attitude. Take a minute each day to save a backup copy of your work on a portable hard drive. Maintain detailed note cards and source cards as you conduct research—doing so will make citing sources in your draft infinitely easier. If you run into difficulties with your research or your writing, ask your instructor for help, or make an appointment with a writing tutor.

**EXERCISE 3**

Identify five potential problems you might encounter in the process of researching and writing your paper.

Write them on a separate sheet of paper. For each problem, write at least one strategy for solving the problem or minimizing its effect on your project.

**Writing at Work**

In the workplace, documents prepared at the beginning of a project often include a detailed plan for risk management. When you manage a project, it makes sense to anticipate and prepare for potential setbacks.
For example, to roll out a new product line, a software development company must strive to complete tasks on a schedule in order to meet the new product release date. The project manager may need to adjust the project plan if one or more tasks fall behind schedule.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- To complete a research project successfully, a writer must carefully manage each phase of the process and break major steps into smaller tasks.
- Writers can plan a research project by setting up a schedule based on the deadline and by identifying useful project resources.
- Writers stay focused by using organizational tools that suit their needs.
- Anticipating and planning for potential setbacks can help writers avoid those setbacks or minimize their effect on the project schedule.

### 7.4 Strategies for Gathering Reliable Information

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources.
2. Identify strategies for locating relevant print and electronic resources efficiently.
3. Identify instances when it is appropriate to use human sources, such as interviews or eyewitness testimony.
4. Identify criteria for evaluating research resources.
5. Understand why many electronic resources are not reliable.

Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging. As you read this section, you will learn ways to locate sources efficiently, so you have enough time to read the sources, take notes, and think about how to use the information.

Of course, the technological advances of the past few decades—particularly the rise of online media—mean that, as a twenty-first-century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable? This section will discuss strategies for evaluating sources critically so that you can be a media-savvy researcher.
In this section, you will locate and evaluate resources for your paper and begin taking notes. As you read, begin gathering print and electronic resources, identify at least eight to ten sources by the time you finish the chapter, and begin taking notes on your research findings.

**Locating Useful Resources**

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research proposal included some general ideas for how to go about your research—for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources. Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative primary and secondary sources.

**Using Primary and Secondary Sources**

Writers classify research resources in two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. *Primary sources* are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. For example, if you were writing a paper about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source. Other primary sources include the following:

- Research articles
- Literary texts
- Historical documents such as diaries or letters
- Autobiographies or other personal accounts

*Secondary sources* discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In researching a paper about the First Amendment, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information. The following are examples of secondary sources:

- Magazine articles
- Biographical books
- Literary and scientific reviews
- Television documentaries
Your topic and purpose determine whether you must cite both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions. If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer’s critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Once you have thought about what kinds of sources are most likely to help you answer your research questions, you may begin your search for print and electronic resources. The challenge here is to conduct your search efficiently. Writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful.

**Types of Information Resources**

Information resources come in a variety of types and formats. Books, DVDs, and various types of periodicals can be found in physical form at the library. Many of these same materials are available in electronic format in the form of e-books, electronic journal articles, and streaming videos. Your library may have some resources in both print and electronic formats while others may be available exclusively in one format. Table 7.1 “Library Information Resources” lists different types of resources available at public and university libraries.

**Table 7.1 “Library Information Resources”**

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<th>Resource Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example(s)</th>
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| Reference works| Reference works provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works. In most cases, reference books may not be checked out of a library. Note that reference works are many steps removed from original primary sources and are often brief, so these should be used only as a starting point when you gather information. | • *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2010*  
• *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* published by the American Psychiatric Association |
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| Nonfiction books         | Nonfiction books provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books and scientific studies are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a topic.                                                                                 | • *The Low-Carb Solution: A Slimmer You in 30 Days*  
• *Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins: Exploring the Relationship Between Macronutrient Ratios and Health Outcomes*                                                                                                                                                           |
| Periodicals and news     | These sources are published at regular intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are examples. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest, while others are more specialized.                                                                 | • *New York Times*  
• *PC Magazine*  
• *JAMA, The Journal of the American Medical Association*                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| news sources             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Government publications  | Federal, state, and local government agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.                                                                 | • *The Census 2000 Profile*  
• *The Business Relocation Package* published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Business and nonprofit   | Businesses and nonprofit organizations produce publications designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents.                                                                 | • A company’s instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program  
• A news release published by the Sierra Club                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| nonprofit publications   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Videos                   | Documentaries are the video equivalent of nonfiction books. They cover a range of topics and can be introductory or scholarly. Newsreels can be primary sources documenting historical events.                                                                                                                                                           | • Documentary in *Films on Demand* database                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
In addition to the resources noted in the table, library holdings may include primary texts such as historical documents, letters, and diaries.

**Writing at Work**

Businesses, government organizations, and nonprofit organizations produce published materials that range from brief advertisements and brochures to lengthy, detailed reports. In many cases, producing these publications requires research. A corporation’s annual report may include research about economic or industry trends. A charitable organization may use information from research in materials sent to potential donors.

Regardless of the industry you work in, you may be asked to assist in developing materials for publication. Often, incorporating research in these documents can make them more effective in informing or persuading readers.

**Tip**

As you gather information, strive for a balance of accessible, easy-to-read sources and more specialized, challenging sources. Relying solely on lightweight books and articles written for a general audience will drastically limit the range of useful, substantial information. On the other hand, restricting oneself to dense, scholarly works could make the process of researching extremely time-consuming and frustrating. An effective strategy for unfamiliar topics is to begin your reading with works written for the general public, then move to more scholarly works as you learn more about your topic.

**EXERCISE 1**

Make a list of five types of print resources you could use to find information about your research topic. Include at least one primary source. Be as specific as possible—if you have a particular resource or type of resource in mind, describe it.

To find information resources efficiently, first identify the major concepts and terms you will use to conduct your search—that is, your **keywords**. Your starting point for developing keywords is your topic and research questions, but also think of synonyms for these words. As you conduct preliminary research,
you may identify additional keywords by noting the subject terms that listed with information resources that are close to your topic. These keywords, along with the research questions you identified in Section 7.2 "Steps in Developing a Research Proposal", will help you find sources using any of the following methods:

- Using the library’s online GIL-FIND catalog to identify books, periodicals, DVDs, and other items in the library’s collection. The catalog will help you find journals by title, but will not list the journal’s articles by title.

- Using online databases, such as those found in GALILEO, to locate articles, e-books, and other electronic resources. These databases can also help you identify articles in print periodicals.

- Using Internet search engines, such as Google, to locate government documents and websites freely available on the web.

Reference librarians can help you determine which of these methods will best fit your project and learn to use the search tools available to you. You can also find research guides and tutorials on the library website that can help you identify appropriate research tools and learn how to use them.

As Jorge used the library catalog and databases, he made note of subject terms associated with resources about low-carb dieting. His search helped him identify potentially useful keywords and related topics, such as low-carbohydrate diet, insulin resistance, reducing diets, glycemic index, and dietary carbohydrates. These terms helped Jorge refine his search.

**Tip**

Knowing the right keywords can sometimes make all the difference in conducting a successful search. If you have trouble finding sources on a topic, consult a librarian to see whether you need to modify your search terms.

**EXERCISE 2**

Visit the Library of Congress’s website at [http://id.loc.gov/authorities](http://id.loc.gov/authorities) and conduct searches on a few terms related to your topic.

1. Review your search results and identify six to eight additional terms you might use when you conduct your research.
2. Print out the search results or save the results to your research folder on your computer or portable storage device.

Using Periodicals and Databases

Library catalogs can help you locate print and electronic book-length sources, as well as some types of nonprint holdings, such as CDs, DVDs, and audio books. The best way to locate shorter sources, such as magazine, newspaper, and journal articles, is to search online databases such as those found in GALILEO, accessible through the library website. In many cases, the full text of articles is available from the database. In other instances, articles are indexed, meaning there is a summary and publication information about the article, but the full text is not immediately available in the database; instead, you may find the indexed article in a print periodical. GALILEO contains a search tool called DISCOVER, which allows you to search many (but not all) databases at once. You may find you find better results by going to specific databases within GALILEO. You can identify specific databases by going to Databases A-Z or Browse by Subject. Databases may be general, including many types of resources on a broad range of subjects, or they may be specialized, focusing on a particular format of resource or a specific subject area. Table 7.2 "Commonly Used Indexes and Databases" describes some commonly used indexes and databases.

Table 7.2 Commonly Used Databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Search Complete</strong></td>
<td>Articles on a wide variety of topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposing Viewpoints</td>
<td>Articles, statistics, and recommended websites related to a wide range of controversial issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CQ Researcher Online</td>
<td>Full text of CQ Researcher articles containing reporting an analysis of issues in the news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
<td>Articles from newspapers and other periodicals, news transcripts, business and legal information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Source Complete</td>
<td>Business-related content from magazines, journals, and trade publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDLINE, Proquest Nursing, Consumer Health Source</td>
<td>Articles in medicine and health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films on Demand</td>
<td>Streaming video of documentaries and historic newsreels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading Popular and Scholarly Periodicals**

When you search for periodicals, be sure to distinguish among different types. Mass-market publications, such as newspapers and popular magazines, differ from scholarly publications in their accessibility, audience, and purpose.

Newspapers and magazines are written for a broader audience than scholarly journals. Their content is usually quite accessible and easy to read. Trade magazines that target readers within a particular industry may presume the reader has background knowledge, but these publications are still reader-friendly for a broader audience. Their purpose is to inform and, often, to entertain or persuade readers as well.

Scholarly or academic journals are written for a much smaller and more expert audience. The creators of these publications assume that most of their readers are already familiar with the main topic of the journal. The target audience is also highly educated. Informing is the primary purpose of a scholarly journal. While a journal article may advance an agenda or advocate a position, the content will still be presented in an objective style and formal tone. Entertaining readers with breezy comments and splashy graphics is not a priority.

Because of these differences, scholarly journals are more challenging to read. That doesn’t mean you should avoid them. On the contrary, they can provide in-depth information unavailable elsewhere. Because knowledgeable professionals carefully review the content before publication, scholarly journals are far more reliable than much of the information available in popular media. Seek out academic journals along with other resources. Just be prepared to spend a little more time processing the information.

**Writing at Work**
Periodicals databases are not just for students writing research papers. They also provide a valuable service to workers in various fields. The owner of a small business might use a database such as Business Source Premiere to find articles on management, finance, or trends within a particular industry. Health care professionals might consult databases such as MedLine to research a particular disease or medication. Regardless of what career path you plan to pursue, periodicals databases can be a useful tool for researching specific topics and identifying periodicals that will help you keep up with the latest news in your industry.

**Consulting a Reference Librarian**

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if it is yielding too many or too few results, you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging, although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian.

Reference librarians are intimately familiar with the systems libraries use to organize and classify information. They can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, and provide tips on how to use databases and other electronic research tools. Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties, ask for help. Many academic librarians are available for online chatting, texting, and e-mailing as well as face-to-face reference consultations. To make the most of your reference consultation, be prepared to explain the assignment to the librarian and the timeline as well as your research question and ideas for keywords. Because they are familiar with the resources available, librarians may be able to recommend specific resources that fit your needs and tailor your keywords to the search tools you are using.

**EXERCISE 3**

Visit your library’s website or consult with a reference librarian to determine what periodicals or databases would be useful for your research. Depending on your topic, you may rely on a general database, a specialized database for a particular subject area, or both. Search the library catalog for your topic and related keywords. Print out or bookmark your search results.
1. Identify at least one to two relevant periodicals, indexes, or databases.

2. Conduct a keyword search to find potentially relevant articles on your topic.

3. Save your search results. If the index you are using provides article summaries, read these to determine how useful the articles are likely to be.

4. Identify at least three to five articles to review more closely. If the full article is available online, set aside time to read it. If not, plan to visit our library within the next few days to locate the articles you need.

**Tip**

Searching the library's online resources is similar in many ways to searching the Internet, except some library catalogs and databases require specific search techniques. For example, some databases require that you use Boolean operators to connect your search terms. In other databases, Boolean operators are optional, but can still help you get better search results. Here are some of the ways you can use Boolean operators:

- Combine keywords with **AND** to limit results to citations that include both keywords—for example, *carbohydrates AND diet*.

- Connect keywords with **OR** to search for results that contain either of two terms. For example, searching for *diet OR nutrition* locates articles that use “diet” as a keyword as well as articles that use “nutrition” as a keyword.

- Combine keywords with **NOT** to search for the first word without the second. This can help you eliminate irrelevant results based on words that are similar to your search term. For example, searching for *obesity NOT childhood* locates materials on obesity but excludes materials on childhood obesity.

- Enclose a phrase in quotation marks to search for an exact phrase, such as “*morbid obesity*.”

Many databases offer tools for improving your search. Make your search in library catalogs and database more effective by using the following tips.

- Use **limiters** (often located on the left side of the search results) to further refine your results after searching.
• Change the sort of your results so the order of the articles best fits your needs. Sorting by date allows you to put the most recent or the oldest articles at the top of the results list. Other types of sorts include relevance, alphabetical by author’s name or alphabetical by article title.

• Use the Advanced Search functions of your database to further refine your results or to create more complex combinations of search terms. Here is an example of using Boolean operators in an Advanced Search:

- Use the Help section of the database to find more search strategies that apply to that particular database.

Web Resources

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines, such as Google, as their first source of information. While the Web can be a great source of information, you should be wary of limiting your research to Web resources. Internet search results do not include many of the library’s high quality electronic resources that are only available through password protected databases or on campus. Because anyone can publish anything on the web, the quality of the information varies greatly and you will need to evaluate web resources carefully.

Using Internet Search Engines Efficiently

To locate web resources, most people use an Internet search engine, such as Google. Some libraries and databases also contain links to specific websites or recommendations for Internet Search tools.

Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of related websites—what could be easier? Unfortunately, despite its apparent convenience, this research strategy has the following drawbacks to consider:

• **Results do not consider reliability of the results.** The first few hits that appear in search results often include sites whose content is not always reliable, such as online encyclopedias that can be edited by any user. Search engines cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.
• **Results may be influenced by popularity or advertisers.** Search engines find websites that people visit often and list the results in order of popularity rather than relevance to your topic.

• **Results may be too numerous for you to use.** Search engines often return an overwhelming number of results. Because it is difficult to filter results for quality or relevance, the most useful sites may be buried deep within your search results. It is not realistic for you to examine every site.

A general web search can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful resources. To get the most out of a search engine, however, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Use multiple keywords and Boolean operators to limit your results. Click on the Advanced Search link on the homepage to find additional options for streamlining your search. Depending on the specific search engine you use, the following options may be available:

• Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame.

• Limit results by language or region.

• Limit results to scholarly works available online. Google Scholar is an example.

• Limit results by file type.

• Limit results to a particular site or domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites, which can often lead to more objective results.

You may find specialized search engines recommended on your library website. For example, [http://www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov) will search for information in United States government websites.

Use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising.

**Evaluating Research Resources**

As you gather sources, you will need to examine them with a critical eye. Smart researchers continually ask themselves two questions: “Is this source relevant to my purpose?” and “Is this source reliable?” The first question will help you avoid wasting valuable time reading sources that stray too far from your specific topic and research questions. The second question will help you find accurate, trustworthy sources.

**Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant**
At this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in checking out books and printing out articles that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Now is a good time to get a little ruthless. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources. To weed through your stack of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. Table 7.3 "Tips for Skimming Books and Articles" explains how to skim to get a quick sense of what topics are covered. If a book or article is not especially relevant, put it aside. You can always come back to it later if you need to.

Table 7.3 Tips for Skimming Books and Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips for Skimming Books</th>
<th>Tips for Skimming Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Read the book cover and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered.</td>
<td>1. Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered.</td>
<td>2. Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.</td>
<td>3. Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Look for keywords related to your topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Determining Whether a Source Is Reliable

All information sources are not created equal. Sources can vary greatly in terms of how carefully they are researched, written, edited, and reviewed for accuracy. Common sense will help you identify obviously questionable sources, such as tabloids that feature tales of alien abductions, or personal websites with glaring typos. Sometimes, however, a source’s reliability—or lack of it—is not so obvious. For more information about source reliability, see Chapter 8 "Writing a Research Paper".

To evaluate your research sources, you will use critical thinking skills consciously and deliberately. You will consider criteria such as the type of source, its intended purpose and audience, the author’s (or authors’) qualifications, the publication’s reputation, any indications of bias or hidden agendas, how current the source is, and the overall quality of the writing, thinking, and design.
Evaluating Types of Sources

The different types of sources you will consult are written for distinct purposes and with different audiences in mind. This accounts for other differences, such as the following:

- How thoroughly the writers cover a given topic
- How carefully the writers research and document facts
- How editors review the work
- What biases or agendas affect the content

A journal article written for an academic audience for the purpose of expanding scholarship in a given field will take an approach quite different from a magazine feature written to inform a general audience. Textbooks, hard news articles, and websites approach a subject from different angles as well. To some extent, the type of source provides clues about its overall depth and reliability. Table 7.4 "Source Rankings" ranks different source types.

Table 7.4 Source Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Quality Sources</th>
<th>Varied-Quality Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These sources provide the most in-depth information. They are researched and written by subject matter experts and are carefully reviewed.</td>
<td>• Scholarly books and articles in scholarly journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as <em>Smithsonian Magazine</em> or <em>Nature</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government documents, such as books, reports, and web pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Documents posted online by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Textbooks and reference books, which are usually reliable but may not cover a topic in great depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• News stories and feature articles (print or online)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Use them with caution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as <em>The New York Times</em> or the Public Broadcasting Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Documents published by businesses and nonprofit organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questionable Sources**

These sources should be avoided. They are often written primarily to attract a large readership or present the author’s opinions and are not subject to careful review.

| • Loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk radio shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms |

**Tip**

Free online encyclopedias, wikis, and community-driven question-and-answer sites, such Yahoo Answers, may seem like a great source of information. They usually appear among the first few results of a web search. They cover thousands of topics, and many articles use an informal, straightforward writing style. Unfortunately, these sites have no control system for researching, writing, and reviewing articles. Instead, they rely on a community of users to police themselves. At best, these sites can be a starting point for finding other, more trustworthy sources. Never use them as final sources.

**Evaluating Credibility and Reputability**

Even when you are using a type of source that is generally reliable, you will still need to evaluate the author’s credibility and the publication itself on an individual basis. To examine the author’s credibility—that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say—examine his or her credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write about this topic?
Keep in mind that expertise in one field is no guarantee of expertise in another, unrelated area. For instance, an author may have an advanced degree in physiology, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.

Just as important as the author’s credibility is the publication’s overall reputability. Reputability refers to a source’s standing and reputation as a respectable, reliable source of information. An established and well-known newspaper, such as the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, is more reputable than a college newspaper put out by comparatively inexperienced students. A website that is maintained by a well-known, respected organization and regularly updated is more reputable than one created by an unknown author or group.

**Checking for Biases and Hidden Agendas**

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author’s or authors’ purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, the source’s content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas.

Bias refers to favoritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly—or not so subtly—makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone’s words, and distort information.

Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animal-rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

As Jorge conducted his research, he read several research studies in which scientists found significant benefits to following a low-carbohydrate diet. He also noticed that many studies were sponsored by a foundation associated with the author of a popular series of low-carbohydrate diet books. Jorge read these studies with a critical eye, knowing that a hidden agenda might be shaping the researchers’ conclusions.

**Using Current Sources**
Be sure to seek out sources that are current, or up to date. Depending on the topic, sources may become outdated relatively soon after publication, or they may remain useful for years. For instance, online social networking sites have evolved rapidly over the past few years. An article published in 2002 about this topic will not provide current information. On the other hand, a research paper on elementary education practices might refer to studies published decades ago by influential child psychologists. When using websites for research, check to see when the site was last updated. Many sites publish this information on the homepage, and some, such as news sites, are updated daily or weekly. Many nonfunctioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your professor for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable—or that the most reliable sources are not relevant.

**Evaluating Overall Quality by Asking Questions**

When you evaluate a source, you will consider the criteria previously discussed as well as your overall impressions of its quality. Read carefully, and notice how well the author presents and supports his or her statements. Stay actively engaged—do not simply accept an author’s words as truth. Ask questions to determine each source’s value. Checklist 7.1 lists ten questions to ask yourself as a critical reader.

**Checklist 7.1**

**Source Evaluation**

- Is the type of source appropriate for my purpose? Is it a high-quality source or one that needs to be looked at more critically?
- Can I establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?
- Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented? Is the source of the author’s information clear? (When you use secondary sources, look for sources that are not too removed from primary research.)
- Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?
- Does the author leave out any information that I would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?
- Do the author’s conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can I see how the author got from one point to another?
Is the writing clear and organized, and is it free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords? Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable? (Be on the lookout for extreme, emotionally charged language.)

Are there any obvious biases or agendas? Based on what I know about the author, are there likely to be any hidden agendas?

Are graphics informative, useful, and easy to understand? Are websites organized, easy to navigate, and free of clutter like flashing ads and unnecessary sound effects?

Is the source contradicted by information found in other sources? (If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why. Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts that you cannot confirm elsewhere.)

Writing at Work

The critical thinking skills you use to evaluate research sources as a student are equally valuable when you conduct research on the job. If you follow certain periodicals or websites, you have probably identified publications that consistently provide reliable information. Reading blogs and online discussion groups is a great way to identify new trends and hot topics in a particular field, but these sources should not be used for substantial research.

EXERCISE 4

Use a search engine to conduct a web search on your topic. Refer to the tips provided earlier to help you streamline your search. Evaluate your search results critically based on the criteria you have learned. Identify and bookmark one or more websites that are reliable, reputable, and likely to be useful in your research.

Managing Source Information

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. What matters is that you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

Keeping Track of Your Sources
Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you’ve written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left—writing your list of sources.

As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used or the dates you accessed them—information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include separate programs for recording bibliographic information.)

Table 7.5 "Details for Commonly Used Source Types" shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography—a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. You may wish to record information using the formatting system of the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Modern Language Association (MLA), which will save a step later on. (For more information on APA and MLA formatting, you may wish to consult the APA website at http://www.apa.org or the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu which regularly updates its online style guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Necessary Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Author(s), title and subtitle, publisher, city of publication, year of publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay or article published in a book</td>
<td>Include all the information you would for any other book. Additionally, record the essay’s or article’s title, author(s), the pages on which it appears, and the name of the book’s editor(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodical</td>
<td>Author(s), article title, publication title, date of publication, volume and issue number, and page numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Type</td>
<td>Necessary Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online source</td>
<td>Author(s) (if available), article or document title, organization that sponsors the site, database name (if applicable), date of publication, date you accessed the site, and URL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Name of person interviewed, method of communication, date of interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your research may involve less common types of sources not listed in Table 7.5 "Details for Commonly Used Source Types". For additional information on citing different sources, see the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu).

**EXERCISE 5**

Create a working bibliography using the format that is most convenient for you. List at least five sources you plan to use. Continue to add sources to your working bibliography throughout the research process.

**Tip**

To make your working bibliography even more complete, you may wish to record additional details, such as a book’s call number or contact information for a person you interviewed. That way, if you need to locate a source again, you have all the information you need right at your fingertips. You may also wish to assign each source a code number to use when taking notes (1, 2, 3, or a similar system).

**Taking Notes Efficiently**

Good researchers stay focused and organized as they gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and think about your goal as a researcher—to find information that will help you answer your research question. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it.

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their notes relate to the questions and ideas they started out with. Remember that you do not need to write down every detail from your reading. Focus on finding and recording details that will help you answer your research questions. The following strategies will help you take notes efficiently.
Use Headings to Organize Ideas

Whether you use old-fashioned index cards or organize your notes using word-processing software, record just one major point from each source at a time, and use a heading to summarize the information covered. Keep all your notes in one file, digital or otherwise. Doing so will help you identify connections among different pieces of information. It will also help you make connections between your notes and the research questions and subtopics you identified earlier.

Know When to Summarize, Paraphrase, or Directly Quote a Source

Your notes will fall under three categories—summary notes, paraphrased information, and direct quotations from your sources. Effective researchers make choices about which type of notes is most appropriate for their purpose.

- Summary notes sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.
- Paraphrased notes restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.
- Direct quotations use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. It is a good strategy to copy direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Most of your notes should be paraphrased from the original source. Paraphrasing as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations, because it forces you to think through the information in your source and understand it well enough to restate it. In short, it helps you stay engaged with the material instead of simply copying and pasting. Synthesizing will help you later when you begin planning and drafting your paper.

Maintain Complete, Accurate Notes

Regardless of the format used, any notes you take should include enough information to help you organize ideas and locate them instantly in the original text if you need to review them. Make sure your notes include the following elements:
Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed each idea to its source. Always include source information so you know exactly which ideas came from which sources. Use quotation marks to set off any words for phrases taken directly from the original text. If you add your own responses and ideas, make sure they are distinct from ideas you quoted or paraphrased.

Finally, make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text. Make sure quoted material is copied verbatim. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission and make sure the omission does not change the author’s meaning. Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure that you have restated the author’s ideas accurately in your own words.

**Use a System That Works for You**

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others—it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choosing the format that works best for you will ensure your notes are organized, complete, and accurate. Consider implementing one of these formats when you begin taking notes:

- **Use index cards.** This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers color-code their cards to make them still more organized.

- **Use note-taking software.** Word-processing and office software packages often include different types of note-taking software. Although you may need to set aside some time to learn the software, this method combines the speed of typing with the same degree of organization associated with handwritten note cards.
• **Maintain a research notebook.** Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook or electronic folder, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research.

• **Annotate your sources.** This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied. If using electronic sources, you can make comments within the source document. For example, you might add comment boxes to a PDF version of an article. This method works best for experienced researchers who have already thought a great deal about the topic because it can be difficult to organize your notes later when starting your draft.

Choose one of the methods from the list to use for taking notes. Continue gathering sources and taking notes. In the next section, you will learn strategies for organizing and synthesizing the information you have found.

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- A writer’s use of primary and secondary sources is determined by the topic and purpose of the research. Sources used may include print sources, such as books and journals; electronic sources, such as websites and articles retrieved from databases; and human sources of information, such as interviews.

- Strategies that help writers locate sources efficiently include conducting effective keyword searches, understanding how to use online catalogs and databases, using strategies to narrow web search results, and consulting reference librarians.

- Writers evaluate sources based on how relevant they are to the research question and how reliable their content is.

- Skimming sources can help writers determine their relevance efficiently.

- Writers evaluate a source’s reliability by asking questions about the type of source (including its audience and purpose); the author’s credibility, the publication’s reputation, the source’s currency, and the overall quality of the writing, research, logic, and design in the source.

- In their notes, effective writers record organized, complete, accurate information. This includes bibliographic information about each source as well as summarized, paraphrased, or quoted information from the source.
7.5 Critical Thinking and Research Applications

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Analyze source materials to determine how they support or refute the working thesis.
2. Identify connections between source materials and eliminate redundant or irrelevant source materials.
3. Identify instances when it is appropriate to use human sources, such as interviews or eyewitness testimony.
4. Select information from sources to begin answering the research questions.
5. Determine an appropriate organizational structure for the research paper that uses critical analysis to connect the writer’s ideas and information taken from sources.

At this point in your project, you are preparing to move from the research phase to the writing phase. You have gathered much of the information you will use, and soon you will be ready to begin writing your draft. This section helps you transition smoothly from one phase to the next.

Beginning writers sometimes attempt to transform a pile of note cards into a formal research paper without any intermediary step. This approach presents problems. The writer’s original question and thesis may be buried in a flood of disconnected details taken from research sources. The first draft may present redundant or contradictory information. Worst of all, the writer’s ideas and voice may be lost.

An effective research paper focuses on the writer’s ideas—from the question that sparked the research process to how the writer answers that question based on the research findings. Before beginning a draft, or even an outline, good writers pause and reflect. They ask themselves questions such as the following:

- How has my thinking changed based on my research? What have I learned?
- Was my working thesis on target? Do I need to rework my thesis based on what I have learned?
- How does the information in my sources mesh with my research questions and help me answer those questions? Have any additional important questions or subtopics come up that I will need to address in my paper?
- How do my sources complement each other? What ideas or facts recur in multiple sources?
• Where do my sources disagree with each other, and why?

In this section, you will reflect on your research and review the information you have gathered. You will determine what you now think about your topic. You will synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions. Finally, you will determine the organizational structure that works best for your paper and begin planning your outline.

**EXERCISE 1**

Review the research questions and working thesis you developed in Section 7.2 "Steps in Developing a Research Proposal". Set a timer for ten minutes and write about your topic, using your questions and thesis to guide your writing. Complete this exercise without looking over your notes or sources. Base your writing on the overall impressions and concepts you have absorbed while conducting research. If additional, related questions come to mind, jot them down.

**Selecting Useful Information**

At this point in the research process, you have gathered information from a wide variety of sources. Now it is time to think about how you will use this information as a writer. When you conduct research, you keep an open mind and seek out many promising sources. You take notes on any information that looks like it might help you answer your research questions. Often, new ideas and terms come up in your reading, and these, too, find their way into your notes. You may record facts or quotations that catch your attention even if they did not seem immediately relevant to your research question. By now, you have probably amassed an impressively detailed collection of notes. You will not use all of your notes in your paper.

Good researchers are thorough. They look at multiple perspectives, facts, and ideas related to their topic, and they gather a great deal of information. Effective writers, however, are selective. They determine which information is most relevant and appropriate for their purpose. They include details that develop or explain their ideas—and they leave out details that do not. The writer, not the pile of notes, is the controlling force. The writer shapes the content of the research paper.

While working through Section 7.4 "Strategies for Gathering Reliable Information", you used strategies to filter out unreliable or irrelevant sources and details. Now you will apply your critical-thinking
skills to the information you recorded—analyzing how it is relevant, determining how it meshes with your ideas, and finding how it forms connections and patterns.

**Writing at Work**

When you create workplace documents based on research, selectivity remains important. A project team may spend months conducting market surveys to prepare for rolling out a new product, but few managers have time to read the research in its entirety. Most employees want the research distilled into a few well-supported points. Focused, concise writing is highly valued in the workplace.

**Identify Information That Supports Your Thesis**

In Exercise 7.5.1, you revisited your research questions and working thesis. The process of writing informally helped you see how you might begin to pull together what you have learned from your research. Do not feel anxious, however, if you still have trouble seeing the big picture. Systematically looking through your notes will help you.

Begin by identifying the notes that clearly support your thesis. Mark or group these, either physically or using the cut-and-paste function in your word-processing program. As you identify the crucial details that support your thesis, make sure you analyze them critically. Ask the following questions to focus your thinking:

- **Is this detail from a reliable, high-quality source? Is it appropriate for me to cite this source in an academic paper?** The bulk of the support for your thesis should come from reliable, reputable sources. If most of the details that support your thesis are from less-reliable sources, you may need to do additional research or modify your thesis.

- **Is the link between this information and my thesis obvious—or will I need to explain it to my readers?** Remember, you have spent more time thinking and reading about this topic than your audience. Some connections might be obvious to both you and your readers. More often, however, you will need to provide the analysis or explanation that shows how the information supports your thesis. As you read through your notes, jot down ideas you have for making those connections clear.

- **What personal biases or experiences might affect the way I interpret this information?** No researcher is 100 percent objective. We all have personal opinions and experiences
that influence our reactions to what we read and learn. Good researchers are aware of this human tendency. They keep an open mind when they read opinions or facts that contradict their beliefs.

**Tip**

It can be tempting to ignore information that does not support your thesis or that contradicts it outright. However, such information is important. At the very least, it gives you a sense of what has been written about the issue. More importantly, it can help you question and refine your own thinking so that writing your research paper is a true learning process.

**Find Connections between Your Sources**

As you find connections between your ideas and information in your sources, also look for information that connects your sources. Do most sources seem to agree on a particular idea? Are some facts mentioned repeatedly in many different sources? What key terms or major concepts come up in most of your sources regardless of whether the sources agree on the finer points? Identifying these connections will help you identify important ideas to discuss in your paper.

Look for subtler ways your sources complement one another, too. Does one author refer to another's book or article? How do sources that are more recent build upon the ideas developed in earlier sources?

Be aware of any redundancies in your sources. If you have amassed solid support from a reputable source, such as a scholarly journal, there is no need to cite the same facts from an online encyclopedia article that is many steps removed from any primary research. If a given source adds nothing new to your discussion and you can cite a stronger source for the same information, use the stronger source. Determine how you will address any contradictions found among different sources. For instance, if one source cites a startling fact that you cannot confirm anywhere else, it is safe to dismiss the information as unreliable. However, if you find significant disagreements among reliable sources, you will need to review them and evaluate each source. Which source presents a sounder argument or more solid evidence? It is up to you to determine which source is the most credible and why.

Finally, do not ignore any information simply because it does not support your thesis. Carefully consider how that information fits into the big picture of your research. You may decide that the source is
unreliable or the information is not relevant, or you may decide that it is an important point you need to bring up. What matters is that you give it careful consideration.

As Jorge reviewed his research, he realized that some of the information was not especially useful for his purpose. His notes included several statements about the relationship between soft drinks that are high in sugar and childhood obesity—a subtopic that was too far outside of the main focus of the paper. Jorge decided to cut this material.

**Reevaluate Your Working Thesis**

A careful analysis of your notes will help you reevaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your ideas changed based on what you read. Even if your sources generally confirmed your preliminary thinking on the topic, it is still a good idea to tweak the wording of your thesis to incorporate the specific details you learned from research.

Jorge realized that his working thesis oversimplified the issues. He still believed that the media was exaggerating the benefits of low-carb diets. However, his research led him to conclude that these diets did have some advantages. Read Jorge’s revised thesis.

> Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

**Synthesizing and Organizing Information**

By now your thinking on your topic is taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing information—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.
It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing information is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign. It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

**Use Your Research Questions to Synthesize Information**

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Analyze how your notes relate to your major research question and the subquestions you identified in Section 7.2 "Steps in Developing a Research Proposal". Organize your notes with headings that correspond to those questions. As you proceed, you might identify some important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some questions are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the sources are reliable and whether the connections between ideas are clear. Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and subquestions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on sticky notes or type and highlight them within an electronic document.

Jorge looked back on the list of research questions that he had written down earlier. He changed a few to match his new thesis, and he began a rough outline for his paper.
EXERCISE 2

Review your research questions and working thesis again. This time, keep them nearby as you review your research notes.

1. Identify information that supports your working thesis.

2. Identify details that call your thesis into question. Determine whether you need to modify your thesis.

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets
Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?
Thesis: Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Main points:
How do low-carb diets work?
- Low-carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.

When did low-carb diets become a "hot" topic in the media?
- The Atkins diet was created in 1972 by Richard Atkins, but it didn't gain widespread attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a low-carb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.

What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue to eat protein and fats while dieting.

What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet?
- Eating foods high in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.
3. Use your research questions to identify key ideas in your paper. Begin categorizing your notes according to which topics are addressed. (You may find yourself adding important topics or deleting unimportant ones as you proceed.)

4. Write out your revised thesis and at least two or three big ideas.

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the two.

Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the relationship between different facts from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

**Plan How to Organize Your Paper**

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor’s requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose. For more information about the structures used in writing, see Chapter 6 "Rhetorical Modes". The purpose of Jorge’s paper was primarily to persuade. With that in mind, he planned the following outline.
EXERCISE 3

Review the organizational structures discussed in this section and Chapter 6 "Rhetorical Modes". Working with the notes you organized earlier, follow these steps to begin planning how to organize your paper.

1. Create an outline that includes your thesis, major subtopics, and supporting points.

2. The major headings in your outline will become sections or paragraphs in your paper. Remember that your ideas should form the backbone of the paper. For each major section of your outline, write out a topic sentence stating the main point you will make in that section.

3. As you complete step 2, you may find that some points are too complex to explain in a sentence. Consider whether any major sections of your outline need to be broken up and jot down additional topic sentences as needed.
4. Review your notes and determine how the different pieces of information fit into your outline as supporting points.

Collaboration

Please share the outline you created with a classmate. Examine your classmate’s outline and see if any questions come to mind or if you see any area that would benefit from an additional point or clarification.

Return the outlines to each other and compare observations.

Writing at Work

The structures described in this section and Chapter 6 "Rhetorical Modes" can also help you organize information in different types of workplace documents. For instance, medical incident reports and police reports follow a chronological structure. If the company must choose between two vendors to provide a service, you might write an e-mail to your supervisor comparing and contrasting the choices.

Understanding when and how to use each organizational structure can help you write workplace documents efficiently and effectively.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- An effective research paper focuses on presenting the writer’s ideas using information from research as support.
- Effective writers spend time reviewing, synthesizing, and organizing their research notes before they begin drafting a research paper.
- It is important for writers to revisit their research questions and working thesis as they transition from the research phase to the writing phrase of a project. Usually, the working thesis will need at least minor adjustments.
- To organize a research paper, writers choose a structure that is appropriate for the topic and purpose. Longer papers may make use of more than one structure.

7.6 Writing from Research: End-of-Chapter Exercises

**EXERCISES**

1. In this chapter, you learned strategies for generating and narrowing a topic for a research paper. Review the following list of five general topics. Use freewriting and preliminary research to narrow
three of these topics to manageable size for a five- to seven-page research paper. Save your list of topics in a print or electronic file, and add to it periodically as you identify additional areas of interest.

- Illegal immigration in the United States
- Bias in the media
- The role of religion in educational systems
- The possibility of life in outer space
- Modern-day slavery around the world

2. Working with one of the topics you have identified, use the research skills you learned in this chapter to locate three to five potentially useful print or electronic sources of information about the topic. Create a list that includes the following:

- One subject-specific periodicals database likely to include relevant articles on your topic
- Two articles about your topic written for an educated general audience
- At least one article about your topic written for an audience with specialized knowledge

3. Organize your list of resources into primary and secondary sources. What makes them such? Pick one primary source and one secondary source and write a sentence or two summarizing the information that they provide. Then answer these questions:

- What type of primary source did you choose? Who wrote it, and why? Do you think this source provides accurate information, or is it biased in some way?
- Where did the information in the secondary source come from? Was the author citing an initial study, piece of literature, or work of art? Where could you find the primary source?
Chapter 8
Writing a Research Paper

8.1 Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Apply strategies for drafting an effective introduction and conclusion.
2. Identify when and how to summarize, paraphrase, and directly quote information from research sources.
3. Apply guidelines for citing sources within the body of the paper and the bibliography.
4. Use primary and secondary research to support ideas.
5. Identify the purposes for which writers use each type of research.

At last, you are ready to begin writing the rough draft of your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting. It can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for handling the more challenging aspects of writing a research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding any misuse of your sources.

The Structure of a Research Paper

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure: an introduction that presents the writer’s thesis, a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence, and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research. Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your introduction and conclusion, as you work to attract your readers’ interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length. They focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should get readers’ attention, provide background information, and present the writer’s thesis. Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
An attention-getting quote
• A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
• A connection between your topic and your readers’ experiences

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know in what direction the paper is headed.

Jorge decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers’ daily experiences.

Read the first draft of his introduction. The thesis is underlined. Note how Jorge progresses from the opening sentences to background information to his thesis.

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies, such as those conducted by Lisa Sanders and David L. Katz (“Low-carb Diets: Are They Safe and Effective?”) and Julie Hirsch (“The Low-carb Evolution”), estimate that approximately forty million Americans, or about twenty percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates. Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight, but they also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

EXERCISE 1

Write the introductory paragraph of your research paper. Try using one of the techniques listed in this section to write an engaging introduction. Be sure to include background information about the topic that leads to your thesis.

Tip

Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research paper. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your paper first. Writing the body sections
first will help you clarify your main points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You may have a better sense of how to introduce the paper after you have drafted some or all of the body.

**Writing Your Conclusion**

In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the paper, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should revisit your thesis and sum up your main ideas. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as “In this paper, I have demonstrated that....” In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers. An effective writer might conclude a paper by asking a new question the research inspired, revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives.

**Writing at Work**

If your job involves writing or reading scientific papers, it helps to understand how professional researchers use the structure described in this section. A scientific paper begins with an abstract that briefly summarizes the entire paper. The introduction explains the purpose of the research, briefly summarizes previous research, and presents the researchers’ hypothesis. The body provides details about the study, such as who participated in it, what the researchers measured, and what results they recorded. The conclusion presents the researchers’ interpretation of the data, or what they learned.

**Using Source Material in Your Paper**

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?
You have already taken a step in the right direction by writing your introduction. The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. You will use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material. Earlier you learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting when taking notes. In the next few sections, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to support your ideas.

**Summarizing Sources**

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers. Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as concisely as you can—preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

In his draft, Jorge summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and Jorge’s summary of the article.

**Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets**

*(From Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.)*

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study found that
obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

Summary
Adrienne Howell points out that in three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time.

Tip
A summary restates ideas in your own words—but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Jorge used the term obese in his summary because related words such as heavy or overweight have a different clinical meaning.

EXERCISE 2
On a separate sheet of paper, practice summarizing by writing a one-sentence summary of the same passage that Jorge already summarized.

Paraphrasing Sources
When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer’s own language and style.
In his draft, Jorge frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Read the following passage from a website. Then read Jorge’s initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

**Original Source**
(From Tracy Niethercott)
Some insulin users in particular find that their blood glucose is far easier to control when they limit the carbs in their diet.

**Initial Paraphrase**
According to one source, some people find they can control their blood glucose when they limit the carbs they eat (Niethercott).

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Jorge realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

**Revised Paraphrase**
Some people with diabetes are better able to control their blood sugar when they reduce their carb intake (Niethercott).

**EXERCISE 3**
On a separate sheet of paper, follow these steps to practice paraphrasing.

1. Choose an important idea or detail from your notes.
2. Without looking at the original source, restate the idea in your own words.
3. Check your paraphrase against the original text in the source. Make sure both your language and your sentence structure are original.
4. Revise your paraphrase if necessary.

**Quoting Sources Directly**
Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author’s words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader’s interest. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact. When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author’s ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author’s point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone, or “dropped in,” quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence.
- Use ellipses (...) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [ ] if you need to replace a word or phrase or add any explanation or clarification of the original.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

Jorge wanted to use the following information from an article on the American Heart Association’s website.

Original Source

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A high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure.

Because this particular sentence would be difficult to paraphrase properly, Jorge decided to quote it instead.

Quotation from the Source

According to the American Heart Association, “a high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure.”

Notice how Jorge smoothly integrated the quoted material by starting the sentence with an introductory phrase.

Documenting Source Material

A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be aware of the works that you used to create it. Readers want to examine your sources to see if you know your subject, to see if you missed anything, or if you offer anything new and interesting. Your new or up-to-date sources may offer the reader additional insight on the subject being considered. It also demonstrates that you, as the author, are up-to-date on what is happening in the field or on the subject. Giving credit where it is due enhances your credibility, and the MLA style offers a clear format to use.

If you incorporate the words or ideas of a source into your own writing without giving full credit, you are plagiarizing that source. In both professional and academic setting the penalties are severe. In the professional world, plagiarism results in loss of credibility and often loss of compensation, including future opportunities. In a classroom setting, plagiarism results in a range of sanctions, from loss of a grade to expulsion from a school or university. Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources. The purpose of doing so is twofold:

1. To give credit to other writers or researchers for their ideas
2. To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired
You will cite sources within the body of your paper and at the end of the paper in your Works Cited. For a complete discussion of MLA documentation style, consult the Purdue University Online Writing Lab website at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu) or the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th* edition.

**Citing Sources in the Body of Your Paper**

MLA style uses a citation in the body of the essay that links to the Works Cited page at the end. You must cite your sources as you use them, giving the author or reference to the source as well as the page number of the quote or paraphrase if pages are given. The reference to the author or title is like a signal to readers that information has been incorporated from a separate source. It also provides readers with the information they need to locate the source in the Works Cited at the end of your essay where they can find the complete reference.

You need to cite all your information: if someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to cite it. The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge, but if you are ever in doubt, go ahead and document the material. It is important to indicate the source both in your essay and in the Works Cited to prevent the possibility of plagiarism. If you follow MLA guidelines, pay attention to detail, and clearly indicate your sources, then this approach to formatting and citation offers a proven way to demonstrate your respect for other authors and artists.

**Summary**

The following examples illustrate basic rules for documenting sources within the text of your paper in MLA style. Keep in mind that you should also include an entry in the Works Cited for the source.

**Author named in the introduction to the paraphrase or quote:**

Jacob Leibowitz found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar (56).

Leibowitz states, “People with Type II diabetes should follow a low-carbohydrate diet in order to prevent weight gain and unbalanced blood-sugar levels” (56).

**Author named in parentheses:**
One source indicates that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar (Leibowitz 56).

A noted nutritionist advises diabetics: “People with Type II diabetes should follow a low-carbohydrate diet in order to prevent weight gain and unbalanced blood-sugar levels” (Leibowitz 56).

**Unknown author:**

One website points out that a low-carbohydrate diet may aggravate a heart condition by raising a person’s bad cholesterol (“Cholesterol and the Low-carb Diet”).

**Unknown or No Page Reference:**

The risks of following a low-carbohydrate diet outweigh any benefits according to one researcher (Jones). Gerald Jones believes that “a balanced diet is still the safest and most effective approach to good health.”

**A source quoted in another source:**

“For the chronically overweight,” states Martin Rogers, “a low-carbohydrate diet may provide a viable option for weight loss” (qtd. in Evans 46).

---

**Introducing Cited Material Effectively**

Including an introductory phrase in your text, such as “Jackson wrote” or “Copeland found,” often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as “Jones said,” “Smith stated,” and so on. Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who “suggests” and one who “claims,” one who “questions” and one who “criticizes.” You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging. The following chart shows some possibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Verbs for Introducing Cited Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ask</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Strong Verbs for Introducing Cited Material**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>explain</th>
<th>Assert</th>
<th>Claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>recommend</td>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>propose</td>
<td>Hypothesize</td>
<td>Believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insist</td>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>Find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determine</td>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Assess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluate</td>
<td>Conclude</td>
<td>Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warn</td>
<td>point out</td>
<td>sum up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 4**

Review the citations in your paper. Look for places where you introduced source material using a signal phrase in your sentence.

1. Highlight the verbs used in your signal phrases, and make note of any that seem to be overused throughout the paper.
2. Identify at least three places where a stronger verb could be used.
3. Make the edits to your draft.

**Writing at Work**

It is important to accurately represent a colleague’s ideas or communications in the workplace. When writing professional or academic papers, be mindful of how the words you use to describe someone’s tone or ideas carry certain connotations. Do not say a source *argues* a particular point unless an argument is, in fact, presented. Use lively language, but avoid language that is emotionally charged. Doing so will ensure you have represented your colleague’s words in an authentic and accurate way.
Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body text will appear in a references list at the end of your paper known as the Works Cited. In the Works Cited, list the sources alphabetically by last name, or list them by title if the author is not known as is often the case with web-based articles. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your Works Cited will include complete publication details. Consult the Purdue University Online Writing Lab website at http://owl.english.purdue.edu or the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition) for the correct format for Works Cited entries.

Using Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present a writer’s analysis or interpretation of primary source materials. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Using Primary Sources Effectively

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer’s own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a literature course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a political science course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a communications course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a business administration course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flextime policies
- A paper for an elementary education course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including nonprint works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the
original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to
design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you
will want to discuss it in detail. For example, the interviews may provide interesting responses that you
want to share with your reader.

**Using Secondary Sources Effectively**

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If
you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, you will need to use secondary sources
extensively. As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as
a journal article presenting the results of the authors’ scientific study or a book that cites interviews and
case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are
further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction
might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result,
the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists’ findings.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock’s films would focus on the films themselves as a primary source, but it might also cite commentary from critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

Jorge knew he did not have the time, resources, or experience needed to conduct original experimental research for his paper. Because he was relying on secondary sources to support his ideas, he made a point of citing sources that were not far removed from primary research.

**Tip**

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer’s purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer’s purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind legislation has affected elementary education, a *Time* magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer’s purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like *Time, Newsweek,* and *US News & World Report* would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.
Avoiding Plagiarism

Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people’s ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism.

Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

When to Cite

Whether it is quoted or paraphrased, any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and the references list (the Works Cited). The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another’s music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward.

Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder’s permission. Fair use means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts
from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another’s work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

As he worked on his draft, Jorge was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Jorge’s revision.

**Initial Use of Source Material**

Heinz found that “subjects in the low-carbohydrate group (30% carbohydrates; 40% protein, 30% fat) had a mean weight loss of 10 kg (22 lbs) over a 4-month period.” These results were “noticeably better than results for subjects on a low-fat diet (45% carbohydrates, 35% protein, 20% fat)” whose average weight loss was only “7 kg (15.4 lbs) in the same period.” From this, it can be concluded that “low-carbohydrate diets obtain more rapid results.” Other researchers agree that “at least in the short term, patients following low-carbohydrate diets enjoy greater success” than those who follow alternative plans (Johnson and Crowe). After reviewing the paragraph, Jorge realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although Jorge had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

**Revised Use of Source Material**

Low-carbohydrate diets may indeed be superior to other diet plans for short-term weight loss. In a study comparing low-carbohydrate diets and low-fat diets, Heinz found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate plan (30% of total calories) for four months lost, on average, about three kilograms more than subjects who followed a low-fat diet for the same time. Heinz concluded that these plans yield quick results, an idea supported by a similar study conducted by Johnson and Crowe. What remains to be seen, however, is whether this initial success can be sustained for longer periods.
As Jorge revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote these sources directly. Instead, he paraphrased their most important findings. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay.

**Working with Sources Carefully**

Disorganization and carelessness sometimes lead to plagiarism. For instance, a writer may be unable to provide a complete, accurate citation if he did not record bibliographical information. A writer may cut and paste a passage from a website into her paper and later forget where the material came from. A writer who procrastinates may rush through a draft, which easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and inaccurate quotations. Any of these actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative consequences. Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. Maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. Check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Allow plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

**Writing at Work**

Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For more extensive use of others' work—for instance, requesting permission to link to another company's website on your own corporate website—always follow your employer's established procedures.

**Academic Integrity**

The concepts and strategies discussed in this chapter connect to a larger issue—academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field.

Academic integrity violations have serious educational and professional consequences. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. Students who are found guilty of academic integrity violations face consequences
An effective research paper focuses on the writer’s ideas. The introduction and conclusion present and revisit the writer’s thesis. The body of the paper develops the thesis and related points with information from research.

I. **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. An effective research paper focuses on the writer’s ideas. The introduction and conclusion present and revisit the writer’s thesis. The body of the paper develops the thesis and related points with information from research.
2. Ideas and information taken from outside sources must be cited in the body of the paper and in the references section (the Works Cited).
3. Material taken from sources should be used to develop the writer’s ideas. Summarizing and paraphrasing are usually most effective for this purpose.
4. A summary concisely restates the main ideas of a source in the writer’s own words.
5. A paraphrase restates ideas from a source using the writer’s own words and sentence structures.
6. Direct quotations should be used sparingly. Ellipses and brackets must be used to indicate words that were omitted or changed for conciseness or grammatical correctness.
7. Always represent material from outside sources accurately.
8. Plagiarism has serious academic and professional consequences. To avoid accidental plagiarism, keep research materials organized, understand guidelines for fair use and appropriate citation of sources, and review the paper to make sure these guidelines are followed.

### 8.2 Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Revise your paper to improve organization and cohesion.
2. Determine an appropriate style and tone for your paper.
3. Revise to ensure that your tone is consistent.
4. Edit your paper to ensure that language, citations, and formatting are correct.
Given all the time and effort you have put into your research project, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully. You may feel that you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable—but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

Revising Your Paper: Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographical entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper. A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer’s ideas.

Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. Use Checklist 8.1 to help you.

Checklist 8.1

Revision: Organization

At the essay level

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
Jorge reread his draft paragraph by paragraph. As he read, he highlighted the main idea of each paragraph so he could see whether his ideas proceeded in a logical order. For the most part, the flow of ideas was clear. However, he did notice that one paragraph did not have a clear main idea. It interrupted the flow of the writing. During revision, Jorge added a topic sentence that clearly connected the paragraph to the one that had preceded it. He also added transitions to improve the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence. Read the following paragraphs: the first example is Jorge's first draft without any changes, and the second paragraph shows his highlighted revisions highlight:

**First Draft:**

Picture this: you’re standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words “Low Carb!” displayed prominently on the label. (You can’t help but notice that the low carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Some researchers estimate that approximately forty million Americans, or about one fifth of the population, have attempted to restrict their intake of foods high in carbohydrates (Sanders and Katz; Hirsch). Proponents of low carb diets say they are the most effective way to lose weight. They yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Some doctors claim that low carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long term effects are unknown. Although following a low carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

**Revised Paragraph:**


Picture this: you’re standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words “Low Carb!” displayed prominently on the label. (You can’t help but notice that the low carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Proponents of low carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight but also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long term effects are unknown. Although following a low carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

**EXERCISE 1**

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper’s overall organization.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper.

2. Read your paper paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph.

3. Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented—just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Do not look at the outline you created during prewriting. You may write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper.

4. Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically.

5. Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.

6. Begin to revise your paper to improve organization. Start with any major issues, such as needing to move an entire paragraph. Then proceed to minor revisions, such as adding a transitional phrase or tweaking a topic sentence so it connects ideas more clearly.
Collaboration: Please share your paper with a classmate. Repeat the six steps and take notes on a separate piece of paper. Share and compare notes.

Tip

Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose, and avoid overusing the same ones. For an extensive list of transitions, see Chapter 5 "Drafting and Revising the Essay," Table 5.1. "Common Transitional Words and Phrases."

Revise to Improve Cohesion

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly. In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer’s point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect. Use Checklist 8.2 to review your essay for cohesion.

Checklist 8.2

Revision: Cohesion

- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose.
- Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.
As Jorge reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that he had too much information on the popularity of low-carb diets and the debate over their effect on weight loss, when his focus only emphasized the various health risks of low-carb diets, so he had to eliminate some material. He also realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully. Read the following paragraph, first without Jorge’s revisions and then with them.

**Initial Paragraph**

One likely reason for these lackluster long term results is that a low carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. They further comment that because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short lived. Medical professionals caution that low carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Foundation). “For some people, [low carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well” (Kwon 78).

**Revised Paragraph**

One likely reason for these lackluster long term results is that a low carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. They further comment that because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short lived. Medical professionals caution that low carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight,
dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Foundation).

Jorge decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that not only was the quotation at the end of the paragraph “dropped in,” it was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding an introductory phrase helped Jorge integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

**EXERCISE 2**

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper to improve cohesion.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from Section 8.2 "Exercise 1."

2. Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.

3. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.

4. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.

5. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion.

6. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of the paper.

7. Revise the places you identified in your paper to improve cohesion.

Collaboration: Please exchange papers with a classmate. Complete step four. On a separate piece of paper, note any areas that would benefit from clarification. Return and compare notes.

**Writing at Work**

Understanding cohesion can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their
audience’s attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation and the financial report shows that the company lost money, funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

**Using a Consistent Style and Tone**

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

**Determining an Appropriate Style and Tone**

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what he or she is talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night’s sleep. A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious. It is generally best to avoid writing in the first person, as this can make your paper seem overly subjective and opinion based. Use Checklist 8.3 on style to review your paper for other issues that affect style and tone. You can check for consistency at the end of the writing process. Checking for consistency is discussed later in this section.

**Checklist 8.3**

*Style*
• My paper avoids excessive wordiness.
• My sentences are varied in length and structure.
• I have avoided using first-person pronouns such as I and we.
• I have used the active voice whenever possible.
• I have defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.
• I have used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon.
• My paper states my point of view using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful.

Word Choice

Note that word choice is an especially important aspect of style. In addition to checking the points noted on Checklist 8.3, review your paper to make sure your language is precise, conveys no unintended connotations, and is free of biases. Here are some of the points to check for:

• Vague or imprecise terms
• Slang
• Repetition of the same phrases (“Smith states..., Jones states...”) to introduce quoted and paraphrased material
• Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of he or she
• Use of language with negative connotations, such as haughty or ridiculous
• Use of outdated or offensive terms to refer to specific ethnic, racial, or religious groups

Tip

Using plural nouns and pronouns or recasting a sentence can help you keep your language gender neutral while avoiding awkwardness. Consider the following examples.

• Gender-biased: When a writer cites a source in the body of his paper, he must list it on his references page.
• Awkward: When a writer cites a source in the body of his or her paper, he or she must list it on his or her references page.
• Improved: Writers must list any sources cited in the body of a paper on the references page.
Keeping Your Style Consistent

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies you can use include the following:

• **Read your paper aloud.** Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.

• **Share your paper with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback.** It is often difficult to evaluate one’s own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.

• **Line-edit your paper slowly, sentence by sentence.** You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

On reviewing his paper, Jorge found that he had generally used an appropriate academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped Jorge maintain a consistent tone. Read his revisions.

**Initial Opening Paragraph**

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

Picture this: you’re standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words “Low-Carb!” displayed prominently on the label. (You can’t help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

**Revised Opening Paragraph**
Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

Picture this: standing in the aisle of your local grocery store, you see an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words “Low-Carb!” displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

EXERCISE 3

Using Checklist 8.3, line-edit your paper. You may use either of these techniques:

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from Section 8.2 "Exercise 1". Read it line by line. Check for the issues noted on Checklist 8.3, as well as any other aspects of your writing style you have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

2. If you prefer to work with an electronic document, use the menu options in your word-processing program to enlarge the text to 150 or 200 percent of the original size. Make sure the type is large enough that you can focus on only one paragraph at a time. Read the paper line by line as described in step 1. Highlight any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

Collaboration: Please exchange papers with a classmate. On a separate piece of paper, note places where the essay does not seem to flow or you have questions about what was written. Return the essay and compare notes.

Editing Your Paper

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you already have caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free. Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:
Correcting Errors

Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers. Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful—but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past. Use Checklist 8.4 to help you as you edit:

Checklist 8.4
Grammar, Mechanics, Punctuation, Usage, and Spelling

- My paper is free of grammatical errors, such as errors in subject-verb agreement and sentence fragments. (For additional guidance on grammar, see Chapter 9 "Grammar," especially 9.1 (sentence writing), 9.14 (pronouns), 9.16 and 9.17 (verbs))
- My paper is free of errors in punctuation and mechanics, such as misplaced commas or incorrectly formatted source titles. (For additional guidance on punctuation and mechanics, see Chapter 9 "Grammar," especially 9.6 (commas) and 9.7 (semicolons))
- My paper is free of common usage errors, such as *alot* and *alright*. (For additional guidance on correct usage, see Chapter 9 "Grammar," especially 9.18 (word choice) and 9.22 (commonly confused words))
- My paper is free of spelling errors. I have proofread my paper for spelling in addition to using the spell-checking feature in my word-processing program. (For additional guidance on spelling, see Chapter 9 "Grammar," especially 9.23 (spelling))
- I have checked my paper for any editing errors that I know I tend to make frequently.

Checklist 8.5
Citations and Formatting

Citations

• Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source.

• Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, if no author is given, the organization name or source title).

• I have used the correct format for in-text and parenthetical citations. If my source gives page numbers, I have included page numbers in parentheses directly after the quote or paraphrase taken from that page or pages.

• Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the Works Cited at the end of my paper.

Formatting

• All entries in my Works Cited are in alphabetical order by author's last name (or by title or organization if no author is listed).

• My Works Cited is consistently double spaced (both within and between entries), and each entry uses proper indentation ("hanging indent": indented on the second and all subsequent lines).

• Each entry in my Works Cited includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.

• My paper includes a heading (with your name, course information, and date) in the upper left-hand corner of the first page; if no heading is used or your instructor requests it, substitute a title page for the heading.

• My paper includes a title that reflects the topic of my paper.

• My paper includes a running head (page numbers, or a header in the upper right-hand corner of each page of the paper).

• The margins of my paper are set at one inch. The text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

For detailed guidelines on MLA citation and formatting, see the Purdue University Online Writing Lab website at http://owl.english.purdue.edu or the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th
“Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets”

Picture this: standing in the aisle of your local grocery store, you see an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words “Low-Carb!” displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Regardless of whether or not low-carb diets are most effective for weight loss, their potential benefits for weight loss must be weighed against other long-term health outcomes such as hypertension, the
risk of heart disease, and cholesterol levels. Research findings in these areas are mixed. For this reason, people considering following a low-carbohydrate diet to lose weight should be advised of the potential risks in doing so.

Research on how low-carbohydrate diets affect cholesterol levels is inconclusive. Some researchers have found that low-carbohydrate diets raise levels of HDL, or “good” cholesterol (Ebbeling et al. 2093). Unfortunately, they may also raise levels of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease (Ebbeling et al. 2094). A particular concern is that as dieters on a low-carbohydrate plan increase their intake of meats and dairy products—foods that are high in protein and fat—they are also likely to consume increased amounts of saturated fats, resulting in clogged arteries and again increasing the risk of heart disease. Studies have identified possible risks to cardiovascular health associated with low-carb diets, so the American Heart Association cautions that doctors cannot yet assess how following a low-carbohydrate diet affects patients’ health over a long-term period.

Some studies have found that following a low-carb diet helped lower patients’ blood pressure (Bell 32). Again, however, excessive consumption of foods high in saturated fats may, over time, lead to the development of clogged arteries and increase risk of hypertension. According to the American Heart Association, “a high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure.” Eliminating those foods in a low-carb diet may raise blood pressure because intake of sodium may increase and intake of minerals like calcium, potassium, and magnesium, all of which are important for maintaining healthy blood pressure, may be decreased. Choosing lean meats over those high in fat and supplementing
the diet with high-fiber, low-glycemic index carbohydrates, such as leafy green vegetables, is a healthier plan for dieters to follow.

Perhaps most surprisingly, low-carbohydrate diets are not necessarily advantageous for patients with Type II diabetes. According to Tracey Neithercott, some people with diabetes are better able to control their blood sugar when they reduce their carb intake, but others are not, and there are no studies that prove one single approach is best for everyone. One problem is that there are no long-term studies of a large scale that have examined this issue in detail. Neithercott advises diabetics to monitor blood sugar levels carefully and to consult with their health care provider or a registered dietitian to develop a plan for healthy eating.

Low-carb diets have garnered a great deal of positive attention, and it is not entirely undeserved. These diets do lead to rapid weight loss, and they often result in greater weight loss over a period of months than other diet plans. Significantly overweight or obese people may find low-carb eating plans the most effective for losing weight and reducing the risks associated with carrying excess body fat. However, because these diets are difficult for some people to adhere to and because their potential long-term health effects are still being debated, they are not necessarily the ideal choice for anyone who wants to lose weight. A moderately overweight person who wants to lose only a few pounds is best advised to choose whatever plan will help him stay active and consume fewer calories consistently—whether or not it involves eating low-carb ketchup.

Works Cited


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**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Organization in a research paper means that the argument proceeds logically from the introduction to the body to the conclusion. It flows logically from one point to the next. When revising a research paper, evaluate the organization of the paper as a whole and the organization of individual paragraphs.

- In a cohesive research paper, the elements of the paper work together smoothly and naturally. When revising a research paper, evaluate its cohesion. In particular, check that information from research is smoothly integrated with your ideas.

- An effective research paper uses a style and tone that are appropriately academic and serious. When revising a research paper, check that the style and tone are consistent throughout.

- Editing a research paper involves checking for errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, usage, spelling, citations, and formatting.

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**8.3 Writing a Research Paper: End-of-Chapter Exercises**

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1. In this chapter, you learned strategies for generating and narrowing a topic for a research paper. Brainstorm to create a list of five general topics of personal or professional interest to you that you would like to research. Then use freewriting and preliminary research to narrow three of these topics to manageable size for a five- to seven-page research paper. Save your list of topics in a print or electronic file and add to it periodically as you identify additional areas of interest. Use your topic list as a starting point the next time a research paper is assigned.

2. Working with one of the topics you just identified, use the research skills you learned in this chapter to locate three to five potentially useful print or electronic sources of information about the topic. Create a list that includes the following:
   - One subject-specific periodicals database likely to include relevant articles on your topic
   - Two articles about your topic written for an educated general audience
   - At least one article about your topic written for an audience with specialized knowledge

3. In real-life and work-related contexts, people consult a wide range of different information sources every day, without always making conscious judgments about whether the source is reliable and why. Identify one media source of information you use at least once a week—for instance, a website you visit regularly, or a newspaper or magazine to which you subscribe. Write two paragraphs explaining the following:
   - What topics you learn about by reading or viewing this source
   - Whether you consider this source reliable and why
In addressing the latter point, be sure to consider details that help you evaluate the source’s credibility and reputability, as well as the presence or absence of bias.

4. Different professional communities develop their own standards about the writing style people in that community use when creating documents to share with others. In some cases, these standards may apply to a very broad group of professionals—for example, researchers in many different social sciences use APA style in academic writing. MLA style is commonly used in the humanities, including English classes. In other cases, style guidelines are specific to a particular company or organization. Find a document, such as a newsletter or brochure, that was produced by an organization to which you
belong. (Make sure it is a document you have permission to share.) Review the document and answer the following questions:

- What are the purpose, intended audience, and message of this document?
- How does the writing style function to fulfill the purpose, appeal to a particular audience, and convey a message? Consider elements of style, such as word choice, the use of active or passive voice, sentence length, and sentence structure. If your document includes graphics, consider their effectiveness as well.
- Are there any places where the style is inconsistent?
- Is the writing style of this document effective for achieving the document’s purpose? Why or why not? If it is not effective, explain why.
Chapter 9
Grammar

Part I. Syntax

9.1 Sentence Writing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the components of a basic sentence.
2. Identify the four most serious writing errors.

Imagine you are reading a book for school. You need to find important details that you can use for an assignment. However, when you begin to read, you notice that the book has very little punctuation. Sentences fail to form complete paragraphs and instead form one block of text without clear organization. Most likely, this book would frustrate and confuse you. Without clear and concise sentences, it is difficult to find the information you need.

For both students and professionals, clear communication is important. Whether you are typing an e-mail or writing a report, it is your responsibility to present your thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Writing in complete sentences is one way to ensure that you communicate well. This section covers how to recognize and write basic sentence structures and how to avoid some common writing errors.

Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Subjects
When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are I, he, she, it, you, they, and we.

**Compound Subjects**

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called compound subjects. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

**Prepositional Phrases**

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a preposition with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include in, on, under, near, by, with, and about. A group of words that begin with a preposition is called a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following circled phrases are examples of prepositional phrases.

**EXERCISE 1**

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o’clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the verb. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question what is the subject doing?

Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of be, do, or have. The word can is also used as a helping verb.

Tip
Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

**Subject:** Who or what is the sentence about?

**Verb:** Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

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**EXERCISE 2**

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. ________
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. ________
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. ________
4. The book was filled with notes from class. ________
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. ________
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. ________
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. ________
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces. ________

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**Sentence Structure, Including Fragments and Run-ons**

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

**Sentence Patterns**

Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing.

**Subject–Verb**
Subject–Linking Verb–Noun

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective

Subject–Verb–Adverb

Subject–Verb–Direct Object

When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

In this sentence structure, an indirect object explains to whom or to what the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.

Exercise 3

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use the following lines or your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

1. ____________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________________________

5. ____________________________________________________________

6. ____________________________________________________________

Collaboration: Find an article in a newspaper, a magazine, or online that interests you. Bring it to class or post it online. Then, looking at a classmate’s article, identify one example of each part of a sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO). Please share or post your results.
Fragments

The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

**Fragment:** Children helping in the kitchen.

**Complete sentence:** Children helping in the kitchen *often make a mess.*

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* creates an S-V-N sentence structure.

See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments.

**Fragment:** Told her about the broken vase.

**Complete sentence:** I *told her about the broken vase.*

**Fragment:** The store down on Main Street.

**Complete sentence:** The store down on Main Street *sells music.*

Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive, or a gerund. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

Clauses that start with a dependent word—such as *since, because, without,* or *unless*—are similar to prepositional phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a
fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma.

When you encounter a word ending in -ing in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the -ing verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An -ing verb form used as a noun is called a gerund.

Once you know whether the -ing word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence.

Incorrect: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.
Correct: Taking deep breaths, Saul prepared for his presentation.
Correct: Saul prepared for his presentation. He was taking deep breaths.

Incorrect: Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.
Correct: She was congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.
Correct: Congratulating the entire team, Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb paired with the word to; for example, to run, to write, or to reach. Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

Incorrect: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.
Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes to reach the one thousand mark.
Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. We wanted to reach the one thousand mark.

EXERCISE 4

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and circle the fragments. Then combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.

4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Robert tries to conserve energy whenever possible.

5. You’ll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.

6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

**Fused sentence:** A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

**Comma splice:** We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice. Both errors can easily be fixed.

Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences. Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.

**Run-on:** The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

**Complete sentence:** The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.
When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma.

**Run-on:** The project was put on hold we didn’t have time to slow down, so we kept working.

**Complete sentence:** The project was put on hold; however, we didn’t have time to slow down, so we kept working.

### Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

**Tip**

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so.* Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym **FANBOYS** will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

**Run-on:** The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

**Complete sentence:** The new printer was installed, but no one knew how to use it.

### Dependent Words

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

**Run-on:** We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

**Complete sentence:** Although we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

**Run-on:** Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn’t been used in years.

**Complete sentence:** Cobwebs covered the furniture because the room hadn’t been used in years.

### Exercise 5
A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. Use what you have learned about run-on sentences to correct the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we’re flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn’t have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.

2. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we’d expected to wait to be seated.

3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings’ original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man’s genius.
Use what you have learned so far to identify common sentence errors. Label each sentence as a fragment (F), a run-on sentence (R), or a correct, complete sentence (C) in the space before each. Write corrected sentences on the lines below fragments and run-ons.

1. ____ Being absent hurts a student's grade, he or she should be in class every day.

2. ____ Having been interested in science most of her life, she did well in Biology 101.

3. ____ Hurry with your breakfast, you will miss the bus.

4. ____ Several students had the right answer; however, most of them failed the exam.

5. ____ Several girls expressed concerns about course selections, therefore, changes were made.

6. ____ Jim practiced the violin daily, he wanted to excel in music.

7. ____ The child loved his mother, but he did not want to obey her.

8. ____ I had a severe case of the flu.

9. ____ I had spent the first three days of my illness in bed.
10. Because I was sick of bed and decided I’d lie on the sofa and watch television.

11. Only getting up to take care of the necessities of life.

12. Then I must have fallen asleep.

13. When I was suddenly conscious again.

14. The wind howled outside, the house was damp and chilly, and my fever soared.

15. Then somewhere in the blackness ahead of me, I saw a spot of light.

16. What has happened to the economy, many Americans want the answer to this question.

17. He was late for his appointment, then he forgot to bring his briefcase with him.

18. Voting is a privilege, this privilege should not be taken for granted.


20. Because I was sure that I had died.
21. ______ A friend is always willing to help, friendship is invaluable.

22. ______ Although he was sick, James came to class.

23. ______ Running a temperature between 102 and 107.

24. ______ We were excited about the game, and we won.

25. ______ Be careful with your answer, your grade could be affected.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own.

2. Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.

3. A compound subject contains more than one noun.

4. A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.

5. A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

6. Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting and more complex.

7. Focusing on the six basic sentence patterns will enhance your writing.
8. Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.

9. Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.

10. Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

**Writing Application**

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

1. A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
2. A business letter to a potential employer.
3. A status report about your current project.
4. A job description for your résumé.

**9.2 Coordination and Subordination**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify coordination and subordination in writing.
2. Combine sentences and ideas using coordination.
3. Combine sentences and ideas using subordination.

In this section, we will examine two ways in which we can join sentences with related ideas:

5. Subordination. Joining two related ideas of unequal importance.

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs, and in turn, produces more effective writing.

**Coordination**

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

**Original sentences:** I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week *because* I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm?
to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

**Revised sentence:** I spent my entire paycheck last week, **so** I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck; I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

### Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions are *for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* and *so.* Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Independent Clause</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coordinating Conjunction</strong></th>
<th><strong>Independent Clause</strong></th>
<th><strong>Revised Sentence</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will not be attending the dance.</td>
<td><em>for</em> (indicates a reason or cause)</td>
<td>I have no one to go with.</td>
<td>I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to stay home.</td>
<td><em>and</em> (joins two ideas)</td>
<td>I will complete an essay for class.</td>
<td>I plan to stay home, and I will complete an essay for class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie isn’t going to be at the dance.</td>
<td><em>nor</em> (indicates a negative)</td>
<td>Tom won’t be there either.</td>
<td>Jessie isn’t going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.</td>
<td><em>but</em> (indicates a contrast)</td>
<td>I don’t think many people are going.</td>
<td>The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don’t think many people are going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I might go to the next fundraising event.</td>
<td><em>or</em> (offers an alternative)</td>
<td>I might donate some money to the cause.</td>
<td>I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents are worried that I am antisocial.</td>
<td><em>yet</em> (indicates a reason)</td>
<td>I have many friends at school.</td>
<td>My parents are worried that I am antisocial, yet I have many friends at school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tip**

To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*. Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction in a sentence, a comma should precede it.

**Conjunctive Adverbs**

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon. A conjunctive adverb is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. Read the following sentences:

**Original sentences**: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.  
Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb.  
Now, read the revised sentence:

**Revised sentence**: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.  
The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget’s desire to take part in the next Olympics and her daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Conjunctive Adverb</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>also, furthermore, moreover, besides</td>
<td>Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>similarly, likewise</td>
<td>Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Conjunctive Adverb</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>waste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>instead, however, conversely</td>
<td>Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>namely, certainly, indeed</td>
<td>The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and Effect</td>
<td>accordingly, consequently, hence, thus</td>
<td>I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>finally, next, subsequently, then</td>
<td>Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb. Then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor’s building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.
7. Collaboration
Writing at Work

When writing an essay or a report, it is important that you do not use excessive coordination. Workplace documents should be clear and concise, so only join two clauses that are logically connected and can work together to make one main point. If you repeat the same coordinating conjunction several times in a sentence, you are probably including more than one idea. This may make it difficult for readers to pick out the most important information in each sentence.

Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by merging them into a main clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the main clause to complete its meaning). Coordination allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, and subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction even though.

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (she stopped to help the injured man) that stands as a complete sentence and a dependent clause (even though Tracy would be late for work) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction even though introducing the dependent clause.

Tip
To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main cause, no punctuation is required.

**Subordinating Conjunctions**

A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Subordinating Conjunction</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concession</td>
<td>although, while, though, whereas, even though</td>
<td>Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>if, unless, until</td>
<td>Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>as if, as, though</td>
<td>Everyone in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>where, wherever</td>
<td>Rita is in San Jose where she has several important client meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>because, since, so that, in order that</td>
<td>Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>after, before, while, once, when</td>
<td>After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 2**

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction and then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Jake is going to Mexico. There are beautiful beaches in Mexico.
2. A snowstorm disrupted traffic all over the east coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
3. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.

4. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Ashley marinated the chicken.

5. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Coordination and subordination join two sentences with related ideas.

2. Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas, whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.

3. Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.

4. Subordinate sentences are characterized by the use of a subordinate conjunction.

5. In a subordinate sentence, a comma is used to separate the main clause from the dependent clause if the dependent clause is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

**9.3 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Identify modifiers.
- Learn how to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out what the writer meant to say. A writer’s goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

**Misplaced Modifiers**

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.
Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head that was too large.
Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet that was too large on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person’s head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer’s meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother they call Shadow.
Correct: They bought a kitten they call Shadow for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother’s name is Shadow. That’s because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is kitten.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician with stomach pains.
Correct: The patient with stomach pains was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

Tip
Simple modifiers like only, almost, just, nearly, and barely often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler almost found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.
Repaired: Tyler found almost fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

1. How do you almost find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called “Speed Racer.”
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn’t drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

**Dangling Modifiers**

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, then the modifier is said to dangle.

**Incorrect:** Riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by rapidly.

**Correct:** As Jane was riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

**Incorrect:** Walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

**Correct:** As Jonas was walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

**Correct:** The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was walking home at night.

- In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas.

Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

**Incorrect:** To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

**Correct:** If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

1. In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

**Tip**

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:
1. Look for an -ing modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:

   *Painting for three hours at night,* the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the -ing modifier.)

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

   *Painting for three hours at night,* the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

   After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the following sentence:

   *Painting for three hours at night, Maggie* finally finished the kitchen.

**EXERCISE 2**

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.

2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.

3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.

4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.

5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.

6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.

7. While driving to the veterinarian’s office, the dog nervously whined.

8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.

9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.

10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

**EXERCISE 3**

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song
blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
2. Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
3. There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

**Writing Application**

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it.

Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate’s sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

**9.4 Parallelism**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

6. Identify sentences that are parallel and not parallel.
7. Identify ways to create parallelism in writing.
8. Write and revise sentences using parallelism.

A strong sentence is composed of balanced parts that all have the same structure. In this section, we will examine how to create a balanced sentence structure by using parallelism.

**Using Parallelism**

Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Read the following sentences aloud:
Faulty parallelism: Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Faulty parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (coordination, jeans), but ends with a phrase (to have good eyesight, wearing a suit). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism: Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Correct parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Correct parallelism: Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Tip

A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like to listen to music and talking to friends on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like listening to music and talking to friends on the phone.
The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen, talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

**Faulty parallelism:** This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lowering workers’ wages.

**Correct parallelism:** This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lower workers’ wages.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce, cut*) and a third item that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

**EXERCISE 1**

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar at weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries.

**Collaboration:** Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Creating Parallelism Using Than or As**

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being
compared. Comparisons frequently use the words than or as, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

**Faulty parallelism:** Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than a pool.

**Correct parallelism:** Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than swimming in a pool.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (than) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (swimming) with a noun (a pool). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

**Faulty parallelism:** A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run.

**Correct parallelism:** Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase going for to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

### EXERCISE 2

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using than or as.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim’s opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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### Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

9. either...or
10. not only...but also
11. neither...nor
12. whether...or
13. rather...than
14. both...and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

**Faulty parallelism:** We can neither wait for something to happen nor can we take evasive action.

**Correct parallelism:** We can neither wait for something to happen nor take evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

**Faulty parallelism:** It was both a long movie and poorly written.

**Correct parallelism:** The movie was both long and poorly written.

**Tip**
To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable oration.

Here is a link to text, audio, video, and the music of Martin Luther King’s speech “I Have a Dream”: [http://www.mlkonline.net/dream.html](http://www.mlkonline.net/dream.html).

**Writing at Work**
Speechwriters use parallelism not only within sentences but also throughout paragraphs and beyond. Repeating particular key phrases throughout a speech is an effective way of tying a paragraph together as a cohesive whole and creating a sense of importance. This technique can be adapted to any piece of writing, but it may be especially useful for creating a proposal or other type of persuasive workplace document. Note that the spelling and grammar checker on most word processors will not draw attention to faulty parallelism. When proofreading a document, read it aloud and listen for sentences that sound awkward or poorly phrased.
EXERCISE 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas.
2. Faulty parallelism occurs when elements of a sentence are not balanced, causing the sentence to sound clunky and awkward.
3. Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using than or as; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

9.5 Sentence Variety

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

15. Identify ways to vary sentence structure.
16. Write and revise sentence structure at the beginning of sentences.
17. Write and revise sentence structure by connecting ideas.

Have you ever ordered a dish in a restaurant and been not happy with its taste, even though it contained most of your favorite ingredients? Just as a meal might lack the finishing touches needed to spice it up, so too might a paragraph contain all the basic components but still lack the stylistic finesse
required to engage a reader. Sometimes writers have a tendency to reuse the same sentence pattern throughout their writing. Like any repetitive task, reading text that contains too many sentences with the same length and structure can become monotonous and boring. Experienced writers mix it up by using an assortment of sentence patterns, rhythms, and lengths.

This section discusses how to introduce sentence variety into writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. You can use these techniques when revising a paper to bring life and rhythm to your work. They will also make reading your work more enjoyable.

**Incorporating Sentence Variety**

Experienced writers incorporate sentence variety into their writing by varying sentence style and structure. Using a mixture of different sentence structures reduces repetition and adds emphasis to important points in the text. Read the following example:

During my time in office I have achieved several goals. I have helped increase funding for local schools. I have reduced crime rates in the neighborhood. I have encouraged young people to get involved in their community. My competitor argues that she is the better choice in the upcoming election. I argue that it is ridiculous to fix something that isn’t broken. If you reelect me this year, I promise to continue to serve this community.

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length and style. Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text more clear for the reader, but the result is a choppy, unsophisticated paragraph that does not grab the audience’s attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

During my time in office, I have helped increase funding for local schools, reduced crime rates in the neighborhood, and encouraged young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn’t broken? If you reelect me this year, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don’t take a chance on an unknown contender; vote for the proven success.
Notice how introducing a short rhetorical question among the longer sentences in the paragraph is an effective means of keeping the reader’s attention. In the revised version, the writer combines the choppy sentences at the beginning into one longer sentence, which adds rhythm and interest to the paragraph.

Tip

Effective writers often implement the “rule of three,” which is basically the thought that things that contain three elements are more memorable and more satisfying to readers than any other number. Try to use a series of three when providing examples, grouping adjectives, or generating a list.

**EXERCISE 1**

Combine each set of simple sentences into a compound or a complex sentence. Write the combined sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.

2. Shakespeare’s writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.

3. Gay marriage is now legal in six states. Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine all permit same-sex marriage. Other states are likely to follow their example.

4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.

5. Mitch Bancroft is a famous writer. He also serves as a governor on the local school board. Mitch’s two children attend the school.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences**

Read the following sentences and consider what they all have in common:

John and Amanda will be analyzing this week’s financial report.

The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young boy.

Students rarely come to the exam adequately prepared.
If you are having trouble figuring out why these sentences are similar, try underlining the subject in each. You will notice that the subject is positioned at the beginning of each sentence—*John and Amanda*, *the car*, *students*. Since the subject-verb-object pattern is the simplest sentence structure, many writers tend to overuse this technique, which can result in repetitive paragraphs with little sentence variety.

**Starting a Sentence with an Adverb**

One technique you can use so as to avoid beginning a sentence with the subject is to use an adverb. An adverb is a word that describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb and often ends in *-ly*. Examples of adverbs include *quickly*, *softly*, *quietly*, *angrily*, and *timidly*. Read the following sentences:

She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

_Slowly, she turned the corner and peered into the murky basement._

In the second sentence, the adverb *slowly* is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If you read the two sentences aloud, you will notice that moving the adverb changes the rhythm of the sentence and slightly alters its meaning. The second sentence emphasizes how the subject moves—slowly—creating a buildup of tension. This technique is effective in fictional writing.

Note that an adverb used at the beginning of a sentence is usually followed by a comma. A comma indicates that the reader should pause briefly, which creates a useful rhetorical device. Read the following sentences aloud and consider the effect of pausing after the adverb:

_Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog’s reaction.

_Solemnly, the policeman approached the mayor and placed him under arrest._

_Suddenly, he slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street._

In an academic essay, moving an adverb to the beginning of a sentence serves to vary the rhythm of a paragraph and increase sentence variety.

**Tip**

Adverbs of time—adverbs that indicate *when* an action takes place—do not always require a comma when used at the beginning of a sentence. Adverbs of time include words such as *yesterday*, *today*, *later*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *now*.
On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences by moving the adverbs to the beginning.

1. The red truck sped furiously past the camper van, blaring its horn.
2. Jeff snatched at the bread hungrily, polishing off three slices in under a minute.
3. Underage drinking typically results from peer pressure and lack of parental attention.
4. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.
5. Mayor Johnson privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Starting a Sentence with a Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Prepositional phrases contain a preposition (a word that specifies place, direction, or time) and an object of the preposition (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition).

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Read the following sentence:

The terrified child hid **underneath the table**.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase is *underneath the table*. The preposition *underneath* relates to the object that follows the preposition—*the table*. Adjectives may be placed between the preposition and the object in a prepositional phrase.

The terrified child hid **underneath the heavy wooden table**.

Some prepositional phrases can be moved to the beginning of a sentence in order to create variety in a piece of writing. Look at the following revised sentence:

**Underneath the heavy wooden table**, the terrified child hid.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject—the terrified child—to the location in which the child is hiding. Words that are placed at the beginning or end of a sentence generally receive the greatest emphasis. Take a look at the following examples. The prepositional phrase is in bold in each:

The bandaged man waited **in the doctor’s office**.

**In the doctor’s office**, the bandaged man waited.

My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m.**

**At 6:45 a.m.**, my train leaves the station.

Teenagers exchange drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.

**Under the railway bridge**, teenagers exchange drugs and money.

Prepositional phrases are useful in any type of writing.

**Unmovable Prepositional Phrases**

Not all prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Read the following sentence:

I would like a chocolate sundae **without whipped cream**.

In this sentence, **without whipped cream** is the prepositional phrase. Because it describes the chocolate sundae, it cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence. “Without whipped cream I would like a
“chocolate sundae” does not make as much (if any) sense. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

**Overuse of Prepositional Phrases**

Experienced writers often include more than one prepositional phrase in a sentence; however, it is important not to overload your writing. Using too many modifiers in a paragraph may create an unintentionally comical effect as the following example shows:

The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard, where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

A sentence is not necessarily effective just because it is long and complex. If your sentence appears cluttered with prepositional phrases, divide it into two shorter sentences. The previous sentence is far more effective when written as two simpler sentences:

The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

**Writing at Work**

The overuse of prepositional phrases often occurs when our thoughts are jumbled and we are unsure how concepts or ideas relate to one another. If you are preparing a report or a proposal, take the time to organize your thoughts in an outline before writing a rough draft. Read the draft aloud, either to yourself or to a colleague, and identify areas that are rambling or unclear. If you notice that a particular part of your report contains several sentences over twenty words, you should double check that particular section to make certain that it is coherent and does not contain unnecessary prepositional phrases. Reading aloud sometimes helps detect unclear and wordy sentences. You can also ask a colleague to paraphrase your main points to ensure that the meaning is clear.

**Starting a Sentence by Inverting Subject and Verb**
As we noted earlier, most writers follow the subject-verb-object sentence structure. In an inverted sentence, the order is reversed so that the subject follows the verb. Read the following sentence pairs:

18. A truck was parked in the driveway.
19. Parked in the driveway was a truck.
20. A copy of the file is attached.
21. Attached is a copy of the file.

Notice how the second sentence in each pair places more emphasis on the subject—a truck in the first example and the file in the second. This technique is useful for drawing the reader’s attention to your primary area of focus.

**EXERCISE 3**

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences as inverted sentences.

1. Teresa will never attempt to run another marathon.
2. A detailed job description is enclosed with this letter.
3. Bathroom facilities are across the hall to the left of the water cooler.
4. The well-dressed stranger stumbled through the doorway.
5. My colleagues remain unconvinced about the proposed merger.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety**

Reviewing and rewriting the beginning of sentences is a good way of introducing sentence variety into your writing. Another useful technique is to connect two sentences using a modifier, a relative clause, or an appositive. This section examines how to connect ideas across several sentences in order to increase sentence variety and improve writing.
Joining Ideas Using an -ing Modifier

Sometimes it is possible to combine two sentences by converting one of them into a modifier using the -ing verb form—singing, dancing, swimming. A modifier is a word or phrase that qualifies the meaning of another element in the sentence. Read the following example:

**Original sentences:** Steve checked the computer system. He discovered a virus.

**Revised sentence:** Checking the computer system, Steve discovered a virus.

To connect two sentences using an -ing modifier, add -ing to one of the verbs in the sentences (checking) and delete the subject (Steve). Use a comma to separate the modifier from the subject of the sentence. It is important to make sure that the main idea in your revised sentence is contained in the main clause, not in the modifier. In this example, the main idea is that Steve discovered a virus, not that he checked the computer system.

In the following example, an -ing modifier indicates that two actions are occurring at the same time:

22. Noticing the police car, she shifted gears and slowed down.
This means that she slowed down at the same time she noticed the police car.

23. Barking loudly, the dog ran across the driveway.
This means that the dog barked as it ran across the driveway.

You can add an -ing modifier to the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on which fits best.

**Beginning:** Conducting a survey among her friends, Amanda found that few were happy in their jobs.

**End:** Maria filed the final report, meeting her deadline.

Joining Ideas Using an -ed Modifier

Some sentences can be combined using an -ed verb form—stopped, finished, played. To use this method, one of the sentences must contain a form of be as a helping verb in addition to the -ed verb form. Take a look at the following example:

**Original sentences:** The Jones family was delayed by a traffic jam. They arrived several hours after the party started.
Revised sentence: Delayed by a traffic jam, the Jones family arrived several hours after the party started.

In the original version, *was* acts as a helping verb—it has no meaning by itself, but it serves a grammatical function by placing the main verb (*delayed*) in the perfect tense.

To connect two sentences using an *-ed* modifier, drop the helping verb (*was*) and the subject (*the Jones family*) from the sentence with an *-ed* verb form. This forms a modifying phrase (*delayed by a traffic jam*) that can be added to the beginning or end of the other sentence according to which fits best. As with the *-ing* modifier, be careful to place the word that the phrase modifies immediately after the phrase in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using *-ing* or *-*ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences.

**Joining Ideas Using a Relative Clause**

Another technique that writers use to combine sentences is to join them using a relative clause. A relative clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and describes a noun. Relative clauses function as adjectives by answering questions such as *which one?* or *what kind?* Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun, such as *who*, *which*, *where*, *why*, or *when*. Read the following examples:

Original sentences: The managing director is visiting the company next week. He lives in Seattle.

Revised sentence: The managing director, who lives in Seattle, is visiting the company next week.

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*he*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Seattle*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*). Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that he is visiting the company.

Revised sentence: The managing director, who is visiting the company next week, lives in Seattle.

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence.

Tip
To check the punctuation of relative clauses, assess whether or not the clause can be taken out of the sentence without changing its meaning. If the relative clause is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, it should be placed in commas. If the relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it does not require commas around it.

**Joining Ideas Using an Appositive**

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

**Original sentences:** Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930. He is Colonel Sanders or “the Colonel.”

**Revised sentence:** Harland Sanders, “the Colonel,” began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence, “the Colonel” is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers:

**Appositive after noun:** Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

**Appositive before noun:** A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or by a set of commas.

**EXERCISE 4**

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using the techniques you have learned in this section.

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways.

2. The Pacific Ocean is the world’s largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.

3. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
4. Ashley introduced her colleague Dan to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.

5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In addition to varying sentence structure, consider varying the types of sentences you are using in a report or other workplace document. Most sentences are declarative, but a carefully placed question, exclamation, or command can pique colleagues’ interest, even if the subject material is fairly dry. Imagine that you are writing a budget analysis. Beginning your report with a rhetorical question, such as “Where is our money going?” or “How can we increase sales?” encourages people to continue reading to find out the answers. Although they should be used sparingly in academic and professional writing, questions or commands are effective rhetorical devices.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Sentence variety reduces repetition in a piece of writing and adds emphasis to important points in the text.

2. Sentence variety can be introduced to the beginning of sentences by starting a sentence with an adverb, starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase, or by inverting the subject and verb.

3. Combine ideas, using modifiers, relative clauses, or appositives, to achieve sentence variety.

Part II. Punctuation

9.6 Commas

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the uses of commas.
- Correctly use commas in sentences.

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can
be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

1. **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
2. **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
3. **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
4. **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
5. **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
6. **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

### Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

### EXERCISE 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.

7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.

8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word and before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

We’ll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.
The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word and does not always need to be before the last adjective.

It was a bright, windy, clear day.
Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

EXERCISE 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.

2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.

3. We’ll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.

5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.

6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

**Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences**

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for, and, or but.*

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

**EXERCISE 3**

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.
7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

8. I’ve got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.

9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let’s ask Leonardo for his help.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

**EXERCISE 4**

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.

2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex handed the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Collaboration:
Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters**

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.
Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person’s name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,
I would like more information about your job posting.
Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf
Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,
Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
Sincerely,
Jack Fromont

**EXERCISE 5**

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
New Castle Maine 90342
Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you
Alexa

**EXERCISE 6**
On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.

2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.

3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.

4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.

2. Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.

3. A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.

4. A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word and is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.

5. A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
6. Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.

7. Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

8. When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.

9. When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.

10. When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

9.7 Semicolons

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the uses of semicolons.

2. Properly use semicolons in sentences.

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

**Correct:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

**Choppy:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

**Incorrect:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.
In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

**Semicolons to Join Items in a List**

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

**Correct:** The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

**Incorrect:** The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

**Tip**

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as and, or, and but.

**EXERCISE 1**

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let’s go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
2. Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

9.8 Colons

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify the uses of colons.
2. Properly use colons in sentences.

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Dear Hiring Manager:

To: Human Resources

From: Deanna Dean

**Colons to Introduce a List**

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

**Colons to Introduce a Quote**

You can use a colon to introduce a quote.

Mark Twain said it best: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than forty words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than forty words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

My father always loved Mark Twain’s words:

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.
Tip
Long quotations, which are forty words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like such as or for example.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.
Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip
Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.
Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: “To thine own self be true.”
Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother’s cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.
Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

EXERCISE 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write OK.

1. Don’t give up you never know what tomorrow brings.
2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

7. The boss’s message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.

8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking “We should have stayed home.”

10. Trust me I have done this before.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.

2. Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

**9.9 Quotes**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Identify the uses of quotes.
- Correctly use quotes in sentences.
Quotation marks (" ") set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

**Direct Quotations**

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

**Direct quotation:** Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

**Indirect quotation:** Carly said that she would never go back there.

**Writing at Work**

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

1. The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
2. The client said, “He thought our manuscript was garbage.”

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word “garbage”? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client’s words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is “he” in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!
Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

**Beginning:** Madison said, “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

**Middle:** “Let’s stop at the farmers market,” Madison said, “to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

**End:** “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner,” Madison said.

**Speaker not identified:** “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed after commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

**Question is part of quoted text:** The new employee asked, “When is lunch?”

**Question is not part of quoted text:** Did you hear her say you were “the next Picasso”?

**Exclamation is part of quoted text:** My supervisor beamed, “Thanks for all of your hard work!”

**Exclamation is not part of quoted text:** He said I “single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars”!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to show a quotation within a quotation.

Theresa said, “I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed.’”

“When you say, ‘I can’t help it,’ what exactly does that mean?”

“The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’”

Titles
Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

“Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The New York Times has been in publication since 1851.

**Writing at Work**

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

**EXERCISE 1**

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

1. Yasmin said, I don’t feel like cooking. Let’s go out to eat.
   
2. Where should we go? said Russell.
   
3. Yasmin said it didn’t matter to her.
   
4. I know, said Russell, let’s go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.
   
5. Perfect! said Yasmin.
   
6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.
   
7. I didn’t! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?
8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

10. That’s the one said Russell.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
2. Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
3. Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

9.10 Apostrophes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the uses of apostrophes.
2. Correctly use apostrophes in sentences.

An apostrophe (’) is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add ‘s.

Jen’s dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog’s leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess’s sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s (’s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe (‘). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s (’s).

Plural noun that ends in s: The drummers’ sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.
Plural noun that does not end in s: The people’s votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

I do not like ice cream.
I don’t like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don’t. The apostrophe shows where the o in not has been left out.

We will see you later.
We’ll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aren’t</th>
<th>are not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can’t</td>
<td>cannot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doesn’t</td>
<td>does not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t</td>
<td>do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isn’t</td>
<td>is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he’ll</td>
<td>he will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll</td>
<td>I will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she’ll</td>
<td>she will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tip

Be careful not to confuse it’s with its. It’s is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun.

It’s cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words it is in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it’s.

EXERCISE 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. “What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes.”
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Use apostrophes to show possession. Add ’s to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s.
   Add ‘ to plural nouns that end in s.
2. Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

9.11 Parentheses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the uses of parentheses.
2. Properly use parentheses in sentences.

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

EXERCISE 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don’t like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.
2. Parentheses are always used in pairs.

9.12 Dashes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1. Identify the uses of dashes.
2. Correctly use dashes in sentences.

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.
Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

**EXERCISE 1**

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don’t know I hadn’t even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Dashes indicate a pause in text.
2. Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

**9.13 Hyphens**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Identify the uses of hyphens.
- Properly use hyphens in sentences.

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

**Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One**
Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

**Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line**

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

My supervisor was concerned that the team meeting would conflict with the client meeting.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
2. Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

**Part III. Diction**

**9.14 Pronouns**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify pronouns and their antecedents.
2. Use pronouns and their antecedents correctly.

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A*. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.
A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.
   - *She* refers to *Lani*.
   - *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.
   - *Him* refers to *Jeremy*.
   - *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him*.

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.
   - *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.
   - *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

**Agreement in Number**

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

**Agreement in Person**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Singular Pronouns</strong></th>
<th><strong>Plural Pronouns</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Person</strong></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Person</strong></td>
<td>You</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Person</strong></td>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

**EXERCISE 1**

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.
Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

**Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement**

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Indefinite Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Collective Nouns**

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular.
### Common Collective Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>faculty</th>
<th>public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>government</td>
<td>society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>committee</td>
<td>group</td>
<td>team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Jury</td>
<td>tribe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EXERCISE 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste ________ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, ________ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did ________ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving ________ a smile in return.
5. My family has ________ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train ________ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward ________.
8. My mother’s singing group has ________ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer ________ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost ________ way in the storm.

### Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular Pronouns</th>
<th>Plural Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject</strong></td>
<td><strong>Object</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jane moved *it* to the corner.

**Tip**

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

Near *them*, the children played.

My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near whom?* And *between whom?*

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

**Incorrect:** *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

**Correct:** *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

**Correct:** Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

**Tip**
Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

**Incorrect:** I have a good feeling about *Janice and I.*

**Correct:** I have a good feeling about *Janice and me.*

**Tip**

It is correct to write *Janice and me,* as opposed to *me and Janice.* Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

**Writing at Work**

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

**EXERCISE 3**

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
   
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
   
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.
   
4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.
5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.

6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.

7. New Year’s Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.

8. You exercise much more often than me.

9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.

10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

**Who versus Whom**

*Who* or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

*Who* won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

*Whom* did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

**Tip**

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

*Who/Whom* do I consider my best friend?
Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.

**EXERCISE 4**

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. ________ hit the home run?
2. I remember ________ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To ________ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea ________ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. ________ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With ________ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew ________ the famous actor was.
8. ________ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From ________ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew ________ ate the cake mom was saving.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
2. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
3. Collective nouns are usually singular.
4. Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
5. Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
7. *Whom* serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.
Writing Application

Write about what makes an ideal marriage or long-term relationship. Provide specific details to back up your assertions. After you have written a few paragraphs, go back and proofread your paper for correct pronoun usage.

9.15 Adjectives and Adverbs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify adjectives and adverbs.
2. Use adjectives and adverbs correctly.

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life. An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as which one, what kind, or how many?

1. The green sweater belongs to Iris.
2. She looks beautiful.

1. In sentence 1, the adjective green describes the noun sweater.
2. In sentence 2, the adjective beautiful describes the pronoun she.

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in -ly. They answer questions such as how, to what extent, why, when, and where.

3. Bertrand sings horribly.
4. My sociology instructor is extremely wise.
5. He threw the ball very accurately.

1. In sentence 3, horribly describes the verb sings. How does Bertrand sing? He sings horribly.
2. In sentence 4, extremely describes the adjective wise. How wise is the instructor? Extremely wise.
3. In sentence 5, very describes the adverb accurately. How accurately did he throw the ball? Very accurately.

EXERCISE 1

Complete the following sentences by adding the correct adjective or adverb. Identify the word as an adjective or an adverb (Adj, Adv).

1. Frederick ________ choked on the piece of chicken when he saw Margaret walk through the door.
2. His _______ eyes looked at everyone and everything as if they were specimens in a biology lab.
3. Despite her pessimistic views on life, Lauren believes that most people have _______ hearts.
4. Although Stefan took the criticism ________, he remained calm.
5. The child developed a _______ imagination because he read a lot of books.
6. Madeleine spoke _______ while she was visiting her grandmother in the hospital.
7. Hector’s most _______ possession was his father’s bass guitar from the 1970s.
8. My definition of a _______ afternoon is walking to the park on a beautiful day, spreading out my
   blanket, and losing myself in a good book.
9. She _______ eyed her new coworker and wondered if he was single.
10. At the party, Denise _______ devoured two pieces of pepperoni pizza and a several slices of ripe
    watermelon.

**Comparative versus Superlative**

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is thin.
2. Steven is thinner than Jorge.
   1. Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective thin.
   2. Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is thinner. So thinner is the comparative
      form of thin.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add -er to it to form the comparative. For
   example, big, fast, and short would become bigger, faster, and shorter in the comparative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word more in front of it to form
   the comparative. For example, happily, comfortable, and jealous would become more happily, more
   comfortable, and more jealous in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

- Jackie is the loudest cheerleader on the squad.
- Kenyatta was voted the most confident student by her graduating class.
1. Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just louder than one other person, but she is the loudest of all the cheerleaders on the squad.

2. Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the most confident student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add -est to form the superlative. For example, big, fast, and short would become biggest, fastest, and shortest in the superlative form.

2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word most in front of it. For example, happily, comfortable, and jealous would become most happily, most comfortable, and most jealous in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in -y, change the -y to an -i and add -est. For example, happy would change to happiest in the superlative form; healthy would change to healthiest.

EXERCISE 2

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko’s treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Collaboration:

Share and compare your answers with a classmate.

Irregular Words: Good, Well, Bad, and Badly

Good, well, bad, and badly are often used incorrectly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjective</strong></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adverb</strong></td>
<td>Well</td>
<td>Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjective</strong></td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adverb</strong></td>
<td>Badly</td>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good versus Well**

*Good* is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

Incorrect: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.

Correct: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

*Well* is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

Incorrect: Cecilia’s team received a *well* score.

Correct: Cecilia’s team received a *good* score.

**Bad versus Badly**

*Bad* is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

Incorrect: I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn’t study.

Correct: I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn’t study.

*Badly* is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

Incorrect: The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.

Correct: The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.
**Better and Worse**

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.

The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

**Best and Worst**

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.

Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

**Tip**

Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

**EXERCISE 3**

Write *good*, *well*, *bad*, or *badly* to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Donna always felt _______ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a _______ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves _______ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was _______ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking _______ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very _______ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son’s math teacher went very _______.
8. Juan has a _______ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a _______ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She _______ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

**EXERCISE 4**
Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is ________ (good) than my last one.
2. Tanaya likes country music ________ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides ________ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the ________ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played ________ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Tracey plays guitar ________ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the ________ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
8. The deforestation in the Amazon is ________ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are ________ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the ________ (good) types of books.

Writing at Work

The irregular words good, well, bad, and badly are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms better, best, worse, and worst. You may not hear the difference between worse and worst, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Adjectives describe a noun or a pronoun.
2. Adverbs describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb.
3. Most adverbs are formed by adding -ly to an adjective.
4. Comparative adjectives and adverbs compare two persons or things.
5. Superlative adjectives or adverbs compare more than two persons or things.
6. The adjectives good and bad and the adverbs well and badly are unique in their comparative and superlative forms and require special attention.

Writing Application
Using the exercises as a guide, write your own ten-sentence quiz for your classmate(s) using the concepts covered in this section. Try to include two questions from each subsection in your quiz. Exchange papers and see whether you can get a perfect score.

9.16 Verb Tense

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Use the correct regular verb tense in basic sentences.
- Use the correct irregular verb tense in basic sentences.

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might judge you harshly. Mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression.

**Regular Verbs**

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add -ed or -d to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate

1. an action or state of being in the present,
2. an action or state of being in the past,
3. an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as be and have, also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

**EXERCISE 1**

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.
1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.

2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather events in American history.

3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.

4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.

5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.

6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.

7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.

8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.

9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.

10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).

11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

**Irregular Verbs**

The past tense of irregular verbs is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow.

**Tip**

The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Simple Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>was, were</td>
<td>lose</td>
<td>Lost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simple Present</td>
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<td>Simple Present</td>
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<td>tear</td>
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<td>tell</td>
<td>Told</td>
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<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>think</td>
<td>Thought</td>
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</table>
EXERCISE 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (teached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year’s Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him “Little Hector.”
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

EXERCISE 3

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)

### Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

**Tip**

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses.

If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

### Exercise 4

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a “lord,” and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants’ families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant’s day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

### Key Takeaways

1. Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
2. Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
3. Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
4. Using consistent verb tense is a key element to effective writing.

**Writing Application**

Tell a family story. You likely have several family stories to choose from, but pick the one that you find most interesting to write about. Use as many details as you can in the telling. As you write and proofread, make sure your all your verbs are correct and the tenses are consistent.

### 9.17 Subject-Verb Agreement

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Define subject-verb agreement.
- Identify common errors in subject-verb agreement.

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

**Agreement**

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

1. **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
2. **Person.** All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.
3. **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms.
4. **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.
Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

**Regular Verbs**

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
<th>Plural Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Person</strong></td>
<td>I live.</td>
<td>We live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Person</strong></td>
<td>You live.</td>
<td>You live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Person</strong></td>
<td>He/She/It lives.</td>
<td>They live.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tip**

Add an -es to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in -sh, -x, -ch, and -s. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

In the singular form, the pronoun *you* refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun *you* refers to a group of people, such as a team.

**Tip**

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an -s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

**Exercise 1**

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

1. I *(brush/brushes)* my teeth twice a day.
2. You *(wear/wears)* the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He *(kick/kicks)* the soccer ball into the goal.
4. She (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

**Irregular Verbs**

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

**Be**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I am.</td>
<td>We are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You are.</td>
<td>You are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/She/It is.</td>
<td>They are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Have**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
<th>Plural Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I have.</td>
<td>We have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular Form</td>
<td>Plural Form</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Second Person</strong></td>
<td>You have.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>You have.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Third Person</strong></td>
<td>He/She/It has.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>They have.</td>
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</table>

**Do**

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<th>Singular Form</th>
<th>Plural Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Person</strong></td>
<td>I do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We do.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Second Person</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>You do.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Third Person</strong></td>
<td>He/She/It does.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>They do.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 2**

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I ________ sure that you will succeed.
2. They ________ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He ________ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We ________ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She ________ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You ________ not know what you are talking about.
7. You ________ all going to pass this class.
8. She ________ not going to like that.
9. It ________ appear to be the right size.
10. They ________ ready to take this job seriously.
Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when
1. a sentence contains a compound subject;
2. the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
3. the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as anyone or everyone;
4. the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as team or organization;
5. the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions and, or, or nor. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with and take a plural verb form.
Compounds subjects combined with or and nor are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Tip

If you can substitute the word they for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.
If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

**Indefinite Pronouns**

When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form. However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb</th>
<th>Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anybody, anyone, anything</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everybody, everyone, everything</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nobody, no one, nothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somebody, someone, something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*.

Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.
Collective Nouns

Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with here or there, the subject follows the verb. If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with here or there; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (who, what, where, when, why, or how) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

EXERCISE 3

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the word OK on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

   ________________________________________________________________________

2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

   ________________________________________________________________________
3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

4. My family are moving to California.

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

7. Which room is bigger?

8. When are the movie going to start?

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

**EXERCISE 4**

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other
details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I look forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
2. A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
3. Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are to be, to have, and to do.
4. A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words and, or, or nor.
5. In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
6. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form.
7. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
8. In sentences that begin with here and there, the subject follows the verb.
9. In questions, the subject follows the verb.

Writing Application

Use your knowledge of subject-verb agreement to write one of the following:

- An advertisement for a potential company
- A memo to all employees of a particular company
- A cover letter describing your qualifications to a potential employer

Be sure to include at least the following:

1. One collective noun
2. One irregular verb
3. One question
9.18 Word Choice

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the reasons why using a dictionary and thesaurus is important when writing.
- Identify how to use proper connotations.
- Identify how to avoid using slang, clichés, and overly general words in your writing.

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries. Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.
• **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceding information you can identify:

**myth, mith, n.** [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth•ic, myth•i•cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms and antonyms. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly.

**precocious adj,** *She's such a precocious little girl!*: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

*Ant.* slow, backward, stupid.

### Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

**Scrawny**

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a *scrawny* child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word *scrawny* may have a negative connotation in the readers’ minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

**Skinny**

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
• **Word used in a sentence:** Skinny jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.

• **Connotation:** (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word *skinny*.

**Lean**

1. **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.

2. **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a lean figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.

3. **Connotation:** (Neutral) In this sentence, *lean* has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word *scrawny*, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word *skinny*. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

---

**EXERCISE 1**

In each of the following items, you will find words with similar denotions. Identify the words’ connotations as positive, negative, or neutral.

1. curious, nosy, interested
2. lazy, relaxed, slow
3. courageous, foolhardy, assured
4. new, newfangled, modern
5. mansion, shack, residence
6. spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
7. giggle, laugh, cackle
8. boring, routine, prosaic
9. noted, notorious, famous
10. assertive, confident, pushy

---

**Avoiding Slang**
Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

**Writing at Work**

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture has desensitized many of us to slang. In certain situations, using slang at work may not be problematic, but keep in mind that words can have a powerful effect. Slang in professional e-mails or during meetings may convey the wrong message or even mistakenly offend someone.

---

**EXERCISE 2**

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying “like” and “um,” and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I’ve been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don’t enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I’m surprised that people didn’t boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

---

**Avoiding Clichés**

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.
1. **Clichéd:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.

2. **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.

3. **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

**Tip**

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

**EXERCISE 3**

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family’s dirty laundry.

2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.

3. Mr. Muller was at his wit’s end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.

4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.

5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.

6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.

7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.

8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, “Time sure does fly when you are having fun!”

9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.

10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

**Avoiding Overly General Words**

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring yours words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.
• **General:** My new puppy is cute.
• **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

1. **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
2. **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

---

**EXERCISE 4**

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo’s essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

---

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
2. Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
3. Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.

**Writing Application**

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school. Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words and rewrite them using stronger language.

---

**9.19 Synonyms and Antonyms**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
1. Recognize how synonyms improve writing.
2. Identify common antonyms to increase your vocabulary.

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

**Synonyms**

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an “easy task” or a “simple task” because easy and simple are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a “large city” or a “metropolis” because city and metropolis are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words boring and insipid may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word insipid evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than boring.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

**Writing at Work**

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word pay, salary, or hourly wage. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

**EXERCISE 1**

Replace the underlined words in the paragraph with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.
When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one’s dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one’s vision. The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi’s career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**EXERCISE 2**

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence
Collaboration:
Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Antonyms**

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Antonym</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Antonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>frequent</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>harmful</td>
<td>harmless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td>Inaccurate</td>
<td>horizontal</td>
<td>Vertical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantage</td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>imitation</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>inhabited</td>
<td>uninhabited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td>Scarce</td>
<td>inferior</td>
<td>superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>intentional</td>
<td>accidental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attractive</td>
<td>Repulsive</td>
<td>justice</td>
<td>injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow</td>
<td>Lend</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bravery</td>
<td>Cowardice</td>
<td>landlord</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create</td>
<td>destroy, demolish</td>
<td>likely</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold</td>
<td>timid, meek</td>
<td>minority</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable</td>
<td>Incapable</td>
<td>miser</td>
<td>spendthrift</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tip
Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

EXERCISE 3
Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!

6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.

7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.

8. Maria thinks elephants that live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.

9. The teacher filled her students’ minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.

10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.

2. Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.

3. Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.

4. Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

**Writing Application**

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

**9.20 Prefixes and Suffixes**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify the meanings of common prefixes.

2. Become familiar with common suffix rules.

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words.

Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

**Prefixes**
A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning.

**Tip**

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is **not** to add letters or leave out any letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dis</td>
<td>not, opposite of</td>
<td>dis + satisfied = dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mis</td>
<td>Wrongly</td>
<td>mis + spell = misspell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>un + acceptable = unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re</td>
<td>Again</td>
<td>re + election = reelection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inter</td>
<td>Between</td>
<td>inter + related = interrelated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>pre + pay = prepay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>non + sense = nonsense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>super</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>super + script = superscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sub</td>
<td>Under</td>
<td>sub + merge = submerge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti</td>
<td>against, opposing</td>
<td>anti + bacterial = antibacterial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper.

At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue!
I forgot that he was color-blind. Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**EXERCISE 2**

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _______ comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _______ matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _______ glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _______ aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child’s _______ standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _______ natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _______ locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _______ act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _______ cautions about watching my step.
10. A _______ combatant is another word for civilian.

**Suffixes**

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

**Rule 1**

When adding the suffixes -ness and -ly to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

**Examples:**

- dark + ness = darkness
- scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1
When the word ends in y, change the y to i before adding -ness and -ly.

**Examples:**
- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

**Rule 2**
When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent e in the root word.

**Examples:**
- care + ing = caring
- use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2
When the word ends in ce or ge, keep the silent e if the suffix begins with a or o.

**Examples:**
- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

**Rule 3**
When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent e in the original word.

**Examples:**
- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

Exceptions to Rule 3

**Examples:**
- true + ly = truly
- argue + ment = argument

**Rule 4**
When the word ends in a consonant plus y, change the y to i before any suffix not beginning with i.

**Examples:**
- sunny + er = sunnier
- hurry + ing = hurrying
**Rule 5**

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

**Examples:**

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)
- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)
- prefer + ed = preferred

**EXERCISE 3**

On your own sheet of paper, write correctly the forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word’s meaning.
2. A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word’s meaning.
3. Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.
Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing one of your life goals. Include five words with prefixes and five words with suffixes. Exchange papers with a classmate and circle the prefixes and suffixes in your classmate’s paper. Correct each prefix or suffix that is spelled incorrectly.

9.21 Using Context Clues

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Identify the different types of context clues.
• Practice using context clues while reading.

Context clues are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

1. Brief definition or restatement
2. Synonyms and antonyms
3. Examples

Brief Definition or Restatement

Sometimes a text directly states the definition or a restatement of the unknown word. The brief definition or restatement is signaled by a word or a punctuation mark. Consider the following example:

If you visit Alaska, you will likely see many glaciers, or slow moving masses of ice.

In this sentence, the word glaciers is defined by the phrase that follows the signal word or, which is slow moving masses of ice.

In other instances, the text may restate the meaning of the word in a different way, by using punctuation as a signal. Look at the following example:

Marina was indignant—fuming mad—when she discovered her brother had left for the party without her.
Although *fuming mad* is not a formal definition of the word *indignant*, it does serve to define it. These two examples use signals—the word *or* and the punctuation dashes—to indicate the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Other signals to look for are the words *is, as, means, known as,* and *refers to.*

**Synonyms and Antonyms**

Sometimes a text gives a synonym of the unknown word to signal the meaning of the unfamiliar word:

When you interpret an image, you actively question and examine what the image connotes and suggests.

In this sentence the word *suggests* is a synonym of the word *connotes.* The word *and* sometimes signals synonyms.

Likewise, the word *but* may signal a contrast, which can help you define a word by its antonym.

I abhor clothes shopping, but I adore grocery shopping.

The word *abhorr* is contrasted with its opposite: *adore.* From this context, the reader can guess that *abhorr* means to dislike greatly.

**Examples**

Sometimes a text will give you an example of the word that sheds light on its meaning:

I knew Mark’s ailurophobia was in full force because he began trembling and stuttering when he saw my cat, Ludwig, slink out from under the bed.

Although *ailurophobia* is an unknown word, the sentence gives an example of its effects. Based on this example, a reader could confidently surmise that the word means a fear of cats.

**Tip**

Look for signal words like *such as, for instance,* and *for example.* These words signal that a word’s meaning may be revealed through an example.

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**EXERCISE 1**

Identify the context clue that helps define the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the context clue on your own sheet of paper.
1. Lucinda is very adroit on the balance beam, but Constance is rather clumsy.
2. I saw the entomologist, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.
3. Lance’s comments about politics were irrelevant and meaningless to the botanist’s lecture on plant reproduction.
4. Before I left for my trip to the Czech Republic, I listened to my mother’s sage advice and made a copy of my passport.
5. His rancor, or hatred, for socializing resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.
6. Martin was mortified, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.
7. The petulant four-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.
8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with several conundrums, or riddles, to solve.
9. Most Americans are omnivores, people that eat both plants and animals.
10. Elena is effervescent, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

**EXERCISE 2**

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

Maggie was a precocious child to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents were flabbergasted—utterly blown away—by their daughter’s ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie’s dexterity, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie never gloated or took pride in her paintings; she just smiled contentedly when she finished one and requested her parents give it to someone as a gift. Whenever people met Maggie for the first time they often watched her paint with their mouths agape, but her parents always kept their mouths closed and simply smiled over their “little Monet.”

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**Tip**
In addition to context clues to help you figure out the meaning of a word, examine the following word parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

**Writing at Work**

Jargon a type of shorthand communication often used in the workplace. It is the technical language of a special field. Imagine it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant and your manager tells you he is going to “eighty-six” the roasted chicken. If you do not realize that “eighty-six” means to remove an item from the menu, you could be confused. When you first start a job, no matter where it may be, you will encounter jargon that will likely be foreign to you. Perhaps after working the job for a short time, you too will feel comfortable enough to use it. When you are first hired, however, jargon can be baffling and make you feel like an outsider. If you cannot decipher the jargon based on the context, it is always a good policy to ask.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Context clues are words or phrases within a text that help clarify vocabulary that is unknown to you.
2. There are several types of context clues including brief definition and restatement, synonyms and antonyms, and example.

**Writing Application**

Write a paragraph describing your first job. In the paragraph, use five words previously unknown to you. These words could be jargon words or you may consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find a new word. Make sure to provide a specific context clue for understanding each word. Exchange papers with a classmate and try to decipher the meaning of the words in each other’s paragraphs based on the context clues.

**9.22 Commonly Confused Words**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Identify commonly confused words.
- Use strategies to avoid commonly confused words.

Just as a mason uses bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Builders need to use tough, reliable materials to
build a solid and structurally sound skyscraper. From the foundation to the roof and every floor in between, every part is necessary. Writers need to use strong, meaningful words from the first sentence to the last and in every sentence in between.

You already know many words that you use everyday as part of your writing and speaking vocabulary. You probably also know that certain words fit better in certain situations. Letters, e-mails, and even quickly jotted grocery lists require the proper selection of vocabulary. Imagine you are writing a grocery list to purchase the ingredients for a recipe but accidentally write down cilantro when the recipe calls for parsley. Even though cilantro and parsley look remarkably alike, each produces a very different effect in food. This seemingly small error could radically alter the flavor of your dish!

Having a solid everyday vocabulary will help you while writing, but learning new words and avoiding common word errors will make a real impression on your readers. Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection and usage can lead to more polished, more meaningful work. Here are word choice and vocabulary-building strategies that will improve your writing.

**Commonly Confused Words**

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words. For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words *new* and *knew*:

I liked her *new* sweater.

I *knew* she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. *New* is an adjective that describes the sweater, and *knew* is the past tense of the verb *to know*.

**Recognizing Commonly Confused Words**
New and knew are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities.

Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

**Commonly Confused Words**

A, An, And

- **A** (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.
  
  a key, a mouse, a screen

- **An** (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.
  
  an airplane, an ocean, an igloo

- **And** (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.
  
  peanut butter and jelly, pen and pencil, jump and shout

Accept, Except

- **Accept** (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.
  
  They accepted our proposal for the conference.

- **Except** (conjunction). Means only or but.
  
  We could fly there except the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- **Affect** (verb). Means to create a change.
  
  Hurricane winds affect the amount of rainfall.

- **Effect** (noun). Means an outcome or result.
  
  The heavy rains will have an effect on the crop growth.

Are, Our

- **Are** (verb). A conjugated form of the verb to be.
  
  My cousins are all tall and blonde.

- **Our** (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun we.
  
  We will bring our cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

- **By** (preposition). Means next to.
  
  My glasses are by the bed.
• **Buy** (verb). Means to purchase.
  
  I will **buy** new glasses after the doctor’s appointment.

**Its, It’s**

• **Its** (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession.

  The butterfly flapped **its** wings.

• **It’s** (contraction). Joins the words *it* and *is*.

  **It’s** the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

**Know, No**

• **Know** (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.

  I **know** the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.

• **No**. Used to make a negative.

  I have **no** time to visit the zoo this weekend.

**Loose, Lose**

• **Loose** (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.

  Without a belt, her pants are **loose** on her waist.

• **Lose** (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.

  She will **lose** even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

**Of, Have**

• **Of** (preposition). Means from or about.

  I studied maps **of** the city to know where to rent a new apartment.

• **Have** (verb). Means to possess something.

  I **have** many friends to help me move.

• **Have** (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.

  I should **have** helped her with that heavy box.

**Quite, Quiet, Quit**

• **Quite** (adverb). Means really or truly.

  My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.
• **Quiet** (adjective). Means not loud.
  I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.

• **Quit** (verb). Means to stop or to end.
  I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

• **Right** (adjective). Means proper or correct.
  When bowling, she practices the **right** form.

• **Right** (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.
  The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.

• **Write** (verb). Means to communicate on paper.
  After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

Set, Sit

• **Set** (verb). Means to put an item down.
  She **set** the mug on the saucer.

• **Set** (noun). Means a group of similar objects.
  All the mugs and saucers belonged in a **set**.

• **Sit** (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place.
  I’ll **sit** on the sofa while she brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

• **Suppose** (verb). Means to think or to consider.
  I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.

• **Suppose** (verb). Means to suggest.
  **Suppose** we all split the cost of the dinner.

• **Supposed** (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.
  She was **supposed** to create the menu.

Than, Then

• **Than** (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing
  Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.
• *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.

   Doctors first complete medical school and *then* obtain a residency.

Their, They’re, There

• *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession.

   The dog walker feeds *their* dogs everyday at two o’clock.

• *They’re* (contraction). Joins the words *they* and *are*.

   *They’re* the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.

• *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place.

   The dogs’ bowls are over *there*, next to the pantry.

• *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something

   *There* are more treats if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

• *To* (preposition). Indicates movement.

   Let’s go *to* the circus.

• *To*. A word that completes an infinitive verb.

   *to* play, *to* ride, *to* watch.

• *Two*. The number after one. It describes how many.

   *Two* clowns squirted the elephants with water.

• *Too* (adverb). Means *also* or *very*.

   The tents were *too* loud, and we left.

Use, Used

• *Use* (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.

   We *use* a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

• *Used*. The past tense form of the verb *to use*

   He *used* the lawnmower last night before it rained.

• *Used to*. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present

   He *used to* hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

Who’s, Whose
• **Who's** (contraction). Joins the words *who* and either *is* or *has*.

  **Who's** the new student? **Who's** met him?

• **Whose** (pronoun). A form of *who* that shows possession.

  **Whose** schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

**Your, You're**

1. **Your** (pronoun). A form of *you* that shows possession.

   **Your** book bag is unzipped.

2. **You're** (contraction). Joins the words *you* and *are*.

   **You're** the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

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**EXERCISE 1**

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns ________ (to, too, two) years old tomorrow.

2. The next-door neighbor’s dog is ________ (quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.

3. ________ (Your, You’re) mother called this morning to talk about the party.

4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake ________ (than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.

5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and ________ (than, then) brushed his teeth.

6. Do you have any ________ (loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?

7. Father must ________ (have, of) left his briefcase at the office.

8. Before playing ice hockey, I was ________ (suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may ________ (affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.
9. Tonight she will ________(set, sit) down and ________(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.

10. It must be fall, because the leaves ________(are, our) changing, and ________(it’s, its) getting darker earlier.

**Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words**

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

- **Use a dictionary.** Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet’s easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.

- **Keep a list of words you commonly confuse.** Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.

- **Study the list of commonly confused words.** You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

**Tip**

Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing.

**Writing at Work**
All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job, employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to* days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your boss and colleagues.

**EXERCISE 2**

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they’re experience. Although signs state, “No Flash Photography,” forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: “No Photography.” Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators’ compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
2. Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.

3. Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write or study the chart in this book.

4. Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

Writing Application

Review the latest assignment you completed for school or for work. Does it contain any commonly confused words? Circle each example and use the circled words to begin your own checklist of commonly confused words. Continue to add to your checklist each time you complete an assignment and find a misused word.

9.23 Spelling

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify common spelling rules.
- Identify commonly misused homonyms.
- Identify commonly misspelled words.

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain. For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them
yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien
- receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + *er* = happier
- cry + *ed* = cried

When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + *ed* = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day, lay, say, pay = daily, laid, said, paid*

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as *-able, -ence, -ing, or -ity*, drop the last *e* in a word.

- write + *ing* = writing
- pure + *ity* = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as *-less, -ment, or -ly*, keep the last *e* in a word.

- hope + *less* = hopeless
- advertise + *ment* = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *-s* when using the plural form.

- photo + *s* = photos
- soprano + *s* = sopranos

Add *-es* to words that end in *s, ch, sh, and x*.

1. church + *es* = churches
2. fax + *es* = faxes

**EXERCISE 1**

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph.
Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d’Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likely suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilities, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagued him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt alienated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializing with his peers on the reservation.

The reading skills he displayed at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologies to his credit, notably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and pow wows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of stories is called *War Dances*, which came out in 2009.

**Tip**

Eight Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

- **Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page.** Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word’s spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.

- **Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying “It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out” may help you remember that *beautiful* begins with “be a.” The practice of pronouncing the word *Wednesday* Wednes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.

- **Use a dictionary.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a “poor speller’s dictionary.”
• **Use your computer’s spell checker.** The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.

• **Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.

• **Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.

• **Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.

• **Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.** Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

**Tip**

Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important—details like spelling and punctuation.

**Homonyms**

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

**Commonly Misused Homonyms**

**Principle, Principal**

• **Principle (noun).** A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.

  The *principle* of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.

• **Principal (noun).** The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.

  The payment plan allows me to pay back only the *principal* amount, not any compounded interest.

• **Principal (noun).** A person who is the main authority of a school.

  The *principal* held a conference for both parents and teachers.
Where, Wear, Ware

- **Where (adverb).** The place in which something happens.
  
  Where is the restaurant?

- **Wear (verb).** To carry or have on the body.
  
  I will wear my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.

- **Ware (noun).** Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, *wares*).
  
  When I return from shopping, I will show you my *wares*.

Lead, Led

- **Lead (noun).** A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.
  
  The lead pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.

- **Led (verb).** The past tense of the verb *lead*.
  
  After the garden, she led the patrons through the museum.

Which, Witch

- **Which (pronoun).** Replaces one out of a group.
  
  Which apartment is yours?

- **Witch (noun).** A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.
  
  She thinks she is a witch, but she does not seem to have any powers.

Peace, Piece

- **Peace (noun).** A state of tranquility or quiet.
  
  For once, there was peace between the argumentative brothers.

- **Piece (noun).** A part of a whole.
  
  I would like a large piece of cake, thank you.

Passed, Past

- **Passed (verb).** To go away or move.
  
  He passed the slower cars on the road using the left lane.

- **Past (noun).** Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.
  
  The argument happened in the past, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

Lessen, Lesson
• **Lessen (verb).** To reduce in number, size, or degree.
  My dentist gave me medicine to lessen the pain of my aching tooth.

• **Lesson (noun).** A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.
  Today’s lesson was about mortgage interest rates.

**Patience, Patients**

• **Patience (noun).** The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).
  The novice teacher’s patience with the unruly class was astounding.

• **Patients (plural noun).** Individuals under medical care.
  The patients were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.

**Sees, Seas, Seize**

• **Sees (verb).** To perceive with the eye.
  He sees a whale through his binoculars.

• **Seas (plural noun).** The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.
  The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and seas are influenced by the moon.

• **Seize (verb).** To possess or take by force.
  The king plans to seize all the peasants’ land.

**Thrown, Through**

1. **Threw (verb).** The past tense of throw.
   She threw the football with perfect form.

2. **Through (preposition).** A word that indicates movement.
   She walked through the door and out of his life.

**EXERCISE 2**

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

1. Do you agree with the underlying ________ (principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?
2. I like to ________(where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.

3. Marjorie felt like she was being ________(led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.

4. Serina described ________(witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.

5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a ________(peace, piece) of his apple.

6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the ________(passed, past) all the time?

7. Eating healthier foods will ________(lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.

8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the ________(patients, patience) of a saint.

9. Daniela ________(sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.

10. Everyone goes ________(through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

**Tip**

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

- Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
- Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Across</th>
<th>Disappoint</th>
<th>integration</th>
<th>particular</th>
<th>Separate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>intelligent</td>
<td>perform</td>
<td>Similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>doesn’t</td>
<td>interest</td>
<td>perhaps</td>
<td>Since</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly across the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginnings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it “Breuckelen.” Immediately after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn’s first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or
conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finally they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British.

In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first important battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an occasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its separate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people’s opinion, the integration into New York City should have never happened; they thought Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Collaboration:

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In today’s job market, writing e-mails has become a means by which many people find employment. E-mails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers’ inboxes are inundated with countless e-mails daily. If even the subject line of an e-mail contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked and someone else’s e-mail will take priority. The best thing to do after you proofread an e-mail to an employer and run the spell checker is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the e-mail and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, which may also be able to assist you.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
2. Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
3. Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
4. Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

**Writing Application**

What is your definition of a successful person? Is it based on a person’s profession or is it based on his or her character? Perhaps success means a combination of both. In one paragraph, describe in detail what you think makes a person successful. When you are finished, proofread your work for spelling errors. Exchange papers with a partner and read each other’s work. See if you catch any spelling errors that your partner missed.

### 9.24 Capitalization

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Learn the basic rules of capitalization.
2. Identify common capitalization errors.

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of capitalization. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

**Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence**

**Capitalize Proper Nouns**

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

**Tip**

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Noun</th>
<th>Proper Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>The Art Institute of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Apollo Theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>Uncle Javier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Dr. Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td><em>Pride and Prejudice</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Smith College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>the Spanish-American War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historical event</td>
<td>The Renaissance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**

On your own sheet of paper, write three proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

**Common noun: river**

1. Nile River
2. 
3. 

**Common noun: musician**

1. 
2. 
3. 
Common noun: magazine

1. 
2. 
3. 

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Capitalize Titles

Tip

Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “e-mail” and “online” are never capitalized.

EXERCISE 2

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. The house on Mango street is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

EXERCISE 3

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

david grann’s the lost City of Z mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett’s voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch’s expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.
The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, David Grann, is lost in the Amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it’s thrilling but also because this is a true account of Grann’s experience. Grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. The suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself a Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

**Writing at Work**

Did you know that, if you use all capital letters to convey a message, the capital letters come across like shouting? In addition, all capital letters are actually more difficult to read and may annoy the reader. To avoid “shouting” at or annoying your reader, follow the rules of capitalization and find other ways to emphasize your point.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
2. Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

**9.25 End of Chapter Exercises: Grammar**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

1. Practice the principles of good grammar learned in this chapter.

**Writing Application**

Write a one-page biography. Make sure to identify people, places, and dates, use capitalization correctly, and apply all the principles of good grammar that you have learned in this chapter.
Chapter 10
Grammar Workbook

10.1 Writing Basics

EXERCISES

On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct (no error).

Then rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 ________. Written in 1931 ________. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes ________. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point ________. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this “hypnopedia” ________. Everyone is kept “happy” in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma ________. because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living ________. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there ________. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out ________. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read ________. Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.

a. Maria and Ty meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.

b. John’s ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.

c. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.
d. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.

e. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.

f. Bernard asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.

g. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.

h. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.

i. Neither Soren nor Andrew are excited about the early morning swim meet.

j. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.

k. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.

l. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.

m. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone’s feelings.
n. Davis winded the old clock and set it atop his nightstand.

o. Cherie lost four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.

p. Janis and Joan describe their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.

q. You should decide for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.

r. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.

s. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.

t. The batter swung at the ball several times but never hit it.

b) Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

Lance Worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol Records on June 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, Nothing to Lose, Lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the IRS revealed. Lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire Robert Bergman, a prominent music Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. Bergman represented Lance all the way to the Supreme Court, where Lance won the case against Capitol Records. Lance Worthington was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record
companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. Worthy is now a successful label based out of Chicago, Illinois, and its artists have appeared on well-known shows such as The Tonight Show and Saturday Night Live. Lance Worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself world that has become the music industry.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

c) Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Denise has a (cheerful) ________ outlook on life than her husband.
2. I don’t mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) ________ cook in my family.
3. Lydia is the (thoughtful) ________ person I know.
4. Italy experienced the (bad) ________ heat wave in its history last year.
5. My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) ________ person I know, and I like that.
6. Dorian’s drawing skills are (good) ________ this semester than last.
7. My handwriting is the (sloppy) ________ of all my classmates.
8. Melvin’s soccer team played (badly) ________ than it did last season.
9. Josie’s pen writes (smooth) ________ than mine.
10. I felt (lucky) ________ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.
10.2 Punctuation

**EXERCISES**

a) Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write OK.

Commas

a) The wedding will be July 13 2012.
b) The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
c) The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.
d) Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
e) The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
f) The photography the catering and the music will all be friends.

Semicolons

a) Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
b) The flowers will be either roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

Colons

a) There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
b) They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
c) Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable.

Quotes

a) The invitations said that the wedding would be “outdoor casual.”
b) “What exactly does ‘outdoor casual’ mean?” I asked the bride.
c) She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Apostrophes

a) On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.
b) My brothers wife will make the arrangements.

c) Shes a great party organizer.

**Parentheses**

a) On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I’ve known her for fifteen years.

b) All the details were perfect in my opinion.

**Dashes**

a) Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.

b) It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

**Hyphens**

The groom danced with his new mother in law.

It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

a) Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

1. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.

2. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.

3. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.

4. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!

5. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.

6. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.

7. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.

8. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.

9. Arent gardens wonderful?

10. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

b) The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.
May 18 2011

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don’t have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

c) Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.
**Writing Application**

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal e-mails. Does your work contain any errors in punctuation? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

**10.3 Working with Words**

**EXERCISES**

Proofread the paragraph and correct any commonly confused words and misspelled words.

Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quietly popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic and expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. Their music was stripped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not wear makeup or sport extravagant hairstyles like many of the day’s rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would buy their clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics to grunge songs were also quite different compared to what was popular at the time. Grunge lyrics are characterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today by music lovers of all ages.

Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homonym or frequently misspelled word.

a. Kevin asked me a serious question and ________ (then, than) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.

b. A hot compress will ________ (lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.

c. Jason was not a graceful ________ (looser, loser) because he knocked his chair over and stormed off the basketball court.

d. Please consider the ________ (effects, affects) of not getting enough green vegetables in your diet.
e. ________(Except, Accept) for Ajay, we all had our tickets to the play.

f. I am ________(threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.

g. I don’t care ________(whose, who’s) coming to the party and ________(whose, who’s) not.

h. Crystal could ________(sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.

i. The ________(principal, principle) gave the students a very long lecture about peer pressure.

j. Dr. Frankl nearly lost his ________(patience, patients) with one of his ________(patience, patients).

b) Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language with stronger, more precise language.

My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don’t even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, “What happened to your face?” Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn’t know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn’t last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can’t fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

c) Write the correct synonym for each word.

1. lenient ________(relaxed, callous)

2. abandon ________(vacate, deceive)

3. berate ________(criticize, encourage)

4. experienced ________(callow, matured)

5. spiteful ________(malevolent, mellow)

6. tame ________(subdued, wild)
7. tasty ________(savory, bland)

8. banal ________(common, interesting)

9. contradict ________(deny, revolt)

10. vain ________(boastful, simple)

10.4 Refining Your Writing

EXERCISES

24. Children’s stories are deliberately written in short, simple sentences to avoid confusion. Most sentences are constructed using the standard subject-verb-object format. Choose a children’s story that is suitable for eight- to ten-year-olds. Rewrite a chapter of the story so that it appeals to a slightly older age group, by editing for sentence variety. Experiment with the techniques you learned in Chapter 9 Grammar, Section 9.5 "Sentence Variety", including the three different ways to vary sentence structure at the beginning of a sentence and the three different ways to connect ideas between sentences. Compare the revised chapter with the original version and consider how sentence variety can be used to target a particular audience.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

25. Compile a selection of real-life writing samples from the workplace or around the home. You might like to choose one of the following: e-mail, junk mail, personal letter, company report, social networking page, local newspaper, bulletin-board posting, or public notice. Choose two samples that lack sentence variety. Highlight areas of each writing sample that you would edit for sentence variety and explain why. Replace any recognizable name with a pseudonym, or a fictitious name.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

26. Group activity. Choose a well-known speech, such as Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Winston Churchill’s “Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat” speech, or Barack Obama’s inaugural address. Make a copy of the speech and, as a group, underline examples of parallelism. Discuss the effects of using parallelism and consider whether it is always used to achieve the same result or whether the writer manipulates parallelism to create a variety of responses among his or her audience.
27. **Group activity.** Working in a small group, select a workplace document or academic essay. Examine each paragraph and identify examples of sentence variety, coordination and subordination, and parallelism. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions:

1. Does the writer use sentence variety effectively?
2. Does the writer connect his or her ideas effectively?
3. Does the writer use subordination and coordination correctly?
4. Does the writer use parallelism to emphasize his or her points?

As a group, identify the weaker areas of the paragraph and rewrite them. Focus on sentence structure and sentence variation. Use coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions to join sentences.

28. Choose a college essay or a recent piece of writing from your work or everyday life. Use the techniques you have learned throughout this chapter to edit your writing for sentence variety, appropriate coordination and subordination, and parallelism. When you have finished, compare the two versions and write a brief analysis of how sentence variety, coordination and subordination, and parallelism help refine a piece of writing.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.
Chapter 11
Additional Help for Non-Native Speakers of English

11.1 Word Order

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the basic structures of sentences.
2. Define adjectives and how they are used.

If your first language is not English, you will most likely need some extra help when writing in Standard, or formal, English. New students of Standard English often make similar kinds of errors. Even if you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills. This chapter covers the most common errors made by English language learners and helps you avoid similar mistakes in your writing.

Basic Sentence Structures

The most basic sentence structure in English is a subject plus a verb. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought. (Exception: Sentences in the imperative mood, such as “Shut the door.” In this kind of sentence, the subject (“you”) is implied.)

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A preposition is a part of speech that relates a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It also introduces a prepositional phrase. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: direct objects and indirect objects. A direct object receives the action of the verb.

Tip

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask what? or who?
Sentence: Maurice kicked the ball.
What did Maurice kick? The direct object, ball.

Sentence: Maurice kicked Tom by accident.
Who did Maurice kick? The direct object, Tom.

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb.

Tip
Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it can be discovered by asking to whom? or for whom? after the verb.

Sentence: Dad baked the children some cookies.
For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, children.

EXERCISE 1
On a separate sheet of paper, identify the subject, verb, direct object, and indirect object in the following sentences.

1. Captain Kirk told the crew a story.
2. Jermaine gave his girlfriend a dozen yellow tulips.
3. That hospital offers nurses better pay.
4. Dad served Grandma a delicious dinner.
5. Mom bought herself a new car.

EXERCISE 2
On a sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences in the correct order. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. The pizza Jeannine burnt.
2. To the Mexican restaurant we had to go for dinner.
3. Jeannine loved the food.
4. Full were we during the walk home.
5. I will make the pizza next time.
Adjectives

An adjective is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells *which one, what kind, and how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind that a common error English language learners make is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun:

1. **Opinion**: an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size**: a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape**: a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age**: a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color**: an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity**: Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material**: silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress

Note: In many cases if this sequence is correctly followed, commas between adjectives are eliminated. For example: *At the embassy, Susan met an enigmatic young Venezuelan diplomat.*

But in this example, the two adjectives function in such a similar manner that they must be separated by a comma: *Blocking the travelers’ way was a forbidding, shaggy-haired giant.*

**Tip**

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after a linking verb.

**Sentence**: My English teacher is excellent.

**EXERCISE 3**

On a separate sheet of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.

The first one has been done for you.
1. book: old, small, Spanish
   a small old Spanish book (age, size, ethnicity)
2. photograph: new, strange
3. suit: wool, green, funny
4. opinion: refreshing, new
5. dress: fashionable, purple

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The most basic sentence structure is a subject plus a verb that expresses a complete thought.
- Adding a prepositional phrase or a direct or indirect object to a sentence makes it more complex.
- Adjectives follow a particular order before the noun they describe. The order is opinion, size, shape, age, color, ethnicity, and material.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph about a memorable family trip. Use at least two adjectives to describe each noun in your paragraph. Proofread your paragraph, and then exchange papers with a classmate. Check your classmate’s use of adjectives to make sure they are correct.

11.2 Negative Statements

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify a negative statement.
2. Write negative statements.

Negative statements are the opposite of positive statements and are necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and helping verbs that can be combined to form a negative statement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Words</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>hardly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nobody</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>scarcely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no one</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>barely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nowhere</td>
<td>rarely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Helping Verbs</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>am</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>does</td>
<td>did</td>
<td>can</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>might</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>should</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would</td>
<td>ought to</td>
<td>used to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.

1. A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.
   
   **Sentence:** My guests are arriving now.
   
   **Negative:** My guests **are not** arriving now.

2. The negative word *no*.
   
   **Sentence:** Jennie has money.
Negative: Jennie has no money.

3. The contraction n’t.

Sentence: Janetta does miss her mom.

Negative: Janetta doesn’t miss her mom.

4. The negative adverb rarely.

Sentence: I always go to the gym after work.

Negative: I rarely go to the gym after work.

5. The negative subject nobody.

Sentence: Everybody gets the day off.

Negative: Nobody gets the day off.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.

Sentence: Paul called me yesterday.

Negative: Paul did not call me yesterday.

Sentence: Jamilee went to the grocery store.

Negative: Jamilee never went to the grocery store.

Sentence: Gina laughed when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Negative: Gina did not laugh when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb did is what signals the past tense, and the main verb laugh does not have an –ed ending.

**EXERCISE 1**

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

Celeste no did call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before.

She was going to meet her friend, Terry, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, “Mom, I’m sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see Terry!” I was relieved.
Double negatives are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

**Tip**

*Ain’t* is considered a contraction of *am not*. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in Standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

### EXERCISE 2

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn’t like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Brittany can’t make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Negatives are usually formed using a negative word plus a helping verb.
- Double negatives are considered incorrect in Standard English.
- Only one negative word is used to express a negative statement.

### 11.3 Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Define and use count and noncount nouns.
2. Recognize and use definite and indefinite articles.

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called **count nouns** because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.
On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called **noncount nouns**. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of *money* or *furniture*, and you cannot simply add -s to the end of a noncount noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

**Incorrect:** five moneys, two furnitures

**Correct:** some money, two pieces of furniture

### Count and Noncount Nouns

A **count noun** refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding –s or -es. Example: chair -- Make sure to push the chairs against the wall before you leave.

A **noncount noun** identifies a whole object that cannot be separated from other identical objects and counted individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

**Table 11.1 Types of Noncount Nouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Noncount Noun</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice</td>
<td>Add more sugar to my coffee, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solids</td>
<td>concrete, chocolate, silver, soap</td>
<td>The ice cream was covered in creamy chocolate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract Nouns</td>
<td>peace, warmth, hospitality, information</td>
<td>I need more information about the insurance policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing C or NC above the noun.

1. The amount of traffic on the way home was terrible.
2. Forgiveness is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic apples I bought.
4. I prefer film cameras instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is history.

**Definite and Indefinite Articles**

The word *the* is a **definite article**. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, *the woman* refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words *a* and *an* are **indefinite articles**. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

**Definite Articles (The) and Indefinite Articles (A/An) with Count Nouns**

I saw **the** concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **the** concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)

I saw **the** U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **a** concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences.

Write **OK** if the sentence is correct.

1. *(A/An/The)* camel can live for days without water. ________
2. I enjoyed *(a/an/the)* pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. ________
3. *(A/An/The)* politician spoke of many important issues. ________
4. I really enjoyed *(a/an/the)* actor’s performance in the play. ________
5. *(A/An/The)* goal I have is to run a marathon this year. ________

**EXERCISE 3**
Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- You can make count nouns plural by adding –s or –es.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or candles.
- Noncount nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- *The* is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as the Queen of England.
- *A* and *an* are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as an apple or a bicycle.

**Writing Application**

Write five sentences using the definite article *the*. Write five sentences using the indefinite article *a* or *an*.

Exchange papers with a classmate and check each other’s work.

### 11.4 Pronouns

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Recognize subject and object pronouns. Identify possessive pronouns.
2. Determine common pronoun errors.

**Types of Pronouns**

Subject pronouns are often the subject of a sentence—“who” and “what” the sentence is about.
Sentence: She loves the desserts in France.
She is the subject.

Sentence: By lunch time, they were hungry.
They is the subject.

Object pronouns are often the object of the verb—“who” or “what” was acted upon.

Sentence: Melanie’s thoughtfulness touched him.
Him is the object of the verb touched.

Sentence: We lifted it.
It is the object of the verb lifted.

The masculine subject pronoun is he, and the masculine object pronoun is him. The feminine subject pronoun is she, and the feminine object pronoun is her.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.

Sentence: The teacher took her apple and left.
The pronoun her shows the teacher owns the apple.

Sentence: The hikers spotted their guide on the trail.
The pronoun their shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Table 11.2 Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Pronouns</th>
<th>I, you, he, she, it, we, they</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Object Pronouns</td>
<td>me, you, him, her, it, us, them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive Pronouns</td>
<td>my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct pronoun.

1. Unfortunately, the house was too expensive for (we, us, they).
2. I completed (mine, my, your) research paper, and she completed (his, hers, theirs).
3. My dog Buster is old, but (he, it, them) is very playful.
4. That ring belongs to my father, so it is (hers, his, theirs).
5. I cannot find my textbook, so I think (they, it, he) is lost.

**Common Pronoun Errors**

English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

**Incorrect:** Me and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch.
This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (*me*) is used instead of a subject pronoun.

**Correct:** Daniela and *I* went to the restaurant for lunch.
This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (*I*) is used.

**Incorrect:** Mark put her grocery bag on the counter.
This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun *her* refers to a female, and Mark is a male.

**Correct:** Mark put *his* grocery bag on the counter.
This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun *his* refers to the male person, *Mark*.

**Incorrect:** The woman she went to work earlier than usual.
This sentence is incorrect because the subject *the woman* is repeated by the pronoun *she*.

**Correct:** The woman *went to work earlier than usual.*
**Correct:** She *went to work earlier than usual.*
These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Steven did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who, whom, whose, which* or *that*.

**Sentence:** A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun.

The subject of this sentence is a *relative pronoun*. The clause *is a type of pronoun* gives some information about the subject.

The relative pronoun *that* may be added to give more details to the subject.

**Sentence using a relative pronoun:** A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun *that* helps connect details to the subject of the sentence.

**Tip**

Remember the following uses of relative pronouns:

- *Who, whom, and whose* refer only to people.
- *Which* refers to things.
- *That* refers to people or things.

The following examples show how a relative pronoun may be used to connect two sentences and to connect details to the subject.

**Sentence 1:** Gossip is a form of communication.

**Sentence 2:** It is a waste of time and energy.

**Combination of 1 and 2:** Gossip is a form of communication *that* is a waste of time and energy.

Notice how the relative pronoun *that* replaces the subject *it* in sentence 2.

*That* is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is a waste of time and energy*) to the subject (*Gossip*).

**Sentence 1:** My grandmother is eighty years old.

**Sentence 2:** She collects seashells.
**Combination of 1 and 2:** My grandmother, **who** is eighty years old, collects seashells.

Notice how the relative pronoun *who* replaces the subject *she* in sentence 2.

*Who* is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is eighty years old*) to the subject (*My grandmother*).

**EXERCISE 3**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (**who, that**) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (**who, that**) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (**which, who**) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (**that, who**) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (**who, that**) are green.

**EXERCISE 4**

On a separate sheet of paper, combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Jeff is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in an accident or gotten a ticket.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun. There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the “who” and “what” the sentence is about. Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action. A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun. Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

**11.5 Verb Tenses**
You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb.

Correct use of verb tenses and forms is very important in English. Verbs carry much of the main meaning of the sentence, and verb suffixes and auxiliaries indicate the time. Verbs are the powerhouses of our language.

There are two main types of verb errors. Try to distinguish between the two types. *Verb Form* is an error where the tense has been incorrectly formed. *Verb Tense* is an error where an incorrect tense has been chosen for the meaning. Although the grammar of verbs is very complex in English, every student can easily learn the basic grammar and be able to use verbs correctly.

### Verb forms

**English verbs have five forms:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Progressive/Continuous</th>
<th>3rd Person Singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regular</strong>&lt;br&gt;Walk</td>
<td>WALKED</td>
<td>WALKED</td>
<td>WALKING</td>
<td>WALKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Irregular</strong>&lt;br&gt;Eat</td>
<td>ATE</td>
<td>EATEN</td>
<td>EATING</td>
<td>EATS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some Verb Form Rules to Know:
Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive = to + base form</th>
<th>To run, to hide, to show</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modal = modal + base form</td>
<td>Can run, could hide, should show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Support = do, does, did + base form</td>
<td>Did run, doesn’t hide, did show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive = “to be” + base + ing</td>
<td>Am running, was hiding, are doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect = have, has, had + past participle</td>
<td>Have run, has hidden, had shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive = “to be” + past participle</td>
<td>Is built, was written, are being done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Active Forms of the 12 English Tenses
Of the regular Verb “WALK”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PAST</th>
<th>PRESENT</th>
<th>FUTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SIMPLE</strong></td>
<td>WALKED</td>
<td>WALK/S</td>
<td>WILL WALK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESSIVE</strong></td>
<td>WAS /WERE WALKING</td>
<td>AM/IS/ARE WALKING</td>
<td>WILL BE WALKING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERFECT</strong></td>
<td>HAD WALKED</td>
<td>HAS/HAVE WALKED</td>
<td>WILL HAVE WALKED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERFECT/PROGRESSIVE</strong></td>
<td>HAD BEEN WALKING</td>
<td>HAS/HAVE BEEN WALKING</td>
<td>WILL HAVE BEEN WALKING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future. These are called Time Frames.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday I jumped.</td>
<td>Today I jump.</td>
<td>Tomorrow I will jump.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

1. When the action takes place now
   I drink the water greedily.

2. When the action is something that happens regularly
   I always cross my fingers for good luck.

3. When describing things that are generally true
   College tuition is very costly.

When it is he, she, or it doing the present tense action, remember to add -s, or -es to the end of the verb or to change the y to -ies.

Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I washed my uniform last night.
- I asked for more pie.
- I coughed loudly last night.

When the action is something done in the past, remember to add -d or -ed to the end of regular verbs, regardless of the subject.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I will work late tomorrow.
- I will kiss my boyfriend when I see him.
- I will erase the board after class.

Going to can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am going to go to work tomorrow.

**EXERCISE 1**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense.

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.

2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.

3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.

4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow’s bake sale.

EXERCISE 2

Correct the verb tense mistakes in the following paragraph.

Last summer, I walk around Walden Pond. Walden Pond is in Concord, Massachusetts. It is where the philosopher Henry David Thoreau will live during the mid-nineteenth century. During his time there, he wrote a book called *Walden*. *Walden* is a book of Thoreau’s reflections on the natural environment. It will be consider a classic in American literature. I did not know that Walden Pond is consider the birthplace of the environmental movement. It was very relaxing there. I will listen to birds, frogs, and crickets, not to mention the peaceful sound of the pond itself.

Tip

Remember, if you have a compound subject like *Marie and Jennifer*, think of the subject as *they* to determine the correct verb form.

- Marie and Jennifer (*they*) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as *he*, *she*, or *it*.

- LeBron (*he*) has scored thirty points so far.

EXERCISE 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs to *be*, to *have*, and to *do* in the three simple tenses.

1. Stefan always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They
are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. A past participle is often called the -ed form of a verb because it is formed by adding -d or -ed to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in -t or -en. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs.

The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>+ has or have</th>
<th>+ past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Have</td>
<td>helped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- **I have worked** as a caretaker since June.

This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

- **Dmitri has just received** an award from the Dean of Students.

This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word *just* emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>+ had or have</th>
<th>+ past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Had</td>
<td>listened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **The bus had left** by the time **Theo arrived** at the station.
Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo arrived (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus had left (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>will have</th>
<th>past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>will have</td>
<td>graduated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You will have forgotten me after you move to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (you) will move (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject will have forgotten (future perfect tense) the speaker, me.

**EXERCISE 4**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I ________ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he ________ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun ________ (to set).
4. Denise ________ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother ________ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.
Progressive Verb Tenses

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as I am going, I was going, or I will be going.

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place. To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present tense form of to be</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>am/is/are</td>
<td>help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti is starting school on Tuesday.
  This sentence describes a planned activity.
- Janetta is getting her teeth cleaned right now.
  This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.
- I am studying ballet at school.
  This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place. To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past tense form of to be</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>was/were</td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Ella and I were planning a vacation.
This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I was helping a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.

This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I was finishing my homework, my wife was talking on the phone.

This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment. To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future tense form of to be</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will be</td>
<td></td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I will be dancing in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Agnes will be reading two of her poems.

**EXERCISE 5**

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)
6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used
when you want to stress that the action is ongoing. To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present tense form of to have</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>Been</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>has or have</td>
<td></td>
<td>been</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- She **has been talking** for the last hour.
  This sentence indicates that she started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.
- I **have been feeling** tired lately.
  This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and I continue to feel tired in the present.
  Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb *lately*. You can also use the adverb *recently* when using the present perfect progressive tense.

  Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past. To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past tense form of to have</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>been</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>-ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had</td>
<td></td>
<td>been</td>
<td></td>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The employees **had been talking** until their boss arrived.
  This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.
- I **had been working** all day.
  This sentence implies that I was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.
The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future. To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future tense form of to have + been + -ing (present participle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- By the end of the meeting, I will have been hearing about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of hearing will continue until the end of the meeting, something that is also in the future.

**Gerunds**

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in -ing. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition. You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. **As a subject**
   
   Traveling is Cynthia’s favorite pastime.

2. **As a direct object**

   I enjoy jogging.

3. **As an object of a proposition**

   The librarian scolded me for laughing.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study Table 11.3 "Gerunds and Verbs" for examples.

**Table 11.3 Gerunds and Verbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gerund</th>
<th>Verb Followed by a Gerund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving</td>
<td>Denise considered moving to Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>I hate cleaning the bathroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gerund | Verb Followed by a Gerund
--- | ---
Winning | Nate *imagines winning* an Oscar one day.
Worrying | Mom says she *has stopped worrying*.
Taking | She *admitted taking* the pumpkin.

**Infinitives**

An infinitive is a form of a verb that comes after the word *to* and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

*to* + *verb* = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives. Study Table 11.4 "Infinitives and Verbs" for examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Verb Followed by Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to help</td>
<td>Jessica <em>offered to help</em> her move.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to arrive</td>
<td>Mick <em>expects to arrive</em> early.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to win</td>
<td>Sunita <em>wants to win</em> the writing contest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to close</td>
<td>He <em>forgot to close</em> the curtains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>She <em>likes to eat</em> late.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives.

With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

**Table 11.5 Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base Form of Verb</th>
<th>Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base Form of Verb</td>
<td>Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>1. John <em>began crying</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. John <em>began to cry</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate</td>
<td>1. Marie <em>hated talking</em> on the phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Marie <em>hated to talk</em> on the phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forget</td>
<td>1. Wendell <em>forgot paying</em> the bills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Wendell <em>forgot to pay</em> the bills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>1. I <em>liked leaving</em> messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I <em>liked to leave</em> messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue</td>
<td>1. He <em>continued listening</em> to the news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. He <em>continued to listen</em> to the news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start</td>
<td>1. I <em>will start recycling</em> immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I <em>will start to recycle</em> immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try</td>
<td>1. Mikhail <em>will try climbing</em> the tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Mikhail <em>will try to climb</em> the tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer</td>
<td>1. I <em>prefer baking</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I <em>prefer to bake</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>1. Josh <em>loves diving</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Josh <em>loves to dive</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXERCISE 6

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant ________ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend ________ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed ________ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish ________ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

• Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
• Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
• There are six main verb tenses in English: simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect.
• Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

Writing Application

Write about a lively event that is either remembered or imagined. Ask yourself the following three questions: What happened during the event? What happened after the event? Looking back, what do you think of the event now? Answer each question in a separate paragraph to keep the present, past, and future tense verbs separate.

11.6 Modal Auxiliaries

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define and identify modal auxiliaries.
2. Learn how and when to use modal auxiliaries.

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using modal auxiliaries.

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that are used only with a main verb to help express its mood.
The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>modal auxiliary</th>
<th>main verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>Call</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

**Table 11.6 Modal Auxiliaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal Auxiliary</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td>Expresses an ability or possibility</td>
<td>I can lift this forty-pound box. (ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We can embrace green sources of energy. (possibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td>Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission</td>
<td>I could beat you at chess when we were kids. (past ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We could bake a pie! (present possibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Could we pick some flowers from the garden? (future permission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question</td>
<td>I may attend the concert. (uncertain future action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You may begin the exam. (permission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May I attend the concert? (yes-no questions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might</td>
<td>Expresses uncertain future action</td>
<td>I might attend the concert (uncertain future action—same as may)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shall</td>
<td>Expresses intended future action</td>
<td>I shall go to the opera. (intended future action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal Auxiliary</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should</td>
<td>Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists</td>
<td>I should mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as ought to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Should I call my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information</td>
<td>I will get an A in this class. (intended future action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will you buy me some chocolate? (favor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will you be finished soon? (information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would</td>
<td>States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions</td>
<td>I would like the steak, please. (preference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Would you like to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would go with you if I didn’t have to babysit tonight. (explain an action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He would write to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must</td>
<td>Expresses obligation</td>
<td>We must be on time for class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ought to</td>
<td>Expresses obligation</td>
<td>I ought to mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tip**

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

```
Modal auxiliary + subject + main verb
```
Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal

   **Incorrect:** I can to move this heavy table.
   **Correct:** I can move this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal

   **Incorrect:** I could moving to the United States.
   **Correct:** I could move to the United States.

3. Using two modals in a row

   **Incorrect:** I should must renew my passport.
   **Correct:** I must renew my passport.
   **Correct:** I should renew my passport.

4. Leaving out a modal

   **Incorrect:** I renew my passport.
   **Correct:** I must renew my passport.

**EXERCISE 1**

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family should miss me very much.

**Modals and Present Perfect Verbs**

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened. Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1. Using *had* instead of *have*
Incorrect: Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.
Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

2. Leaving out have
Incorrect: Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.
Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is
  
  subject + modal auxiliary + main verb

- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought to.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always have.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using had instead of have and leaving out have.

Writing Application

On a separate sheet of paper, write ten original sentences using modal auxiliaries.

11.7 Prepositions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify prepositions.
2. Learn how and when to use prepositions.
A preposition is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as *above*, *below*, and *behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during*, *after*, and *until* show location in time.

**In, At, and On**

The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways. Study Table 11.7, Table 11.8, and Table 11.9 to learn when to use each one.

**Table 11.7 In**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>year</td>
<td>in 1942</td>
<td>country</td>
<td>in Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>month</td>
<td>in August</td>
<td>state</td>
<td>in California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>season</td>
<td>in the summer</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>in Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>time of day (not with <em>night</em>)</td>
<td>in the afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11.8 On**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>on Monday</td>
<td>surfaces</td>
<td>on the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>date</td>
<td>on May 23</td>
<td>streets</td>
<td>on 124th Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>specific days/dates</td>
<td>on Monday</td>
<td>modes of transportation</td>
<td>on the bus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11.9 At**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>at five o’clock</td>
<td>addresses</td>
<td>at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with <em>night</em></td>
<td>at night</td>
<td>location</td>
<td>at Rooney’s Grill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**
Edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors within, at, and on.

Dear Mrs. Salazar,

I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now. Sincerely, Milani Davis

**Prepositions after Verbs**

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb + Preposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agree with</td>
<td>to agree with something or someone</td>
<td>My husband always agrees with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologize for</td>
<td>to express regret for something, to say sorry about something</td>
<td>I apologize for being late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apply for</td>
<td>to ask for something formally</td>
<td>I will apply for that job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believe in</td>
<td>to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something</td>
<td>I believe in educating the world’s women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care about</td>
<td>to think that someone or something is important</td>
<td>I care about the health of our oceans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hear about</td>
<td>to be told about something or someone</td>
<td>I heard about the teachers’ strike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look after</td>
<td>to watch or to protect someone or something</td>
<td>Will you look after my dog while I am on vacation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb + Preposition</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk about</td>
<td>to discuss something</td>
<td>We will talk about the importance of recycling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak to, with</td>
<td>to talk to/with someone</td>
<td>I will speak to his teacher tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wait for</td>
<td>to await the arrival of someone or something</td>
<td>I will wait for my package to arrive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tip**

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

**EXERCISE 2**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Charlotte does not ________ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to ________ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
3. Herman said he was going to ________ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not ________ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
5. I ________ (care about, agree with) the environment very much.

**Prepositions after Adjectives**

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

**Table 11.11 Adjectives + Prepositions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective + Preposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>angry at, about</td>
<td>to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something</td>
<td>I am angry about the oil spill in the ocean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective + Preposition</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confused about</td>
<td>to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.</td>
<td>Shawn was confused about the concepts presented at the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disappointed in, with</td>
<td>to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something</td>
<td>I was disappointed in my husband because he voted for that candidate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dressed in</td>
<td>to clothe the body</td>
<td>He was dressed in a pin-striped suit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy for</td>
<td>to show happiness for someone or something</td>
<td>I was happy for my sister who graduated from college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interested in</td>
<td>giving attention to something, expressing interest</td>
<td>I am interested in musical theater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jealous of</td>
<td>to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)</td>
<td>I was jealous of her because she always went on vacation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thankful for</td>
<td>to express thanks for something</td>
<td>I am thankful for my wonderful friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tired of</td>
<td>to be disgusted with, have a distaste for</td>
<td>I was tired of driving for hours without end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worried about</td>
<td>to express anxiety or worry about something</td>
<td>I am worried about my father’s health.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 3**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Meera was deeply ________ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was ________ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am ________ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was ________ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was ________ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.
Tip

The following adjectives are often followed by the preposition at:

- Good
  She is really **good at** chess.
- Excellent
  Henry is **excellent at** drawing.
- Brilliant
  Mary Anne is **brilliant at** playing the violin.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. The prepositions in, at, and on are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.
2. The preposition in is used when expressing the following: year, month, season, part of the day (e.g., in the afternoon, in the morning; exception: at night), country, state, and city.
3. The preposition on is used to express day, date, and specific days or dates and surfaces, streets, and transportation modes.
4. The preposition at is used for expressions of time (e.g., at 10:00 a.m.), with night, and with addresses and locations.
5. Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.
6. Prepositions also follow adjectives to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.

**Writing Application**

Write about a happy childhood memory using as many prepositions followed by verbs and adjectives as you can. Use at least ten. When you are finished, exchange papers with a classmate and correct any preposition errors you find.

**11.8 Slang and Idioms**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Recognize slang and idioms.
2. Learn to avoid using slang and idioms in formal writing.
Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of “ums,” “likes,” “yeahs,” and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context is formal or informal.

**Slang**

“Hey guys, let’s learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!”

What do you notice about the previous paragraph? You might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member. The paragraph also uses a lot of slang. Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. The important thing to understand is that slang is casual talk, and you should avoid using it in formal contexts. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. Table 11.12 "Slang Expressions" explains just a few of the more common terms.

**Table 11.12 Slang Expressions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slang Word or Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>check it out, check this out</td>
<td>v. look at, watch, examine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic</td>
<td>n. a person who loves, is addicted to chocolate/work/shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuff</td>
<td>n. things (used as a singular, noncount noun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taking care of business</td>
<td>doing things that need to be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>n. a person who is a professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crack up</td>
<td>v. to laugh uncontrollably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slang Word or Phrase</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veg (sounds like the veg in vegetable)</td>
<td>v. relax and do nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dude, man</td>
<td>n. person, man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all-nighter</td>
<td>n. studying all night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>adj. good, fashionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gross, nasty</td>
<td>adj. disgusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pig out</td>
<td>v. eat a lot, overeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>screw up</td>
<td>v. make a mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome</td>
<td>adj. great</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 1**

Edit the business e-mail by replacing any slang words and phrases with more formal language.

Dear Ms. O’Connor:

I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and “take care of business.” Haha. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

M. Ernest Anderson

**Idioms**

Idioms are expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words in the expression. Because English contains many idioms, nonnative English speakers have difficulties making logical sense of idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to
English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more common idioms may be of some help.

Table 11.13 Idioms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a blessing in disguise</td>
<td>a good thing you do not recognize at first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a piece of cake</td>
<td>easy to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better late than never</td>
<td>it is better to do something late than not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get over it</td>
<td>recover from something (like a perceived insult)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no idea</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not a chance</td>
<td>it will definitely not happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on pins and needles</td>
<td>very nervous about something that is happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on top of the world</td>
<td>feeling great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pulling your leg</td>
<td>making a joke by tricking another person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the sky is the limit</td>
<td>the possibilities are endless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What if you come across an idiom that you do not understand? There are clues that can help you. They are called context clues. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher its meaning.

1. **Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom may be explained immediately after its use.

   **Sentence:** I felt like I was sitting on pins and needles I was so nervous.

2. **Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.

   **Sentence:** The young girl felt as though she had been sent to the dog house when her mother punished her for fighting in school.
3. **Contrast or Antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.

**Sentence:** Chynna thought the 5k marathon would be *a piece of cake*, *but it turned out to be very difficult*.

Pay attention to the signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occurring.

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**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Informal language is not appropriate in formal writing or speaking contexts.
- Slang and idioms might not make logical sense to nonnative speakers of English.
- It is good to be aware of slang and idioms so they do not appear in your formal writing.

**Writing Application**

Write a short paragraph about yourself to a friend. Write another paragraph about yourself to an employer. Examine and discuss the differences in language between the two paragraphs.

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**11.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter and work collaboratively with other students.

**EXERCISES**

On a separate sheet of paper, underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.

- a) Monica told us about her trip.
- b) I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.
- c) The panther climbed up the tree.
- d) The little boy was standing behind his mother’s legs.
- e) We stayed awake until dawn.

Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.

- a) eyes: black, mesmerizing
b) jacket: vintage, orange, suede

c) pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet

d) vacation: fun, skiing

e) movie: hilarious, independent

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

a) Sometimes I work on Saturdays.

b) The garden attracts butterflies and bees.

c) He breathes loudly at night.

d) I chew on blades of grass in the summer time.

e) I communicate well with my husband.

On another paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn’t hardly breathe. Ain’t nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn’t have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn’t do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn’t not wait for winter to come.
Chapter 12
Readings: Examples of Essays

12.1 Introduction to Sample Essays

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the role of reading in the writing process.
2. Read examples of the rhetorical modes.

The best way to become a better writer is to become a closer reader. This chapter contains essays from professional writers that illustrate the rhetorical modes described in Chapter 6 "Rhetorical Modes". Model essays demonstrating these modes as well as others from student writers in classes at Georgia Perimeter College can be found in The Polishing Cloth.

While you read these essays, remember the purpose of the writing and pay attention to the following:

- **Thesis statement.** What is the author’s main point of the essay? Identify the sentence and see how well it is supported throughout the essay.
- **Topic sentence.** How well does each topic sentence support the thesis, and how well does it describe the main idea of the following paragraph?
- **Supporting evidence.** Identify the evidence that the author uses to support the essay’s main ideas, and gauge their credibility.

Noting these elements should shape your response to each essay and also to your own writing.

12.2 Narrative Essay

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the narrative rhetorical mode.

Online Narrative Essay Alternatives

Sandra Cisneros offers an example of a narrative essay in *Only Daughter* that captures her sense of her Chicana-Mexican heritage as the only daughter in a family of seven children.

Her complete essay is available on several websites, including the following:
Gary Shteyngart came to the United States when he was seven years old. The son of Russian Jewish parents who struggled to provide a better life for their son, he reflects on his struggles, including becoming “American,” in *Sixty-Nine Cents*:

12.3 Descriptive Essay

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

1. Read an example of the descriptive rhetorical mode.

**Online Descriptive Essay Alternatives**

Susan Berne visits New York and describes her impressions in *Where Nothing Says Everything*, also called *Ground Zero*:


Heather Rogers provides a detailed description (book excerpt) of a landfill that challenges the reader to consider his or her own consumption and waste in *The Hidden Life of Garbage*:

- [http://www.alternet.org/story/27116](http://www.alternet.org/story/27116)
- [http://books.google.com/books?id=efUymAhM_tAC&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=the+hidden+life+of+garbage+by+heather+rogers+%22in+the+dark+chill+of+early+morning%22&source=bl&ots=7c4hoFLhTp&sig=ngecGSS27blb9ov8wLaJX8la_o&hl=en&ei=Vi7xTKDKG4zSsAP2hdGtCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBgQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false]
12.4 Classification Essay

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the classification rhetorical mode.

Online Classification Essay Alternatives

Amy Tan describes relationship with her heritage, her mother, and her languages in *Mother Tongue*:

- [http://teachers.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/mcunningham/grapes/mother%20tounge.pdf](http://teachers.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/mcunningham/grapes/mother%20tounge.pdf)

12.5 Process Analysis Essay

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the process analysis rhetorical mode.

Online Process Analysis Essay Alternatives:

Stanley Fish, a professor of humanities and law at Florida International University, tells us why *Getting Coffee Is Hard to Do*:


12.6 Definition Essay

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the definition rhetorical mode.

Online Definition Essay Alternatives

Judy Brady provides a humorous look at responsibilities and relationships in *I Want a Wife*:

- [http://www.columbia.edu/~sss31/rainbow/wife.html](http://www.columbia.edu/~sss31/rainbow/wife.html)
Gayle Rosenwald Smith shares her dislike of the name for a sleeveless T-shirt, *The Wife-Beater*:

Online Compare-and-Contrast Essay Alternatives

Deborah Tannen compares and contrasts conversation styles in *Sex, Lies and Conversation: Why Is It So Hard for Men and Women to Talk to Each Other?*

- [http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/tannend/sexlies.htm](http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/tannend/sexlies.htm)

Alex Wright examines communication patterns, old and new, in *Friending, Ancient or Otherwise*:


12.8 Cause-and-Effect Essay

Online Cause-and-Effective Essay Alternatives

Norman Cousins examines cause and effect in boxing in *Who Killed Benny Paret?*


Alan Weisman examines the human impact on the planet and its effects in *Earth without People*:

12.9 Persuasive Essay

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the persuasive rhetorical mode.

Online Persuasive Essay Alternatives

Martin Luther King Jr. writes persuasively about civil disobedience in *Letter from Birmingham Jail*:

- [http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf](http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf)
- [http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf)

Michael Levin argues *The Case for Torture*:

- [http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/torture.html](http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/torture.html)
- [http://www.canyons.edu/departments/philosophy/levin.html](http://www.canyons.edu/departments/philosophy/levin.html)

Alisa Solomon argues *The Case against Torture*: