

Cohesion: Uniting Reading and Writing!

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Level: Academic Lower Division

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Language: English



Introduction

Welcome to Cohesion: Uniting Reading and Writing! This resource was made possible by an Open Education Resources Grant Program of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Thank you!!!

This OER book was born from the desire to design and produce a free resource for students that shows them the cohesive elements of reading and writing. We wanted to have an outlet in which to illustrate that a reader must be connected to their writing, and a writer must embrace reading; the two literally must be joined together to help produce competent but also confident writers!

This book is suitable for students in stand-alone English composition classes, integrated reading-writing courses, and corequisite classes that combine English composition with reading or integrated reading and writing elements.

Purpose of Text:

The purpose of this text, or should we say guide, is to help all students in English composition classes - whether stand-alone or coupled with reading courses - understand the connections and the cohesive aspect of reading and writing. The authors used their own years of teaching both reading and writing, for all levels in college, to explain concepts in a straightforward and clear manner for students. The goal is that this becomes a resource - a FREE resource - students can return to time and time again when they have questions or need a refresher even after their English composition course ends.

A note about Point-of-view and Gender/Gender-neutral pronouns:

In this text, we write to *you*, the college student, whether you are brand new to a composition course, brand new to college, or are returning after being out of the classroom for a few years! Normally, when you write an academic paper, you will not use what is called second person point-of-view (*you, your, you are*) because it can be limiting to your reader unless you wrote that piece specifically for that person or member of the audience. In this case, our three authors write as though you are *one of our very own students*, sitting in our class, watching us teach!

You will also notice that we use a variety of gender and gender-neutral pronouns (*he, she, they, them*) to refer to people in the examples throughout this text. This is done to support all people and all genders and to produce an inclusive resource.

Contributions and Thank Yous!

Thank you to the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board for their grant to make this free resource possible for college students!

Thank you to the administration at South Plains College for generously sharing campus resources to help make this book possible. Special thanks to South Plains College President Dr. Robin Satterwhite; Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Ryan Gibbs; Dean of Arts and Sciences, Alan Worley; and the Director of the Teaching and Learning Center, Dr. Gail Malone.

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Thank you to Jay and Yogi Warnick for your unending love and support of all my endeavors!

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Thank you to the following students for graciously allowing us to publish their essays as sample essays in the OER: Chloe Dorsett, Alize Salazar, Lyric Garlitz, and Daniel Robinson.

A huge thank you to the "Grammar Police" for your help and support in researching information for this resource!

Chapter 1: Reading and Writing Connections - Cohesion at its Best!

Chapter 1: Reading/Writing Connections

Writers:	Readers:
Write for an audience! They write with people in mind.	Readers ARE the audience anytime the writer writes something.
Writers MUST keep their audience in mind when writing.	Readers may stop reading after the first few lines if they do not "connect" with the reading or if they think the piece is not written for them.
Writers use certain organization strategies: thesis, or main idea, details, and signal words, to express their thoughts.	Readers know what to look for when reading pieces; they look for the main idea and the details to determine whether they agree with the piece or with the author's stance or point about the topic.
Writers understand that readers will bring their own backgrounds to the reading of their article or essay.	Readers make connections to readings. Sometimes these connections are to themselves, to other things they have read, or to the world around them.

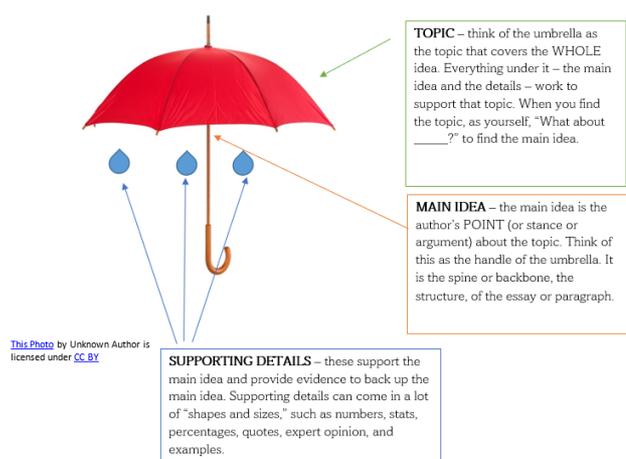
Reading and Writing Connection

It is very easy to think and assume that reading and writing are two different academic areas or disciplines. They do require different skill sets. However, they work together.

Reading is considered *input*. Anytime we listen to something or read information, we are *taking in* information. Writing is considered *output*. Anytime we read something or say something, we are putting *information out* there to others.

While different skills are used to read and write, these areas work together because what you read is what someone else wrote, and when you write, someone will be reading that information! When you know HOW reading and writing work, and more importantly, you know what to look for as a reader and writer, your reading will become stronger, and your writing will become more advanced. You will write with the reader in mind, and you will read looking for writer's tips and tricks!

All Writings Have These Key Elements!



Putting it All Together!

Example TOPIC: Study Strategies

Example MAIN IDEA: Effective study strategies can increase success in college students.

Example DETAILS: First, the use of the SQ3R reading strategy has been shown to increase reader comprehension. Next, notetaking strategies, such as the Cornell notetaking

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How Reading Works

How Reading Works

Believe it or not, reading is actually a very complex system of seeing letters, which form words, connecting meaning to those words, and making connections between the readings and your own lives. If you have ever read something and thought, "I have no idea what I just read!", the below information will help you in comprehending, or understanding your readings, and recalling, or remembering, what you read.

Constructing Meaning

The process of constructing meaning involves readers taking what has been written and constructing or making meaning based on their own thoughts and experiences. To help them interpret what has been written, the reader brings their lived experiences and their prior knowledge (what they already know) to the reading. What a reader already knows may help them make connections, but it could also block their understanding. Active reading allows the reader to construct meaning more accurately.

Active Reading

Active reading includes being present in the reading, by making connections, and by attending to the stages of reading. Active means to do something, so if you are readings actively, this means that you are connecting with the reading, taking notes in the margin (annotating), highlighting keywords, and perhaps even discussing what you just read with others.

Making Connections

Successful readers make three types of connections:

- **text-to-text** - this is when you as the reader read something and see a connection between what you just read and other things you have read or are reading. This is an important skill in college. When you read, it is important to ask yourself where else you have seen this information.
- **text-to-self** - another critical skill in reading is making connections between the text and yourself. For example, when reading this information in this book, how will this help you in college? How might this help you in your current job? How might this help you in your future career, or in your relationships?
- **text-to-world** - these are connections we see between the text and the world around us.

Prior Knowledge

One strategy for building success in reading is to activate your prior knowledge, or what you know about the topic, before reading. Doing so helps you build your neural network or a pathway by which information can travel. Recalling, or remembering information requires the reader to make connections to their learning. When students ask questions about the reading, they can activate their prior knowledge. Some questions to consider include:

What is the purpose of this reading?

What do I already know about this subject?

What do I need to know about this subject to increase my knowledge?

"BUT what if I know NOTHING about the topic?!" This can happen often in college because you are now taking new classes, with new terminology, learning new concepts. So, there are a few ways to still build prior knowledge! You can:

- do a quick Google search to pull up a definition or image of the concept you are about to learn.
- go to the school's library and begin reading about the new concept.
- visit a location about that topic/concept to see it in real-time.

Prior knowledge does not mean **advanced or extensive knowledge**. You do not need to know a lot about a topic to have prior knowledge. It helps the brain to be able to pull up a visual or to connect with this new topic when you are about to read something related to that topic.

How Writing Works

How Writing Works

The writing process is made up of specific steps writers take to ensure they have a coherent essay that also meets the requirements for the assignment. At first, this process may seem long or annoying. However, as you become familiar with the process, the steps will become a habit, and you will not need to think about what to do when given an essay assignment. The steps are broken into four categories: invention, arrangement, drafting & revising, editing & proofreading.

Invention

The first step in writing a paper is invention, also known as pre-writing. At this point in the process, you will create a plan for the essay. In your academic career, you will frequently be given an essay assignment to complete. Remember, the purpose of all assignments in college is for the professor to determine if you have learned and understand the material. It is therefore important to make sure you understand the assignment. Do you understand what you are being asked to do? Did you copy the assignment correctly from the board? If the professor verbally gave the assignment, did you write down what was said correctly? If you are not sure, ASK! It is better to ask than to receive an F for completing the incorrect assignment.

Length

Now that you know what you are supposed to write about you need to decide the appropriate length for the essay. The first place to check is the assignment. Did your instructor tell you how long the paper should be? Keep in mind if the instructor tells you two to three pages, that means at least two full pages, not one full page with a couple of sentences on the second page. It also does not mean three full pages with additional text on a fourth page. Many instructors have hundreds of papers to grade every week and have allotted enough time to grade, at most, three pages per student. Therefore, any additional text will most likely not be read. If your instructor has not specified a length for the essay, then you will need to determine the nature of the assignment. For example, an email will be shorter than a reflection essay, and a reflective essay will be shorter than a research paper.

Purpose

The purpose for your writing will also impact the length of your essay. Remember in college you are trying to show your professor that you have learned and understand the material. There are a lot of reasons you may be asked to write a paper; it could be a personal essay, an informational essay to give employees or the public more information about a topic, or a persuasive essay to try and convince people to agree with your point of view on a topic. Remember this acronym: P.I.E., which stands for persuade, inform, and entertain. These are the three general purposes for writing papers.

Audience

When you have decided on the purpose for your paper, you will then need to decide who the audience is that will read the paper. In college, you will often write for your professor, but you may also write for your friends, a general audience, or experts in a field. For example, if you are writing an essay on the flu for the general public, the essay may be shorter and use language that is easy for everyone to understand. But if you are writing an essay on the flu for a group of nurses, the essay may be longer and contain more scientific language. Remember, too, that your reader and audience are not necessarily the same person! Your professor might be the one *reading* your essay on the flu, but your audience (the people you had in mind when you wrote that essay) will be the group for whom you write the essay. Your audience drives your word choice and phrasing in the paper.

Occasion

Now that you know the purpose and audience for this assignment, you will need to determine the occasion (also known as the situation) for the assignment. Is this for school? Work? Do you want to inform? Or persuade? The occasion or reason you are writing the paper will determine the type of essay you write. For example, the information may be best presented as a PowerPoint presentation in a speech class, but a formal technical report might be a better choice in a science class.

Knowledge

The last part of the invention process is deciding what you know about the subject and what you need to know. Remember, in college, the professors often use the assignment to determine if you have learned and understand the material. If you do not know something, then you need to find the information. If the professor gives you multiple topic options, then you will need to decide which one you know the most about. There is limited time in a semester, so do not be afraid to choose an easier topic. Make the best of your study time and choose the one you know the most about. If you are taking a test and you are not sure you know enough about the topic, a trick is to flip back through the test and review some of the previous questions. Many times, there will be pieces of information that you can use to help complete the essay.

Organization

Now that you have a group of ideas, you will need to group them in a way that will help you determine if you need additional information and help you see how the ideas might fit together. This is also sometimes called outlining. *There are a few different ways to create an outline, and there is also no right way to create an outline.* Some options include a formal outline with Roman numerals, a concept, or cluster map, or even a brainstorm list where you color-code like items together. You will see more on outlining and concept maps in Chapter 4.

Quick Tips for Students on Reading and Writing in College

Quick Tips for Students on Reading and Writing in College

1. **Be sure to read the assignment carefully and listen carefully in class!** Take time to underline the keywords. Do the assignment instructions say to compare, contrast, or discuss? What is the main topic for the assignment? For example, you may be asked to write an essay comparing each phase of mitosis. The keywords here are “**compare**,” “**each phase**,” and “**mitosis**.” If you write an amazing essay that *explains*, but does not compare, each phase of mitosis, you will earn zero credit. Why? Because you were asked to *compare* the phases. If you compare the phases of meiosis, you will earn zero credit. Why? Because you were asked to compare the phases of *mitosis*. In this case you have the wrong topic. So, make sure you have the correct assignment, and you understand what you are being asked to do. If ever in doubt, ask your professor!

1. **Read actively!** Read with a pen/highlighter in hand, and make that text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. Jot down short notes on the page or in the margin, highlight keywords or phrases (NOT the entire page!), and summarize what you have read. Then, where and whenever possible, discuss what you read with someone else. This way, you are taking information in (input through reading), but you also put that information out (in writing a summary and discussing with others).

1. **ALWAYS pay attention to detail!** You should see information about the length of a writing assignment, word count, and formatting in the assignment instructions. For example, if your professor wants a two-page paper, no more than 750 words, in MLA format, but you submit a 10-page paper in APA format, more than likely, you will get a 0 on this assignment. Why? You did not pay attention to *detail*. Sometimes, these little details may seem unimportant; however, following instructions and following detail are important skills to learn in college, as you will need to understand these skills in your future career!

Chapter 2: Reading and Writing Strategies for Effective College Reading and Learning

Writers:	Readers:
take notes and jot ideas down on the readings WHILE reading, not after.	must read actively, meaning they must read, think, connect, and even infer (make educated guesses), all while reading information.

Active Reading

Now that you understand the basics of how reading and writing work, this chapter presents some tried-and-true methods for reading and writing *simultaneously*, which will help you recall, or remember, information more readily!

Active reading involves doing something while reading. This can include reviewing the chapter/reading before reading, taking notes in the margin (annotating) while reading, and writing a summary of what was just read. There are three steps to active reading: before, during, and after.

****Before continuing, please take a moment to think of the ways in which you were taught to read** . What do you remember? What skills do you remember?

Often when this question is asked of students, the answers are usually things like, "sound each letter out," "follow along with my finger," "highlight words that are important," or "take notes in the margin."

While these are terrific skills, they only place the reader in the "during" category of active reading. But to truly connect with, and recall, the information, a reader must take steps before, during, and after reading the piece, text, chapter, or essay.

Before – Believe it or not, there should be steps taken BEFORE you read anything! Always look over the title, subtitle, headings, and subheadings, as this will give you an idea of what you are about to read. Look for important words (usually in bold or italicized), as these are often words that you will be tested on in upcoming exams. Also look at material at the start of a reading, such as author's objectives in a textbook.

During – WHILE reading, always read with a pen/pencil in hand. Take short notes in the margin of the reading (called *annotating*), and be sure to underline, circle, or star important concepts.

After – After reading, summarize the passage. Turn the reading upside down if you need to and try summarizing from what you recall from the reading. Another tip is to scan the margin of the reading for your notes, to include these notes in your summary. Finally, be sure to include this information in your own personal notes, especially if you know it could be on an upcoming exam.

Reading and Writing Strategies for Notetaking

Reading and Writing Strategies for Note-taking

Annotating

Annotating means taking quick, short notes in the margin (or somewhere on the page) of the reading. This may be done on a print essay, an article, or even in your textbook. In digital articles, many offer opportunities now to include notes, highlight, and insert digital sticky notes.

The five annotating tips below come directly from authors Burnell, Wood, Babin, Pesznecker, and Rosevear (2017), from their text titled, *The Word on College Reading and Writing*.

1. "Double-underline what you believe to be the topic or thesis statement in the article. (The thesis statement is one or two sentences that summarizes the article's main point and tells what it's about. The thesis statement can occur anywhere in the article—even near the end.)
2. As you read, underline points that you find especially interesting. Make notes in the margins as ideas occur to you.
3. Write question marks in the margin where questions occur to you, and make written margin notes about them, too.
4. Circle all words you don't understand. Then look them up! ([Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) is a good online dictionary and even pronounces words so you'll know how they sound.)
5. When you're finished, write a quick summary—several sentences or a short paragraph—that captures the article's main points."

Source: *The Word on College Reading and Writing*, available here: <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/wrd/>

SQ3R

SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review, and it is a great example of the before, during, and after reading methods. Founded by Francis Robinson, this method involves the following steps.

Survey: Review all parts of the reading, including headings, subheadings, titles, bold/italicized words, pictures, and the summary. This gives you a feel for what you are about to read.

Question: Turn key aspects of the readings into questions, especially the title, subtitle, and all headings and subheadings. Be sure the questions are open-ended.

Here is an example. Let's say the heading is *The Cell Cycle of the Human Body*.

DON'T ask: Does the human body have a cell cycle (by the nature of the title, we know the answer is yes).

DO ask: What is the cell cycle of the human body? How does the cell cycle work?

Read: Now, you will read with a purpose: to locate the answers to your questions. In non-fiction text, if you have turned the headings into questions, then the answers should be in the passages! Write the answers down AS you read (not after).

Recite: There are a few different ways to use the recite step in SQ3R. First, you can list out on a separate sheet of paper all the key/main details and ideas you recall. Another way to recite is to list out all the headings in the reading, and then without looking back at the reading, see what you recall from each section. This is a great way to study for an exam.

Review: The final step should be ongoing. You can write a summary of the passage or discuss the reading with friends. You should plan to review your notes daily, even for 10 minutes a day; that would be more effective to prepare for an upcoming exam than to cram the night before.

5Ws & 1H

The 5Ws and 1H method of reading and writing involves locating the "5Ws," which stand for who, what, when, where, why, and the one "H," which is how. These six questions help the reader find the critical details and the main idea in a reading. Be sure to make a chart on a separate piece of paper (or the back of a reading or the margin) and keep track of the five Ws and the one H AS you are reading.

Here are some tips for using this reading/writing method:

1. Ask yourself WHO the reading is about and WHO was featured in the reading: the who can be all people featured in the story, and the who can also be non-human. In the case of, say, an article on Amazon, the who may be Amazon.
2. Ask yourself WHAT is going on in the story and WHAT is the author's point they are trying to make.
3. Ask yourself WHERE the story takes place: this could include a state, a city, a country, a science lab, a house, a school...be sure to include all of these important details! Of course, there could be more than one location - that's OK!
4. Ask yourself WHEN the story unfolds and WHEN these actions occur: Is there a month listed in the story? Is there a year? Are the words the author uses clearly showing present tense? Look at the article's date as well, which will give you a sense of time if there is no year listed in the article.
5. Ask yourself WHY about the main idea: Let's say you were reading a story about a company offering free shipping to all its customers. You would want to ask WHY is a company going to offer free shipping to all its customers?
6. Ask yourself HOW about the story and the action: in step 5 (as an example), how will the company offer free shipping to all its customers? HOW will the company pay for this?

Reading/Thinking Voice

Illustrated by Kristina Smekens of Smekens Education, the reading/thinking voice is referred to as a dialectic notetaking approach. Dialectic means dialogue, and in the reading/thinking voice notes, you will have a dialogue between what you read and what you think about what you read.

This is an important skill because you cannot understand what you read if you do not stop and think about what you read!

You can do this type of voice and notetaking with any reading!

In a reading/thinking voice, you will draw a line down the middle of the page. Then, on the left side, you will capture the facts of the reading (the parts that are important to you or stand out to you, such as terms/definitions, main ideas, or important details). Across from that, on the right side, you will put *your thoughts at that moment* about what you wrote down on the left side. This is important to write as you read.

Here is an example (using the paragraph above, which describes the term dialectic):

Reading Voice

Dialectic means a dialogue, and in the reading/thinking voice notes, you will have a dialogue between what you read and what you think about what you read.

Thinking Voice

"Hmmm... how in the world do I do a 'dialogue' with a reading? Maybe this means to ask questions about what I just read."

"Perhaps when I dialogue, I can jot down notes or questions that are important to me."

Get Extra Help on Reading/Writing Strategies on Your Phone or Tablet!

Get Extra Help on Your Phone or Tablet!

Learn about annotation marks: [Annotating Marks](#)

Practice the SQ3R method: [Khan Academy SQ3R](#)

Practice the Reading/Thinking Voice: [Practice and watch the reading/thinking voice in action!](#)

Chapter 3: Main Ideas in Reading and Writing

Main Ideas in Reading and Writing

The main idea is the author's point about the topic. The main idea can go by a variety of terms, such as point, stance/argument (for a persuasive paper), thesis (the main idea for the entire essay/piece), and central idea. A topic sentence, which appears at the start of each body paragraph in an essay, is also a main idea. This is when the topic of the essay meets the main idea about that paragraph's key point.

In an essay, there will be one overarching main idea, called a thesis statement. This is the author's point for the ENTIRE essay. Then, each paragraph will have "mini" main ideas, called topic sentences. This is where the topic and main idea for THAT paragraph come together.

There are two TYPES of main ideas:

1. Stated main idea – This is literally written word-for-word for the reader. The writer makes his or her point clear in a statement that includes the topic of the paper and the point the author is making in that paper.
2. Implied main idea – This is a main idea that is NOT written out word-for-word in the essay, article, or written piece. With this type of main idea, the reader must "connect the dots" using the details the writer provides. This type of main idea is often used in narration essays.

Here are some writer's tips for finding the main idea. As a reader, be on the lookout for the main idea, and as a writer, you need to remember these tips to keep things clear and simple for your reader:

1. Look for a simple list/process list.

A simple or process list occurs when the author presents a numbered list (steps, stages, tips) using keywords as follows: first, second, third, also, in addition, for one thing, another, the first step, the next step, finally (these are not all of the signal words, but these are the common ones to look for).

1. When you see these signal words, circle them.
2. The main idea will almost always come before the first item in the list. Let's look at an example:

There are a few tips to consider when studying for an exam. **First**, be sure to put away (or turn off) anything that could cause a distraction, such as a cell phone, earbuds, or even a TV. **Next**, take out all your notes from the class. **Third**, make sure you have a highlighter and pens in different colors to make annotations in the margins. **Finally**, create a set of flashcards to test yourself on the critical vocabulary.

Notice the placement of this main idea. In an informational essay, this would be the topic sentence of that body paragraph.

1. Look for a reverse transition.

Look for the signal words *however, but, yet, although, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary* in the second, third, or fourth sentence of the paragraph. ****Placement is CRUCIAL here for this to be a reverse transition.**** The sentence that starts with that reverse transition signal word (sometimes considered the contrast, or difference, signal word) is the main idea.

Many people were not happy about wearing masks when the pandemic first hit the United States. **However, many lessons were learned from the wearing of masks.** First, masks helped prevent person A from spreading COVID to another person. Second, masks help limit the spread of other illnesses as well, such as the common cold and the flu.

1. Be on the lookout for pronouns.

These are almost never the main idea! Pronouns take the place of nouns (e.g., girl = she, college = it, students = they). The main idea can "stand on its own," meaning that it must tell the reader exactly what they need to know IN that sentence. If you are wondering who "he" or "she" or "they" is, and you have to go back to another sentence to understand who the writer is discussing, then that is probably not the main idea.

Michael is starting school in two weeks and will need some supplies. First, he will need a backpack. Next, he must make sure to get all his textbooks for his classes. Finally, he will need to make sure he has a working laptop or tablet for notetaking. He is excited to start college!

4. Look for concluding sentences.

While these will generally not be used as main ideas in essays, you may find the main idea appear in a research article or textbook reading at the end of a paragraph or section. This will usually be signaled with words like *therefore, in conclusion, or the conclusion of the study was...*

The researchers examined data from 420 college student participants and found that an overwhelming percentage of students were happiest when they could use free textbooks. **Therefore, the conclusion of the study is the free textbook movement is gaining momentum.**

Writing a Thesis Statement and a Topic Sentence

Remember that the main idea is the author's - YOUR point - about the topic. Here is a simple formula to write your thesis!

Your POINT or OPINION + Topic + Reason = THESIS

Let's look at this "formula" more closely!

EXAMPLE #1:

Topic = texting while driving

Opinion = should be illegal in all 50 states

Reason = because it distracts drivers

Thesis: Texting while driving should be illegal in all 50 states because it distracts drivers and causes numerous accidents and deaths across the country. {thesis for a persuasive or argumentative essay}

EXAMPLE #2:

Topic = building a personal computer

Opinion = can be done in three steps

Reason = find parts, put computer together, add software

Thesis: Building a personal computer can be completed in three core steps: purchasing parts, assembling the computer, and adding software. {thesis for a process essay}

Chapter 4: Arrangement and Organization of Essays

Chapter 4: Arrangement and Organization of Essays

Writers:	Readers:
organize their pre-writing to help them see ideas and connections between and among ideas.	carefully review their pre-writing to look for connections and missing points or ideas.
understand that organization is important for clarity in writing.	appreciate organization when reading any writing. This organization helps readers find the main idea and details faster.
understand the three different outlining strategies for capturing and connecting details in essays.	understand the three different outlining strategies for capturing and connecting ideas in readings.

Understanding the Academic/5-Paragraph/1-3-1 Essay

In college and life, you will be asked to write papers. Some will be short, perhaps a paragraph, while others may be longer, such as 10 pages long. But before you can write a comprehensive research paper, it helps to understand the basic structure of the academic essay, which is sometimes called the “5-paragraph essay” or the “1-3-1” essay.

This essay includes the following characteristics:

*Five paragraphs:

- An introduction paragraph, which introduces the thesis (main idea) for the entire essay. Before the thesis (which will appear towards the END of the introduction paragraph), the writer will start with a hook to “hook” the reader’s attention, explain/connect the hook to the thesis (called the bridge), then present the main idea (the thesis), then include the three key points that support the main idea.
- Three body paragraphs, each with three details. Body paragraphs start with a topic sentence (the main idea for THAT paragraph) and end with a transition sentence, which readies the reader for the next key point/body paragraph.
- A conclusion paragraph. The conclusion paragraph serves to “wrap up” the essay and what the reader just read by reminding the reader of the thesis, the key points, and then ending with a bang, just like we begin with a hook.

*Series of three:

- The basic, academic essay usually uses the “series of three” principle:
 - Three key points in the introduction support the thesis and form the body paragraphs.
 - Three body paragraphs (each key point gets its own body paragraph).
 - Three details in each body paragraph (each detail supports THAT key point).

Organizing Your Essay and Your Learning

Organizing Your Essay

Regardless of the length of your essay, whether it is a five-paragraph essay or a five-page research paper, organizing your essay and your thoughts is crucial BEFORE you ever start writing. A big mistake many writers make is not spending time prewriting. Yet, this first step in writing is crucial! Once you have decided upon a topic for your essay (or, if a topic has been provided to you by your professor), you will need to spend some time prewriting. Prewriting is the act of organizing your thoughts so that you can see where connections are, what details you have, and what details you need. In addition, you will also see if your ideas are connected (they should be!!).

Organizing Your Learning

Remember that when you are reading, you are reading what someone else *wrote*. Therefore, it makes sense that the same organizational strategies used for organizing your writing can be used to organize someone else's writing – meaning the very same outlines, concept maps, and lists can be used to organize what you are reading.

There are a few different options for prewriting, organizing your essay, and taking notes!

This first option is called a formal outline. The formal outline includes Roman numerals and letters, and the sample outline below was designed for the academic or 5-paragraph essay. The pros of this outline include the thoroughness and the fact that you can write out complete sentences easily on this type of template. The con can be that sometimes this is confusing in the early stages of writing, and some students do not like blank spaces on their outlines. For example, you may not know your hook and bridge until you write the entire essay.

The outline may be used for taking notes, especially in classes such as history, when you need to keep track of dates. This would also be a great way to take notes in a very structured class or a class where the professor provides handouts ahead of time.

Related resources

Formal Outline for 5-Paragraph Essay

DOCX
[Download](#)

Brainstorm_Cluster_Thesis Roadmap

DOCX
[Download](#)

Concept Map_Editable_Word

DOCX
[Download](#)

The Formal Outline

This first option is called a formal outline. The formal outline includes Roman numerals and letters, and the sample outline below was designed for the academic or 5-paragraph essay. The pros of this outline include the thoroughness and the fact that you can write out complete sentences easily on this type of template. The con can be that sometimes this is confusing in the early stages of writing, and some students do not like blank spaces on their outlines. For example, you may not know your hook and bridge until you write the entire essay.

The outline may be used for taking notes, especially in classes such as history, when you need to keep track of dates. This would also be a great way to take notes in a very structured class or a class where the professor provides handouts ahead of time.

Formal Outline for 5-Paragraph Essay/ For Reading Passages

1. Introduction Paragraph

1. Hook
2. Bridge
3. Thesis (main idea)
 1. Key Point 1
 2. Key Point 2
 3. Key Point 3

2. Body Paragraph 1/Key Point 1

1. Topic sentence
 1. Detail #1
 2. Detail #2
 3. Detail #3

2. Transition Sentence

3. Body Paragraph 2/Key Point 2

1. Topic sentence
 1. Detail #1
 2. Detail #2
 3. Detail #3

2. Transition Sentence

4. Body Paragraph 3/Key Point 3

1. Topic sentence
 1. Detail #1
 2. Detail #2
 3. Detail #3

2. Transition/wrap-up sentence

5. Conclusion Paragraph

1. Reworded thesis statement
2. Briefly reiterate/remind the reader about three key points
3. End with a bang (try to connect back to hook)

The Concept/Cluster Map

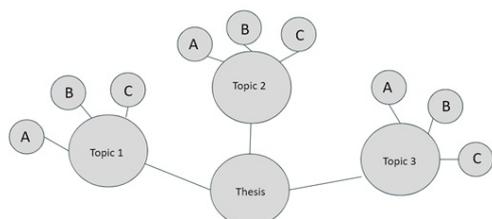
The second option is called an informal outline, and more specifically, a concept or cluster map. This style works well for those who may be more visual or abstract thinkers. In the center bubble, you will place your topic, and preferably also your thesis statement, because this is the subject of the essay. Next, you will write your first topic sentence in one of the bubbles and the three details that show how this topic supports your thesis in individual bubbles that connect to the topic sentence one bubble. Then write your second topic sentence in another bubble and the three details that show how this topic supports your thesis in individual bubbles that connect to the topic sentence two bubble. Last, write your third topic sentence in a bubble and the three details that show how this topic supports your thesis in individual bubbles that connect to the topic sentence three bubble.

NOTE: If using this to map out thoughts for your five-paragraph essay, each bubble represents one of the body paragraphs in your essay!

If using this for longer essays, you may add additional bubbles.

This concept map may also be used for notetaking purposes! This is a great notetaking method for someone who is very visual, for classes where you need to see relationships among ideas (such as a literature course), and for courses where the professor teaches in a non-linear fashion.

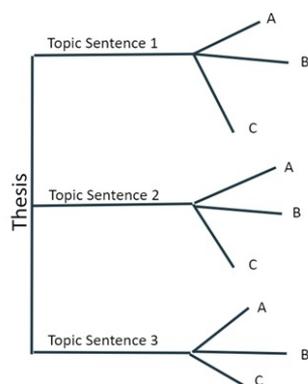
Informal Outline – The Concept/Cluster Map



The Chicken Foot

The third prewriting/notetaking option is called a "chicken foot." This style of outline became popular in the last ten years and combines the formal and informal styles of outlining. First, you will need to write out your thesis vertically along the main line to make sure you remember the subject of the essay. Next, you will write your first topic sentence on the top line and the three details that show how this topic supports your thesis on individual lines that connect to the topic sentence one. Now, write your second topic sentence on the second line and the three details that show how this topic supports your thesis on individual lines that connect to the topic sentence two. Last, write your third topic sentence on the last line and the three details that show how this topic supports your thesis on individual lines that connect to the topic sentence three.

Informal Outline - Chicken Foot



Reading/Writing Tips for Prewriting/Notetaking

Reading/Writing Tips for Prewriting/Notetaking:

1. Use the templates in Word or Google Docs to create a formal or informal outline.
2. Google “free concept map generator” to create a concept, or cluster map, on your computer.
3. Try different outlines for the same essay. Start with a cluster map to flesh out ideas, then move to the formal outline to expand upon those ideas.
4. Try different notetaking strategies in your classes. It’s always a great idea to know various strategies and use them accordingly. For example, formal outlines work well for topics that are very date-heavy or linear (step-by-step); for more humanities-based courses, such as literature or art, the concept map would be a great choice.
5. Remember that notetaking is critical as part of the learning process. Even if you think you do not need to take notes, you should take notes! This is what helps you begin to recall and connect information. You should plan on keeping a separate notebook for each class, and be sure to title your notes and date them at the top of each page, so you can find them quickly and easily throughout the semester.

Chapter 5: Words, Word Choices, and Context Clues

Writers:	Readers:
recognize that the more they read, the more sophisticated terminology they will learn and know for their own writings.	recognize that the more they read what others write, they are actively building their vocabulary.
choose appropriate words and phrases that help their supporting details come to life.	must be able to determine words within the context of the reading; sometimes readers cannot stop to look a word up.
understand that vivid verbs and crystal clear words, as well as collegiate-level synonyms for everyday terminology, help make their writing more sophisticated, academic, and professional.	Use vivid verbs and clear words to imagine, picture, and even embrace the images that come through what they are reading.

Context Clues

Context clues are clues or hints, the reader picks up on from the context, or the background/environment of the reading.

Sometimes, when we are reading, we just cannot stop and take out a dictionary or our phones to look up words. So, we must rely on the context of the source to determine the unknown words.

There are four basic types of context clues. Understanding the types can help you figure out a word faster.

Synonym Clue - synonym means the same, so a synonym clue means that the unknown word will be the same meaning as another word in that sentence:

EXAMPLE: Marsha is prompt and quick when submitting her homework.

Hmm... Notice the word "and" is joining the words prompt and quick. This tells the reader that prompt and quick must be similar, so prompt must mean the same as quick!

Antonym Clue - in this type of hint, the writer uses signal words that indicate the opposite (but, however, although, nevertheless, whereas) to indicate the opposite meaning of the unknown word:

EXAMPLE: Jasmine's desk is neat and tidy, whereas Poppy's desk is unkempt.

Hmm... "Whereas" indicates a change in direction...so if Jasmine's desk is neat and tidy, and we're switching direction to the *opposite* of neat and tidy, then unkempt must mean not neat and messy!

Definition Clue

In a definition context clue, the writer will literally define the meaning of the unknown word. Look for hints like *or, means, which is, that is, which means, is the same as, is defined as, or the use of dashes or commas* to separate the unknown term from the meaning:

EXAMPLE: Jaden was elated, or thrilled, at the outcome of his team's score.

Hmm... Notice the word "thrilled" surrounded by commas; this sets off the definition of elated. So, elated means thrilled.

General Knowledge Clue

Sometimes, readers must use what they know about something - their background knowledge - to figure out the actual clue. In addition, readers have to pull in other clues in the sentence(s) to determine the unknown word.

EXAMPLE: Melanie was getting madder and madder with blind dates and dating apps. Every time she went on a date, it turned out to be one bad evening after another. She was *infuriated* with the time and money she spent on buying clothes and doing her hair. She was fed up!

Hmm... Notice the word "infuriated" comes after words like madder and madder and fed up. This tells us that infuriated probably means angry.

Confusing Words

Commonly Confused Words

The following chart from the book *Writing for Success* presents the most commonly confused words that writers and readers may come across. To access this chart, please visit: <https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/4-1-commonly-confused-words/>

A, An, And

A (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant or sounds like it starts with a consonant.

- a key, a mouse, a screen

An (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel or sounds like it starts 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 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.

NOTICE: It is NOT "I should of helped her..."

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

Your (pronoun). A form of you that shows possession.

- Your book bag is unzipped.

You're (contraction). Joins the words you and are.

- You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.

Commonly confused chart Writing for Success, <https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/4-1-commonly-confused-words/> Licensed under CC BY NC-SA <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> Adaptations were made to formatting, font, size, and color of font.

Chapter 6: Understanding the Parts of an Essay

Chapter 5: Understanding the Parts of the Essay

Writers:	Readers:
understand that the entire essay must be interconnected. The topic must be written in the thesis, and each key point must relate back to the thesis and the topic.	will get very confused if they think they are reading about Topic A, but the main idea and details are not related to that topic.
make sure to organize their ideas and connect their ideas for readability.	readers look for connections in the reading, often without even realizing this.
are careful to constantly remind the reader - through the thesis, key points topic sentences, and transition sentences, of the paper's point.	look for signal posts or signs of what the reading is about; these signposts come through via the thesis, key points, topic sentences, and transition sentences.

Parts of an Essay - Do all the parts "fit?"

John Langan (2019, p. xvii), in his text titled, *College Writing Skills with Readings*, explains that essays should have four characteristics. These are:

1. Unity - What is the point of your essay? Do you stay on point? Do all the details and paragraphs support that point?
2. Coherence - This refers to the connection and flow of your essay. Do you have signal words and transition sentences? Do your details flow effortlessly from one point to another? If not, your details may sound choppy to the reader.
3. Support - Does your essay have details? In addition to details, are they clear, colorful, and backed by expert opinion/support where applicable? Do you have specific examples?
4. Sentence skills - Is your essay readable? Do you follow basic grammar principles (e.g., capitalizing the first word of each new sentence, adding punctuation throughout), as well as more advanced grammar skills (e.g., looking for comma splices, fixing run-on sentences, and locating fragments)?

When you write an essay, you need to make sure that you do not go off topic, bring in additional information that could confuse the reader, or present shallow details that do not paint the picture for what you are trying to convey.

As a reader, when you know what to look for in an essay, you will be able to find the main idea and details that much faster - in essays, research reports, and articles. Knowing the parts of an essay helps you as both the reader and the writer of essays!

Hooks, Bridges, and "Bangs"

Hooks, Bridges, and "Bangs"

No matter the length of your essay, there are some basic principles that you will need to **follow to grab and keep your reader's attention**. Do NOT assume that just because a peer has been assigned to read your paper, or a professor "has" to read your essay, that they were interested in the paper from start to finish. Keeping your reader's attention is important, especially in an academic setting!

Hook

Just like it sounds, a hook is a writing device that "hooks," or grabs, the reader's attention. Examples of hooks include a thought-provoking question, a statistic, or even a quote. Here are some tips for creating a great hook!

***DO be sure that your hook is related to your topic.** Sometimes, a writer may see an interesting quote that is loosely related to the topic at hand, but when the reader starts reading through the introduction, the hook does not seem to quite "connect" with the thesis.

EXAMPLE: "The game of football is one of strategy and tactics," said Woody Hayes. A lot of work goes into winning football games. Players practice long hours on the field. There are three characteristics that make a great football player: courage, confidence, and determination.

BETTER OPTION: Joe Paterno once said, "The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital." The game of football is a sport that requires that very will Paterno spoke of in his famous quote. In addition to this mental strength, football players must also possess courage, confidence, and determination.

DO avoid closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions are questions that usually only produce a one-word response, such as yes, no, or maybe. The problem with this hook is that if your intention was a yes (or no) response in the mind of your reader, but your reader responds opposite of the way you intended, you have already lost your reader's attention.

EXAMPLE: "Do you think that texting while driving should be illegal?" {if your reader thinks "no," you have already lost them!}

BETTER OPTION: According to Warnick's (3) research, 42.6% of people have been impacted by drivers who were texting while operating a motor vehicle."

***DO NOT skip the hook!** Too often, new writers might skip the hook altogether, or jump right into the thesis. The hook needs to be evident for the reader; this is what begins to build interest. You would not jump right to the punchline of the joke. Why? It would not make sense! This is the same with the hook. The reader needs that hook to buy into your argument or to begin to understand the topic you are writing about.

Bridge

The bridge serves to literally "connect" the hook with the thesis in the essay. If we only have a hook followed by the main idea, with no explanation or further definition to provide background information (also referred to as "context") for the reader, the reader could be confused. The bridge should naturally flow from the hook and then serve as a "lead-in" or set up for the thesis (main idea) for the entire essay. Here are some tips for creating a great bridge!

***DO consider using the bridge to further explain or define the topic.** This helps create a nice flow for the reader and further explains the importance of the topic.

EXAMPLE (without a bridge): According to Warnick's (3) research, 42.6% of people have been impacted by drivers who were texting while operating a motor vehicle. Due to these accidents, driving while texting should be made illegal in every state in America.

CORRECTED VERSION (bridge is in blue): According to Warnick's (3) research, 42.6% of people have been impacted by drivers who were texting while operating a motor vehicle. This impact includes everything from minor fender-benders to larger, more impactful automobile collisions and pedestrian accidents. Due to these accidents, driving while texting should be made illegal in every state in America.

***DO NOT use the thesis as a bridge.** The reader needs to "see" the connection between the hook and the thesis. Additionally, when a writer uses their thesis as the bridge, it becomes repetitive for the reader.

EXAMPLE: Joe Paterno once said, "The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital." The game of football is a sport that requires that very will Paterno spoke of in his famous quote, as well as things like courage, confidence, and determination. Football players must possess courage, confidence, and determination.

BETTER OPTION (bridge is in blue): Joe Paterno once said, "The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital." The game of football is a sport that requires that very will Paterno spoke of in his famous quote. "Will" in its basic sense refers to mental determination and diligence. Will is the foundation for the preparation needed to be successful in football, and this preparation is needed in the areas of physical health, mental focus, and strategy development.

"Bangs"/Conclusion Paragraph

Just like writers start with a hook, they must end their essay with something - we call this a "bang," that leaves the reader wanting more, feeling as though they are called to action, or nodding their heads in response to what they just read. In addition to ending with a bang, this section presents some additional things to keep in mind when writing that conclusion paragraph. Here are some tips for the conclusion paragraph!

***LINK your "bang" to your hook, if possible.** Whether you began with a meaningful quote or a statistic, this is a great place to remind the reader and tie everything together for the reader.

EXAMPLE: Understanding the importance of preparation in the game of football, especially in the areas of physical health, mental alertness, and strategy development - is vital for success on the field. Success is not about memorizing plays or lifting weights. As Paterno famously uttered, "the will to prepare is vital." Without a plan, failure is inevitable.

***END with a call to action.** A call to action end is very desirable in a persuasive or argumentative essay.

EXAMPLE: While the United States has begun to crack down on those who insist on texting while driving, more must be done to protect both pedestrians and other drivers. Now is the time to act before more innocent lives are impacted by this very controllable behavior.

***DO Provide your reader with a sentence that “they can do this, too!” This is effective in informational essays.**

EXAMPLE: When a student utilizes these three time management techniques, they, too, can master the art of time management!

***DO NOT introduce new material into the conclusion.** The conclusion should never introduce something that was not written about in the body. Otherwise, you risk losing and confusing your reader. Only reiterate the key points mentioned in the body; do not introduce a new key point or detail here.

Topic and Transition Sentences in Essays

Topic Sentences

Just like there is a thesis - a main idea for the entire essay - each body paragraph will start with a topic sentence, which is the main idea for THAT paragraph. When you write that topic sentence, you need to include the key point in that sentence. Do not just jump into the details!

TOPIC + KEY POINT FOR THAT PARAGRAPH = TOPIC SENTENCE

Here is an example topic sentence for the first key point from this thesis and key point (KP) statement: "Time management is critical for college success, and three strong time management strategies that have shown great results among college students include the Pomodoro Technique, digital calendars, and short- and long-term goal setting."

CORRECT: The first time management technique that has shown great success in college students is the Pomodoro Technique. The first step in the Pomodoro Technique is to set a timer for 20 minutes.

INCORRECT: First, set a timer for 20 minutes.

Transition Sentences

Not all your essays will only have three body paragraphs; some may have six body paragraphs: two paragraphs for each key point. Because of this, and to ready the reader for what is to come next, you will need a wrap-up sentence that will move the reader from one point to the next; otherwise, the reader will think or assume that the next body paragraph is still about the key point in the current body paragraph.

CORRECT: While the Pomodoro Technique is very effective for time management and avoiding procrastination, studies show that digital calendars work equally as well for college students.

INCORRECT. Now we will talk about digital calendars.

Chapter 7: Purposes, Patterns, and Signal Words in Reading and Writing

Writers:	Readers:
write with a purpose, or reason, for writing! Their purpose could be to inform their readers about something, persuade them into acting a certain way, or entertain them through humor.	readers READ for a purpose. Sometimes it is to learn something, while other times, it may be to entertain themselves.
use certain signal words to help organize their writing and make it easier to read and understand.	can look for certain signal words, which will help them further understand the writer's purpose for writing.
organize their supporting details in patterns, which makes the details easier to understand, follow, and comprehend for the reader.	pay attention to patterns to determine the message the author is trying to convey, or send, in the writing.

Purposes for Reading and Writing

There are three purposes for reading and writing.

Persuade: Persuade means to encourage you, the reader, to believe in, adopt, embrace, or accept the writer's beliefs, arguments, or stance (position) on a topic. Persuasive writing will use modal verbs, such as should, must,

Inform: Informational writing is neutral, and this type of writing is designed to inform the reader about something. Textbooks and cookbooks are two examples of informative, or informational, writing.

Entertain: This is a broad category for writing, and both fiction and non-fiction writing (such as memoirs) can be included in this category. Written pieces that entertain could be sad, humorous, or scary, so romance thrillers, mystery novels, and even poems can be considered entertainment.

When in doubt, remember P.I.E.!

Signal Words and Supporting Details

Signal Words and Supporting Details

Writers use signal or transition words to organize their supporting details. Writers will use these signal or transition words to move from one detail to another. Not only do signal words help the reader follow along, but they also help the sentences within paragraphs flow nicely from one detail to another. This helps the writing in any piece sound smooth and not choppy.

Supporting details can come in many “shapes and sizes,” but usually include specifics, such as:

- numbers
- percentages
- dollar signs
- reasons
- facts
- definitions
- examples (*for example, for instance*)
- expert opinions

As a friendly reminder, supporting details are never the main idea. They are the EVIDENCE for the main idea or thesis.

Patterns 1 and 2: Simple List and Time Order

Patterns 1 and 2: Simple List and Time Order (Perfect for Informational Essays!)

Simple list and time order patterns, on their surface, look similar: both can be used for informational writing, as both are designed to inform readers about something (such as reading strategies) or explain step-by-step how to do something (such as how to make a particular recipe).

What makes simple list and time order different?

- In a simple list pattern, the order in which the information is presented does not matter. How one author chooses to lay out the information may differ from the way another author chooses to write this information. In fact, writer 1 could list the three key points one way, writer 2 could list them in a different way, and both authors could still come to the same idea or conclusion.
- On the other hand, in time order, the order of the list DOES matter. If even one detail cannot be swapped or switched around, then we have time order. For example, if you are writing about the steps needed to apply to and take classes in college, then this would be time order. Why? A student cannot take classes for which he or she has not paid, and the student cannot pay for classes if he or she has not completed an application.

Because of this difference, time order is generally used when writing about steps, stages, phases, or cycles. Simple list is used when writing about tips, strategies, kinds, ways, things, or ideas.

Signal words readers should look for and writers should use:

Again, because the two patterns look similar, the signal words will look similar as well. The most common signal words for simple list and time order are:

- First, second, third, also, next, finally (not necessarily in this order)
- The first step, the next step (or stage, or cycle, or phase)
- A bulleted or numbered list
- Moreover, in addition

Main idea statements (thesis statements and topic sentences) readers should look for and writers should use:

For simple list patterns:

- The main idea (thesis for the whole essay/topic sentence for a paragraph) will probably have words such as ways, kinds, things, tips, or ideas in the sentence:
 - There are a few tips college students should be aware of when learning to study properly.

For time order patterns:

- The main idea (thesis for the whole essay/topic sentence for a paragraph) will probably have words such as steps, stages, phases, segments, periods, or cycles, in the sentence:
 - There are four steps to applying for college admission.

****Reader/Writer Hint!****

Usually, in body paragraphs, the topic sentence will appear right before the first signal word. Look for signal words, such as first, second, next, also, and circle them. Then look right before that first signal word, and that should be the main idea of the paragraph.

Pattern 3: Chronological

Pattern 3: Chronological (Great for Informational Essays!)

Chronology literally means time! Chronological patterns are patterns where the writer has listed out months, days, or years to explain a sequence or timeline of events. Chronological works especially well when explaining a historical event.

Signal words readers should look for and writers should use:

The most common signal words for chronological patterns are:

- First, second, third, also, next, finally (not necessarily in this order)
- Years
- Dates
- Months (e.g., *In January, on February 15, 1982...*)
- Before, during, while, after

Pattern 4: Compare and Contrast

Pattern 4: Compare and/or Contrast

In reading and writing, the word *compare* means to look at how two or more things are similar, or what they have in common, while the word *contrast* means to look at how two things are different.

Compare and contrast is a critical skill in college and beyond; every day, you need to quickly determine similarities and differences among items.

****IMPORTANT** It is CRUCIAL to read instructions carefully!** Sometimes, you might be asked to compare AND contrast, which means you will need to examine how two things are both similar AND different. Other times, you may be asked to select – compare OR contrast. In this case, you would choose whether to compare two things or contrast them. Compare and/or contrast is a common pattern used on exams and in writing essays.

Signal words readers should look for and writers should use:

The most common signal words for compare and contrast patterns are:

- Similarities
- Differences
- Similarly
- On the other hand
- In contrast
- Contrary to popular belief
- Both

Main idea/Thesis statement in compare and contrast:

The main idea MUST tell the reader two things:

1. That this IS compare and contrast or compare or contrast and,
2. WHAT two things are being compared and/or contrasted

EXAMPLE:

There are several similarities and differences between Lubbock and Dallas. {compare AND contrast; Lubbock and Dallas are the two things being compared and contrasted}

The growth mindset and the fixed mindset have stark differences. {contrast only; the word *differences* tells us this. The growth and fixed mindsets are being contrasted here}

Pattern 5: Cause and Effect

Pattern #5: Cause and Effect

The cause and effect pattern examines the causes (reasons) why something happens/happened, and/or the effect (result) of that event. In essay writing, this can also be considered a causal analysis paper, where the author analyzes the cause of a result or event that occurred.

Signal words readers should look for and writers should use:

- The cause of...
- The effect of...
- The reason is/are/was/were...
- The event
- Because
- Due to...
- As a result
- The result was/is...

Main idea/Thesis statement in cause and effect:

1. The main idea is usually the sentence that presents the effect (event).
2. However, in the case of a causal analysis paper, the main idea is the cause.

EXAMPLE:

There are a number of factors that caused me to succeed this semester. {causal analysis}

Smoking (cause) results (effect) in several health-related issues, such as emphysema, cancer, and cardiovascular issues. {cause and effect}

Chapter 8: Editing and Revising Essays

Writers:	Readers:
understand that writing happens in a "series of threes." They prewrite (organize) their writing, write their draft, and then edit and revise.	instinctively begin to pick up on errors in their own writing.
do BOTH editing and revisions to their essays.	review the drafts of peers to further develop their reading and writing skills.

Editing and Revising Essays

When you are done writing your draft, it is time to revise and edit your essay. Often, you will revise and edit while writing, especially the stronger you become at writing. As the reader of your own writing, you will notice little mistakes, and you will start to correct in the moment. You might also begin live revising while drafting; again, you will read something in your head or out loud, and fix the phrasing, more sentences around, or delete sections that do not seem to convey the message you writing to your audience.

How to Revise Your Paper

How to Revise Your Paper

Read your essay out loud. Reading your essay aloud is perhaps one of the best ways to begin the revision process because you can often hear mistakes you might not normally hear in your head. You will also hear whether a phrase sounds correct or is missing vital information.

Strive for clear, colorful, specific details. If, when you read your essay, you feel as though you are going in circles (i.e., you are repeating yourself, or you feel a shallowness to your body paragraphs), this usually means your details are not specific, clear, and colorful enough.

Details in writing should include specific examples throughout to paint the picture for the reader.

HINT: Be sure to vary your examples. You might use one example to explain your first detail, but you might also provide two examples for the next detail. Also, be sure to vary your signal words, as this can also make the paragraph sounds repetitive.

EXAMPLE: Courage is important to be successful in football. First, in the game of football, players need to have courage and be mentally strong. Second, mental strength is important in football, especially when working out. Third, courage is important for facing difficult choices preparing for the game.

CORRECTED: For players to be successful in football, whether on a pro or college team, they need to be courageous. For example, when a 300-pound linebacker is charging towards a player, the player cannot run; instead, the football player must embrace this challenge head-on. Courage also forms the basis of preparing for the game itself by remaining mentally strong during weak moments, such as hours in the gym, restricting calories to stay healthy, or practicing on the field.

Form a peer review group. Whether required in your class or not, you should get in the habit of reading others' essays, and vice versa. This will help you begin to spot errors in your own paper as well. When you review someone's paper (or even your own!), consider the questions on the checklist at the end of this chapter!

Challenge your vocabulary throughout your paper. The more you read, the more words you will learn, and these words should begin to make their way into your essays! We tend to use some words in our everyday language that may be too casual or basic for academic essays, especially for academic essays written by college students. Words such as *like*, *stuff*, and *things* could be changed to *enjoy*, *material*, and *objects*. Get in the habit of consulting a thesaurus, or right-click a word you would like to change and select thesaurus from the menu in Word.

Vary your sentences in length and kind. Go through your essays, sentence by sentence, and look closely at the length of each sentence. Are they all short? Are they all long? One is not necessarily better than the other, but if you have all the same length throughout the essay, then the essay might sound clipped and botchy if the sentences are all short, or long and drawn out if the sentences are all long.

Also, do you start some of your sentences with dependent clauses? A dependent clause is a phrase that has a subject and a verb, but on its own, it does not make sense (EXAMPLE: Although I know what a dependent clause is...). For example, see how this sentence is begging for "the rest of the thought?" Place a comma after the dependent clause, and then finish the thought (Although I know what a dependent clause is, I noticed I was not using enough of them in my writing).

Vary your signal/transition words. When reading through your paper, do you find you are always using the same words (e.g., First,... Next, ...Finally, ...First,..., Next,)? This can become extremely repetitive for the reader. Be sure to vary those signal words throughout!

How to Edit Your Paper

How to Edit Your Paper

Read your essay “backwards,” from the bottom up. Because you have been living with your essay for several weeks, if not several months, you already know the order in which your sentences and paragraphs flow. Even if you do not have the essay memorized, you know which detail comes first and which key point forms the last body paragraph. Because your mind already knows this, you could overlook some missing connections, details, or examples. Read the last sentence first. Then move back to the second-to-last sentence, and so on. You will be more apt to catch errors in sentence structure using this method.

Create your own checklist. Sitting with the instructions for your paper, create a checklist of what you should have. Alternatively, you might sit with the rubric that will be used to grade the essay. Check off each item you have in your paper. If you are missing an item, this means that you need to go back.

Use the Search Tool in Word (or CTRL + F). You can actually search your document for common errors or to check to make sure you do not have certain mistakes in your paper, such as comma splices or the first-person point-of-view throughout. Please see the attached document which presents a table of suggested items to search for in your essay.

Use a color-editing code. According to Sherri Bova (2007), in her lesson for teaching editing, she suggests using a color-coding system to identify common errors in drafts. An example of this, according to Bova, would be “blue - highlight the first word in each sentence; yellow - highlight every use of the 'to be' verb; green - highlight all the details in paragraphs; purple - highlight all transition words” (p. 161). With these highlights, you can now look for the following and fix these in your papers: “develop a variety in opening sentences (blue); practice the use of vivid verbs (yellow); use specific details for each idea (green); include transition words to show connections (purple)” (p. 161).

Related resources

Suggested search ideas for editing papers

DOCX

[Download](#)

Sample Peer Review Checklist (Reader's Perspective)

Peer Review Checklist for Essay X

Your Name: _____

Peer's Name: _____

Title of Peer's Paper: _____

GENERAL FORMATTING

- ___ Times New Roman, 12-point font
- ___ Author block with name, professor name, course name/code, and date in correct format
- ___ Proper date format: day month year
- ___ Double spaced at 0point/0point double in the formatting/paragraph settings
- ___ Last name and page number is in the upper right-hand corner of the **header** (font is TNR 12).

ESSAY STRUCTURE

- ___ Five body paragraphs (Intro, three BPs, Conclusion)
- ___ 500+ words
- ___ Topic sentence that starts EACH body paragraph.
- ___ Transition sentences at the end of EACH body paragraph (one and two).

INTRO PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

- ___ Hook is interesting and compelling.
- ___ Bridge follows hook and "ties" the hook to the thesis.
- ___ Thesis is evident and in correct format (e.g., not in question form).
- ___ Three key point sentence follows thesis or is part of the thesis sentence.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1 STRUCTURE

- ___ There are THREE key details to support this key point.
- ___ The author uses signal words so I can see the details (e.g., First,... Also,..., Another lesson learned was...., In addition,)
- ___ This body paragraph is about the FIRST key point mentioned in the intro.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2 STRUCTURE

- ___ There are THREE key details to support this key point.
- ___ The author uses signal words so I can see the details (e.g., First,... Also,..., Another lesson learned was...., In addition,)
- ___ This body paragraph is about the SECOND key point mentioned in the intro.

BODY PARAGRAPH 3 STRUCTURE

- ___ There are THREE key details to support this key point.
- ___ The author uses signal words so I can see the details (e.g., First,... Also,..., Another lesson learned was...., In addition,)
- ___ This body paragraph is about the THIRD key point mentioned in the intro.

CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

____ Thesis is actually REWORDED, not merely repeated

HINT: Look back at the intro to see if the thesis is reworded.

____ Author briefly summarizes each major key point.

____ Conclusion ends with a bang. There is a satisfying ending that makes you (the reader) feel as though the essay really did come to an end.

OVERALL TONE

____ Author uses the third person (e.g., he, she, they, people) or second person (e.g., you, us, we, your), but stays consistent in voice.

____ Author uses CLEAR examples to back up what he/she is saying, not merely generalizations.

____ Author “shows” the reader what he/she means, instead of telling. *EXAMPLE: In addition to clear examples, the author NEVER says the following: “Now I am going to tell you about _____.”*

____ Author does not take a side and remains neutral throughout.

____ Author does not use “I” or “me.”

OVERALL GRAMMAR/MECHANICS/WORD CHOICE

____ Only proper nouns (SPECIFIC nouns) are capitalized.

____ The topic (e.g., football) is NOT capitalized, unless it is the first word in the sentence.

____ There are complete sentences throughout the essay, with punctuation separating sentences.

____ There are few to no run-on sentences; the writing was very clear for the reader.

____ The writer wrote for his audience (i.e., perfect balance of definitions when needed, but still written in a manner that took the reader into consideration).

____ The word choice is sophisticated but not overly complicated.

EXAMPLE: Instead of “like” to mean enjoy, the author uses words such as relish or appreciate:

- College students like to take notes using the outline format.
- College students relish the opportunity to take notes using an outline.

As a reader:

- Indicate which parts of the paper you find most or least effective, and why:
- Identify or rephrase the thesis:
- List the major points of support or evidence:
- Indicate sentences or paragraphs that seem out of order, incompletely explained, or otherwise in need of revision:

Chapter 9: Argumentative and Persuasive Essays

Writers:	Readers:
form an argument and a claim, use research and sources to back up that claim, and present that claim to persuade readers.	need to take information they read "with a grain of salt." This means that it is important to question the data, sources, and statistics a writer uses for a persuasive or argumentative essay.
Writers use certain words in their persuasive and argumentative essays.	Readers can look for these certain words and phrases (i.e., the word such as should) to zero in on this type of writing.

Argumentative and Persuasive Essays

In college, you will at some point be asked to write either a persuasive essay or an argumentative essay. Both stem from a claim you, the writer, will make. However, there is a difference between the argumentative essay and the persuasive essay. The *purpose of an argumentative essay is to present one side of a topic using evidence to support the writer's position*. This should not be confused with persuasion, *used in the persuasive essay, which is often opinion-based* and involves the writer using the three appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos, to influence the reader.

The Three Appeals

The first appeal a writer may use to persuade people is *ethos*. This is an argument based on the ethical character of a writer. "Because I am an ethical and honest person you should agree with me." The writer is trying to persuade the reader using their credibility or trustworthiness as an expert.

The second appeal a writer may use to persuade people is *pathos*. This is an argument based on feeling. The writer will try to appeal to the readers feelings and emotions.

The third appeal a writer may use to persuade people is *logos*. This is an argument based on logic. The writer is going to use evidence such as science or experts to appeal to the reader's sense of what is logical; "because of this evidence, it is logical that you should agree with me."

Claim, Evidence, Opposition

Claim

In an argument essay the main appeal the writer will use is *logos*. This is the formal structure of a statement, evidence, and then a logical conclusion which is most often used in academic writing.

When creating an argument, you must decide two things: first, what do you think? Answering this question will help you determine what side of the argument you support. Second, what do you know? If you do not have a lot of evidence to support the side you have chosen you will need to do more research. As you research the topic to gather evidence, make sure to keep an open mind because it is important to know what the opposing side thinks in order to prepare to defend your position, but also to confirm that you truly believe the side you have chosen.

The thesis statement for an argument essay must have an opposing opinion. If there is not an alternate side, then there is not a reason to argue the topic. One way to determine if there is an opposing side to your thesis is to write the opposite of your thesis.

Evidence

Selecting evidence to support your thesis depends on your audience and the combination of appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) you have chosen. When determining your audience consider the following questions:

- What are their beliefs or opinions?
- Do they generally have the same opinion as you?
- Are they on the fence meaning they do not care either way?
- Or are they the opposite of you?
- Is the audience open to new ideas and opinions?
- Is the audience hostile and wants to fight?
- Are you trying to educate a group that is skeptical about the subject?

When using logic, it is important to use facts that have been supported by science and experts in the subject. The evidence should also be directly related to the topic of the essay and represent the majority of the population affected by the subject. Keep in mind, any evidence from an outside source must be cited using one of the approved citations styles (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). Please see Chapter 11 for more information on citations in the MLA and APA styles.

Opposition

Every argument should have at least two sides and you as the writer must choose the side you would like to argue, but then you must decide what to do with the opposing sides point of view. You can choose to not acknowledge or address the opposing side, but this suggests to the reader that you may not have fully researched or truly understand the subject. Another option is to directly confront the opposition and point out why you are right, and they are wrong. This is direct and there is no option for discussion. The last option is to use a collaborative approach and try to establish a relationship with the opposition that acknowledges their point of view and suggests to the reader that there is room for common ground and mutual understanding.

Example Argument/Persuasive Outline

Building an Argument

Main Idea/Thesis:

Reason One (Key Point 1):

Evidence (details):

Reason Two (Key Point 2):

Evidence (details): _____

Reason Three (Key point 3): _____

Evidence (details): _____

You could argue that: _____

However, _____

Strong finish/call to action: _____

Reading Argumentative and Persuasive Essays

Reading Argumentative and Persuasive Essays

As a reader, it is very important that you do not take everything at “face value;” you cannot believe everything that you read, especially with the proliferation (large amount) of fake news that has appeared on websites today. So, how do you begin to form opinions as a reader of a persuasive and argumentative paper.

1. **Look at the sources carefully.** If you are reading a persuasive essay on the health benefits of being a vegetarian, and the claims come from medical doctors, then you might consider these claims as authoritative, meaning dependable or reliable. If, on the other hand, all the sources are from websites that are
2. **Inspect WHERE the sources come from.** If a source is from an academic journal, then again, this has a level of credibility and reliability; if a source comes from Wikipedia, then this could be questioned, as anyone can go online and add information on wiki-based sites.
3. **Inspect WEB sources carefully as well.** Look at the end of a website on an essay or article’s references list. If it ends in .edu, this indicates an education-based organization, such as a school or college. If the ending of the web address is .org, this indicates an organization. The organization could be neutral, or it could be very specific to one side, opinion, or group. Anything that ends in .com is a company, so this may be a profit-driven website.
4. **Pay attention to numbers.** If, while reading a persuasive or argumentative piece, you come across a statistic such as, “75% of doctors surveyed said they believe eating more steak can cure diseases,” look up the source yourself to see how many people are in that “75%” number. This number sounds HUGE, and the reader may be tempted to assume every doctor in the country participated in this study! This could only be three out of four people - a tiny percentage.

Chapter 10: Grammar Basics

Grammar Basics

Writers:	Readers:
recognize that grammar is crucial to conveying their message and getting their written points across to readers.	rely on the writer's proper grammar to make sense of the written material. If sentences are written incorrectly, then this is confusing to the reader.

The Eight (or Nine!*) Parts of Speech

Grammar is like a set of building blocks for our English language; each piece has a place to help convey or send a message through writing.

Grammar can be thought of like Legos. When you get a new Lego set, each box comes with bags of pieces; some pieces are red, some are yellow, and some are blue. Some pieces are clearly bricks meant for making a building, while some pieces have wheels, and some pieces may even be little people!

When these bricks come together, they form buildings, vehicles, and even whole cities. The same can be said about grammar: when the "bricks" – the pieces of grammar – come together, they form sentences, which, when placed together, then form paragraphs.

Let's take a closer look at each of the "bricks" in the grammar Lego set! Kramer (2021,) on Grammarly.com (a great site for learning and checking your grammar, linked at the end of this chapter!), explains the core parts of speech on the Grammarly blog:

Nouns

Verbs

Pronouns

Adjectives

Adverbs

Prepositions

Conjunctions

Articles*

***Some people consider Interjections to be a part of speech, so these are also covered in this chapter.**

Nouns

A noun is a person, place, thing, or idea.

Person = girl, boy, Mary, Sam

Place = classroom, kitchen, state, country, college, South Plains College, Texas

Thing = chair, computer, desk, Mac book Air

Idea = love, enthusiasm, friendship

#1. Nouns can be considered common or proper:

- Common nouns are basic, general nouns, and unless they start a sentence, they do not have to be capitalized.
- Proper nouns DO have to be capitalized because they are SPECIFIC nouns.

Common	Proper
girl	Mary

Common	Proper
state	Texas
computer	Dell

#2. Nouns can also be called concrete or abstract:

- Concrete nouns are things you can see, touch, hear, or taste. Items such as an apple, a chair, a Dell computer, or even a person are concrete. They exist in front of you.
- Abstract nouns are things that you cannot quite describe, or, if you do describe them, your description will differ from someone else's. Items such as friendship, love, hate, or enthusiasm would be considered abstract.

#3. Nouns can be "grouped" together:

Some words are what we call "collective" nouns (like a collection or group). Words such as band, team, staff, and leadership are collective nouns, and they would be considered singular (e.g., one band, one staff, one leadership, one team).

Grammar Basics: Verbs

Verbs

A verb is a word that can express action or feeling, or a verb can link a subject to another word in the sentence. There are three types of verbs: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

Action Verbs

An action verb is a word that connects the subject to an action. An action verb answers the question *what is the subject doing?*

The dog *barked* at the jogger.
He *gave* a short speech before we ate.

Good To Know!!!

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?

Linking Verbs

A linking verb is a word that does NOT show action. Instead, it connects, or links, the subject with the rest of the sentence. Often, this type of verb explains how something is or its state of being: how it feels, sounds, looks, or is in general. According to verbs explained on the website for Butte College's Center for Academic Success (n.d.), "In a sentence, a linking verb tells what the subject *is* rather than what it *does*" (para. 4).

Common linking verbs include:

The "to be" verbs (is, am, was, were, be, being, been)

Words that describe the subject (sense verbs): *look, seem, feel, touch, taste, appear*

She *has* a cold.

This milk *tastes* funny.

The room *feels* hot.

Action Verb: The boy *looked* for his glove.

Linking Verb: The boy *looked* tired.

Although both sentences use the same verb, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Good To Know!!!

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

The 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 (either linking or action) 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.

To be verbs: is, am, was, were, be, being, been

Do verbs: do, did, does

Have verbs: has, had, have

The restaurant *is known* for its variety of dishes.
She *does speak up* when prompted in class.
We *have seen* that movie three times.
She *can tell* when someone walks on her lawn.
(is, does, have, and can are helping verbs and known, speak up, seen, and tell are verbs)

Source:

Linking and Helping Verbs information was sourced from *Writing for Success*. Retrieved from <https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/2-1-sentence-writing/>

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Adaptations were made to formatting, font, size, and color of font; edits were made with some additional information added in from the authors of this OER.

Grammar Basics: Pronouns

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of a noun. It is good to use pronouns every so often in your sentences and your writing to help avoid repetition. Here is an example:

Professor Nuffer ran to class because she was running late.

We would not say Professor Nuffer ran to class because Professor Nuffer was running late. (too repetitive).

At the same time, be careful not to write too many pronouns in the same sentence, or the reader may be confused as to whom you are referring!

There are three types of pronouns: subject, object, and possessive.

Subject Pronouns	I, you, he, she, it, we, they
Object Pronouns	me, you, him, her, it, us, them
Possessive Pronouns	my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s)

Subject pronouns are often the subject of a sentence—“who” and “what” the sentence is about.

EXAMPLE: *She* loves the desserts in France. {ask yourself: who loves the desserts in France? SHE loves the desserts}

She is the subject.

EXAMPLE: By lunch time, *they* were hungry. {ask yourself: who was hungry? THEY were hungry}

They is the subject.

Object pronouns are often the object of the verb— “who” or “what” was acted upon.

EXAMPLE: Melanie’s thoughtfulness touched *him*.

{ask yourself: whom did the thoughtfulness touch? It touched HIM}

Him is the object of the verb touched.

EXAMPLE: We lifted it. {ask yourself: WHAT did we lift? We lifted IT}

It is the object of the verb lifted.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.

EXAMPLE: The teacher took *her* apple and left.

The pronoun *her* shows the teacher owns the apple.

EXAMPLE: The hikers spotted *their* guide on the trail.

The pronoun *their* shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Good To Know!!!

The masculine subject pronoun is he, and the masculine subject pronoun is him.

The feminine subject pronoun is she, and the feminine object pronoun is her.

Gender neutral pronouns should also be considered, however. It is becoming more acceptable to use “they” in place of a singular noun.

Source:

Pronouns information was sourced from: *Writing for Success*. Retrieved from <https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/2-1-sentence-writing/>

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Chapter 11: Grammar Specifics: Capitalization

After understanding the basic building blocks of grammar, it is important to then move on to the more specific, and often advanced, grammar rules. These are the rules and patterns in grammar that can elevate a paper from a basic draft into a more formal, professional, and academic essay!

Capitalization

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

Incorrect: the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Correct: The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Incorrect: He grew up in harlem, new york.

Correct: He grew up in Harlem, New York.

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, English, German, and so on.

Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “e-mail” and “online” are never capitalized.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Incorrect: On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Correct: On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Incorrect: The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.

Correct: The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

Important!!

Do NOT capitalize your topic if it is not a proper noun unless your topic is at the start of the sentence.

Incorrect: There are three important aspects in the game of Football, which include...

Correct: There are three important aspects of the game football, which include...

Capitalize Titles

Incorrect: The play, fences, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Correct: The play, *Fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Incorrect: The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.

Correct: The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

Important!!

Always capitalize the letter I when it refers to you in a narration, an email, or any type of communication.

Incorrect: i was born on January 2, 2001.

Correct: I was born on January 2, 2001.

Capitalization information was sourced from *Writing for Success*. Retrieved from <https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/2-4-capitalization/> Licensed under CC BY NC-SA <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>; Adaptations were made to formatting, font, size, and color of font; edits were made with some additional information added in from the authors of this OER (Cohesion: Uniting Reading and Writing).

Grammar Specifics: Punctuation and Practicing Editing Punctuation

Punctuation

To improve your punctuation, practice with clauses and phrases.

First, try combining clauses with the correct punctuation. Here are the most common ways to join clauses. The examples below are demonstrated with these two clauses: "The two cats were constant companions. They truly loved each other."

- **Comma + FANBOYS** (coordinating conjunction: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so): "The two cats were constant companions, for they truly loved each other."
- **Semicolon**: "The two cats were constant companions; they truly loved each other."
- **Semicolon with adverbial conjunction** (semicolon words such as however, nonetheless, moreover). Semicolon words do not make a sentence dependent on another sentence (do not turn a complete clause into a dependent clause): "The two cats were constant companions; moreover, they truly loved each other."
- **Colon** (rare): "The two cats were constant companions: they truly loved each other."
- **Make one sentence dependent on the other** by adding a subordinating conjunction (dependent word such as while, though, when, if). Dependent words turn a sentence into a dependent sentence (a dependent clause): "Though the two cats were constant companions, they truly loved each other." -or- "The two cats were constant companions because they truly loved each other."

Notice that the way you choose to join the clauses can emphasize a certain meaning, so make your choices carefully.

Next, practice correctly punctuating with commas.

Listing comma: This comma is used to separate the items in a list of two or more. (The comma that comes before the final item is called the Oxford comma, and it is always used in academic writing. It can often be left out in informal writing as long as the meaning is clear; it is usually left out in newspaper articles to save space.) Here's an example: "I bought bread, peanut butter, and jelly to make sandwiches."

Compound sentence comma (two independent clauses joined together): See the example in the previous section, Comma + FANBOYS. NOTE: Don't add a comma every time you use "and" or another coordinating conjunction. Make sure first that the two things you are joining are actually two independent clauses. You can do that by looking at the words before "and" to make sure they make up a complete sentence, and then do the same with the words after "and."

Introductory comma: This comma is used after an introductory word, phrase, or clause. If the introductory element is very short, the comma is optional.

EXAMPLE: "After the storm, the spider carefully rebuilt its web."

Interrupting comma: This pair of commas is used to mark interruptions within a sentence—as long as the interruption is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

EXAMPLE: "I wonder, you know, if you really love me."

Restrictive element: an essential element, whether a clause or phrase. Removing the essential element would change the meaning of the sentence. Restrictive elements/essential elements do NOT need commas.

EXAMPLE: "The monster that swallowed Los Angeles died of indigestion." The phrase "that swallowed Los Angeles" can't be removed from the sentence because essential in identifying which monster.

Non-restrictive element: a non-essential element, either a clause or phrase. Removing the non-essential element does not change the meaning of the sentence. These elements need commas. One way to remember that is to think of comma handles so that you can lift the element in and out of the sentence.

EXAMPLE: "My third sister, who lives in Salem, is the baby of the family."

The phrase "who lives in Salem" could be removed from the sentence because it's not essential in identifying which sister—we already know she's the third sister.

There are other ways to use commas; these are just the most common uses.

Punctuation information was sourced from: *The Word on College Reading and Writing*, by Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear. Retrieved from <https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/courses/the-word-on-college-reading-and-writing/view> Licensed under CC BY NC <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> Adaptations were made only to formatting, font, size, and color of font.

Grammar: How to Fix Common Errors

Writers:	Readers:
recognize that grammar is crucial, so they edit while writing, looking for common grammar errors that can send the wrong message (literally!) to the reader.	read through their work while writing to catch and correct these common grammar errors. Readers reading others' works could misunderstand what the writer is trying to say when these common mistakes are present.

Error #1: Fixing Run-on Sentences

STOP! Let us review!

A complete sentence, or INDEPENDENT clause, contains the following:

- Subject (who/what the sentence is about)
- Verb (action or linking)
- Makes sense
- ****Note that the subject almost always falls before the verb!****

When you have a complete sentence (independent clause) next to another complete sentence (or two or more complete sentences), you can have one of THREE punctuation marks in between the two:

- A period.
- A semicolon (;)
- A comma + one of the FANBOYS conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

Questions can also be considered complete, though note that the verb usually comes before the subject in a question:

- Are you feeling OK today? (subject = you; verb = are feeling)
- Where is Terry? (subject = Terry; verb = is)

You CANNOT have two or more complete sentences back-to-back with no punctuation in between.

- THIS is what is called a *run-on sentence* (or *fused sentence*).

Fixing run-ons

Fixing run-on is easy!

- First, read the sentence aloud to find where one sentence ends and the next begins.
- Add a period between the run-ons.
- Add a semicolon between the run-ons.
- Add a comma + FANBOYS between the run-ons.

EXAMPLE: Let's look at the SAME sentence from the comma splice lesson!

COMPLETE SENTENCE 1

Dr. Vice drove down 114 she was running late to work.

COMPLETE SENTENCE 2

Note that there is NO punctuation between those two complete sentences, causing the reader to read this like it is one long sentence. We have two complete sentences (CS) separated by nothing, which equals a run-on or fused sentence (that's a no-no in the world of grammar!)

We can fix these three different ways:

1. Dr. Vice drove down 114. She was running late for work. {period between two CS}
2. Dr. Vice drove down 114; she was running late for work. {semicolon between two CS}
3. Dr. Vice drove down 114, for she was running late for work. {comma + FANBOYS between two CS}

Error #2: Fixing Comma Splices

Error #2: Fixing Comma Splices

STOP! Let us review AGAIN!!!

A complete sentence, or INDEPENDENT clause, contains the following:

- Subject (who/what the sentence is about)
- Verb (action or linking)
- Makes sense
- ****Note that the subject almost always falls before the verb!****

When you have a complete sentence (independent clause) next to another complete sentence (or two or more complete sentences), you can have one of THREE punctuation marks in between the two:

- A period.
- A semicolon (;)
- A comma + one of the FANBOYS conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

Questions can also be considered complete, though note that the verb usually comes before the subject in a question:

- Are you feeling OK today? (subject = you; verb = are feeling)
- Where is Terry? (subject = Glen; verb = is)

You CANNOT have ONLY a comma between two complete sentences.

- THIS is what is called a *comma splice*.

Fixing comma splices:

Fixing the splice is easy!

- Turn the comma into a period.
- Turn the comma into a semicolon.
- Keep the comma but add one of the FANBOYS that is the most appropriate.



Do not forget that verbs can also be is, am, was, were, are, be, being, been, has, have, and had!

EXAMPLE:

COMPLETE SENTENCE 1

Dr. Vice drove down 114, she was running late to work.

COMPLETE SENTENCE 2

Subject: Dr. Vice

Verb: drove

Subject: She (pronoun for Dr. Vice)

Verb: was running (helping verb)

Both sentences make sense on their own, so they are each independent (complete).

This is a comma splice. We have two complete sentences (CS) separated by ONLY a comma (that's a no-no in the world of grammar!)

We can fix these three different ways:

1. Dr. Vice drove down 114. She was running late to work. {period between two CS}
2. Dr. Vice drove down 114; she was running late to work. {semicolon between two CS}
3. Dr. Vice drove down 114, for she was running late to work. {comma + FANBOYS between two CS}

Grammar: Subjects/Predicates, Complete Sentences. and Incomplete Sentences

Subjects and Predicates

Understanding the subject of the sentence is important, as is being able to identify complete sentences because you will know where to place punctuation when you can spot complete and incomplete sentences! Let's look at each part:

Subject - the subject of the sentence is WHO or WHAT the sentence is about.

Predicate - the verb plus everything else in the sentence.

A complete sentence (officially called an independent clause) has these components:

*Subject - the subject of the sentence is the WHO or WHAT the sentence is about.

*Verb - shows WHAT the who or what is doing.

*The sentence makes sense - it is a complete thought with end punctuation.

A complete sentence is called an *independent clause* because it is *independent*: it can stand alone, and everything the reader needs to know is in that one sentence.

Dependent and Independent Clauses

We can elevate our writing by blending dependent and independent clauses together. This builds interest and sometimes intrigue in our writing for our readers.

Remember that an independent clause is complete. Therefore, a *dependent clause is NOT complete* and is DEPENDENT on the REST of the thought (the independent clause) to make sense. Remember this simple formula for remembering where to place commas when working with independent and dependent clauses!

Formula #1: Dependent Clause, + Independent Clause

IF the dependent clause comes at the beginning of the phrase, then you need to ADD a comma after the dependent clause and before the "rest of the thought" (the independent clause). The dependent clause has been highlighted for you:

EXAMPLE: Although Dr. Garrett had a cold, she held meeting with students. (comma added AFTER the dependent clause)

Formula #2: Independent Clause + Dependent Clause

IF the independent clause comes at the start of the sentence, and the dependent clause comes at the end of the sentence, you do NOT add a comma in between clauses. The dependent clause has been highlighted for you:

EXAMPLE: The students were tired because they had played in the pool until 10pm. (no comma needed because the dependent clause is at the end of the sentence).

Common dependent clause starters:

As	Although	Because
Before	If	Since
Unless	Whenever	While

Sample Essay: Informational

Example Informational Essay

Getting to Know Hair

Your hair is a big part of who you are, and it is one of the first things people notice when they see you. But there is more to hair than meets the eye. How well would you say you know your hair? Because your hair is crucial to your appearance, getting to know it is of utmost importance. There are a few concepts to grasp regarding hair, such as hair type, porosity, and the products needed for hair's overall health.

The first step in knowing your hair is understanding its type. Hair types are numbered in ascending order as follows: straight (being type one), wavy, curly, and coily (being type four). These are determined by one's visual hair texture. These types are further divided into three subcategories each, labeled in alphabetical order, determined by how tight or how loose one's curls/coils are within said hair types. For instance, 3a hair has the loosest curl pattern in the type three hair category, while hair type 3c has the tightest. Although it is important to know your hair type, be aware that it is possible and quite common for one to have multiple hair types. For example, you may have 3c in the back, while your crown area is 4b, and your front section is 4a. Knowing this helps you better understand why your hair behaves the way it does in response to some hair products or even to weather. After identifying your different hair type (or types), it's time to move to the next essential notion, porosity.

In simple terms, your hair's porosity is its ability to hold and take in moisture. Although there are only three types, low, medium, and high, it is a little more complex of a concept than hair levels. Your porosity is determined by how open or closed your hair's cuticles are, which cannot be seen by the naked eye. So, how do you find out your hair's porosity? Start by filling up a glass of water, preferably see-through, and drop a strand or two of your hair in said glass. If the strand sits at the top, you have low porosity hair; if it sinks halfway, you have medium porosity, and if it sinks completely, your hair is highly porous. With low porosity, since your cuticles are closed, little to no moisture is able to penetrate your strands. For example, you might notice that most hair products usually just sit on your hair rather than being absorbed. With high porosity, even though your strands are able to absorb moisture since the cuticles are open, it comes right back out, which means that even after applying hair cream, you might be left with your hair feeling dry because the acquired moisture cannot be kept in. But with medium porosity hair, moisture is able to be absorbed, and it does not easily escape. It is important to note that contrary to hair type, hair porosity is not determined by genetics. Hair dyeing and chemical treatments are some things that can damage your hair cuticles and consequently alter porosity. The last critical component to learn is how to care for your hair with the previously mentioned concepts in mind.

There are general key points that must be kept in mind when considering hair types. For types one and two, which are known for being oily, it is recommended to steer away from oils. Better products that will not weigh this hair type down nor reduce its volume and definition include sprays, serums, foams, and mousses. For types three and four, which are both known for being prone to dryness and frizz, an abundance of moisture is recommended by using deep conditioning masks, butters, and hair creams. Along with finger detangling, using products that define the curls/coils, such as leave-in conditioners and gels, and allowing the hair to air dry, will help set curls. Now here are the things to keep in mind according to porosity. Low porosity hair is prone to product build-up, so use the least amount of product possible and avoid the use of oils since they are sealants. And to allow your hair to retain moisture, it is recommended to use steam treatments. For medium porosity, the goal is to keep the hair the way it is, therefore avoid harsh chemical and heat treatments. Finally, for high porosity hair, it is recommended to use rich oils, such as castor oil, to seal in moisture.

Getting to know your hair is not an easy task. But after understanding and identifying its type/s (ranging from 1a to 4c), porosity level (low, medium, and high), and recommended products, it becomes a lot easier. Of course, caring for hair takes time, patience, and dedication, but you must keep in mind that your head of hair will last you a lifetime! And as an unknown author once said, "*Your hair is the crown you never take off.*"

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